



Memorandum

Date: 3/10/2026
Meeting of: City Council

File No. SS 26-028
Type: Study Session

TO: Members of the City Council
FROM: Mayor Angela Birney
DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR CONTACT(S):

Police	Chief Darrell Lowe	425-556-2521
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DEPARTMENT STAFF:

Police	Brian Coats	Deputy Chief
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TITLE:
Police Technology Update

OVERVIEW STATEMENT:

The Redmond Police Department (RPD) respectfully submits this briefing to provide City Council with a comprehensive update on current and emerging public safety technologies. This communication covers the Drone as First Responder (DFR) Program, the Real-Time Information Center (RTIC), the upgrade of Redmond's existing fixed city traffic camera infrastructure, and Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology including a comparison of fixed versus mobile ALPR systems, the current suspension of investigative ALPR, pending state legislation, and a recommendation for the path forward.

Every technology discussed in this briefing was adopted or is being considered through a consistent evaluative lens: Does it solve a specific public safety problem? Does it create measurable operational efficiency? Does it enhance the effectiveness and outcomes of the department's public safety mission while respecting the rights, privacy, and trust of every member of our community? That philosophy shapes every recommendation in this document.

Additional Background Information/Description of Proposal Attached

REQUESTED ACTION:

Receive Information **Provide Direction** **Approve**

REQUEST RATIONALE:

- **Relevant Plans/Policies:**
DFR Program Dashboard (live): redmond.gov/2172/Drone-Program-Dashboard
- **Required:**
N/A

- **Council Request:**
Council request for routine updates
- **Other Key Facts:**

1. DRONE AS FIRST RESPONDER (DFR) PROGRAM

Does it solve a problem? Yes. Does it create efficiency? Yes.

Launched in April 2024, the RPD DFR program became the first full-time Drone as First Responder program in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. Drones deploy from fixed docking stations citywide and can arrive on scene before ground units, providing aerial situational awareness to responding officers.

Demonstrated Impact

- 3,344 calls have been responded since program launch.
- Deployed in incidents involving armed individuals, DUIs, missing persons, shoplifting, traffic collisions, and structure fires.
- DFR deployed to a man-with-a-gun call at an apartment complex, providing real-time aerial intelligence that allowed officers to approach safely, assess accurately, and de-escalate - a direct officer and community safety outcome.

Pilots can cancel unnecessary ground unit responses when DFR confirms no active threat, preserving resources for priority calls.

2. REAL-TIME INFORMATION CENTER (RTIC)

Does it solve a problem? Yes. Does it create efficiency? Yes.

- The RTIC is the operational and governance hub for RPD's technology infrastructure. Trained analysts synthesize data from calls for service, camera feeds, drone video, mapping tools, and analytics platforms to support real-time decision-making during active incidents and planned events.

Operational Value

- Reduces information latency officers arrive with situational awareness rather than uncertainty.
- Enables command coordination during critical incidents and large-scale events.
- Human review is embedded at every step: no automated system triggers enforcement action without analyst confirmation.

3. FIXED CITY TRAFFIC CAMERA INFRASTRUCTURE

Does it solve a problem? Yes. Does it create efficiency? Yes.

- This section addresses the planned upgrade of Redmond's existing fixed city traffic camera infrastructure the network of cameras already in place at traffic corridors and key public spaces throughout the city. This is not a proposal to expand the number or scope of camera deployments; it is an investment in the reliability, image quality, and integration capability of infrastructure that already exists and that the community has already accepted.

Why Upgrade Now

- Aging equipment produces degraded image quality that reduces evidentiary value in investigations and limits RTIC operator effectiveness during critical incidents.
- FIFA World Cup
- Integration with the RTIC requires updated hardware capable of delivering reliable, high-resolution feeds in real time.
- Reliability gaps create operational blind spots during the incidents when camera coverage matters most.

What the Upgrade Does Not Do

- Does not expand camera coverage beyond currently approved locations.
- Does not add new surveillance capability or purposes beyond those already established.
- Does not change retention periods, access controls, or governance all remain governed by Policy 341.

4. AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER (ALPR) TECHNOLOGY

Understanding the Full ALPR Landscape

- The department operates or oversees three distinct categories of ALPR technology. These must be understood separately, as they serve different purposes, operate under different legal frameworks, and carry different community implications. Council's suspension applies specifically to the investigative fixed-camera system.

System	Purpose	Mechanism	Current Status
Investigative Fixed ALPR (Flock Safety)	Detect vehicles linked to crimes, stolen vehicles, and missing persons citywide 24/7.	Fixed cameras at strategic city locations always-on coverage independent of officer deployment.	SUSPENDED - pending Council direction.
Mobile ALPR (In-Car Camera)	Detect wanted vehicles during patrol opportunistic coverage dependent on officer routing.	Mounted on patrol vehicles active only when car is present at same location as target vehicle.	Available as an alternative, not currently deployed.

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<p>Parking Enforcement ALPR</p>	<p>Enforce parking regulations and permit zones.</p>	<p>Mobile operates under separate legal framework from investigative ALPR.</p>	<p>Operational.</p>
<p>School Zone Speed Enforcement</p>	<p>Enforce speed limits in school zones to protect children.</p>	<p>Fixed subject-specific statutory authority.</p>	<p>Operational.</p>

Fixed vs. Mobile ALPR: Why Fixed Infrastructure Is the More Effective Tool

Council should be aware that mobile ALPR technology camera systems mounted on patrol vehicles exists as an alternative to the fixed Flock Safety infrastructure currently suspended. After careful evaluation, the department does not recommend mobile ALPR as a substitute. The reasons are operational and grounded in the department's evaluative framework of problem-solving and efficiency:

- Coverage dependency: Mobile ALPR can only detect a wanted vehicle if a patrol car happens to be in the same location at the same time. Fixed cameras provide continuous, citywide coverage 24 hours a day, regardless of officer deployment patterns.
- Reactive vs. proactive value: Fixed systems alert officers when a wanted vehicle enters a monitored area, allowing rapid, targeted response. Mobile systems capture plates passively during routine patrol an officer may drive past a wanted vehicle without any alert if the system is not actively querying that specific plate at that moment.
- Resource efficiency: Fixed infrastructure generates alerts without requiring an officer to be present. Mobile ALPR consumes officer time and patrol resources while delivering narrower and less reliable coverage.
- Investigative gap: A wanted vehicle associated with a felony investigation may sit in a residential neighborhood for days without a patrol car passing. Fixed cameras at key corridors capture that vehicle the moment it moves. Mobile ALPR would miss it entirely unless an officer happened to be on the same block.

In short: mobile ALPR relies on coincidence. Fixed ALPR relies on infrastructure. For a department committed to efficiency and effectiveness, fixed infrastructure is the operationally superior choice. The department

acknowledges this assessment and presents it to Council as relevant context for evaluating the suspension.

Background on the Suspension

Following reports in early 2025 of ALPR data being shared with federal immigration enforcement (ICE) in other jurisdictions without community knowledge or consent Redmond's investigative ALPR program was suspended by Council. The department fully supports Council's exercise of oversight authority. However, the community should understand that Redmond's program had already built protections that distinguished it from those where problems occurred:

- No nationwide data sharing: Redmond did not activate Flock Safety's national shared network. Data remained local.
- Chief-level approval for all external requests: Vague or ambiguous requests were denied; the investigative sergeant verified legal basis before any release.
- Documented investigative nexus required: Every officer query required a valid case number and documented nexus. No speculative searches.

Chief's Recommendation: Resume Investigative ALPR Upon Passage of SB 6002

The department respectfully but clearly recommends that Council authorize resumption of the investigative ALPR program upon enactment of SB 6002, provided Redmond's policies are updated to comply with the new state law. This recommendation is grounded in the following:

- SB 6002 directly addresses the concerns that motivated the suspension. The legislation codifies in state law what Redmond's internal policy had already established including the prohibition on immigration enforcement use and the mandatory audit requirements. The community's concern about data misuse will, upon passage, be backed by statutory penalties including criminal liability for willful violations.
- Washington State will provide a legal framework and enforcement mechanism that does not depend on any individual agency's good faith. That is the structural protection the community deserves.
- The operational case for fixed ALPR is compelling. Stolen vehicles, trafficking cases, felony suspects these are problems ALPR solves in ways that no other available tool replicates with the same speed and coverage.
- Redmond's existing safeguards no data sharing, chief-level approval, mandatory case nexus, system-level immigration filter already exceed what SB 6002 requires. Compliance will be a policy update, not a program redesign.

The department is not asking Council to accept the program as it was before suspension. It is asking Council to commit to resuming the program once the state has provided the legal structure that gives the community the assurance it deserves. The longer the suspension continues beyond that point, the greater the cost in investigations delayed, vehicles not recovered, and vulnerable residents not protected.

If the session closes without SB 6002 passing, the department recommends that Council provide direction on reinstatement under enhanced written policy rather than continued indefinite suspension.

5. TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE & OVERSIGHT FRAMEWORDK

All RPD technology programs operate under a unified governance structure. Relevant governing documents include:

- RPD Policy 341 - Public Safety Technology Data Governance: Standards for data collection, retention, access, auditing, and community transparency across all technology systems. Publicly available at redmond.gov.
- RPD Policy 612 - Automated License Plate Readers: Specific operational and data handling requirements for ALPR systems. Publicly available at redmond.gov.
- RCW 10.93.160 - Keep Washington Working Act: Binding state law restricting use of state resources for immigration enforcement, with which all RPD technology programs comply.
- SB 6002 (pending): Once enacted, the state will establish the first comprehensive ALPR governance statute, creating mandatory statewide standards that supersede and reinforce existing local policy.

The department also proposes establishing a regular public-facing technology transparency report annual, covering system access volume, incident categories, outcomes, and audit results to give every community member a direct window into how these tools are being used on their behalf.

OUTCOMES:

Following this briefing, the department requests that Council:

- Acknowledge receipt of the technology update and provide any immediate feedback or questions.
- Commit to authorizing resumption of the investigative ALPR program upon enactment of SB 6002, with policy updates to comply with the new state law.
- In the event SB 6002 does not pass during the current session (closing March 12, 2026), provide direction on the path forward for investigative ALPR so the department can manage equipment and communicate clearly with the community.
- Indicate any areas where Council would like additional information, independent review, or community engagement prior to future action.

COMMUNITY/STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT:

- **Timeline (previous or planned):**
N/A
- **Outreach Methods and Results:**
N/A
- **Feedback Summary:**
N/A

BUDGET IMPACT:

Total Cost:

No new appropriation requested at this time. Camera upgrade costs to be presented in a separate budget offer.

Approved in current biennial budget: Yes No N/A

Budget Offer Number:

228

Budget Priority:

Safe and Resilient

Other budget impacts or additional costs: Yes No N/A

If yes, explain:

N/A

Funding source(s):

General Fund

Budget/Funding Constraints:

The continued suspension of investigative ALPR represents an ongoing cost in equipment maintenance and unquantified investigative capability loss. A fiscal impact analysis is available upon Council's request.

Additional budget details attached

COUNCIL REVIEW:

Previous Contact(s)

Date	Meeting	Requested Action
10/21/2025	Committee of the Whole - Public Safety and Human Services	Receive Information

Proposed Upcoming Contact(s)

Date	Meeting	Requested Action
N/A	None proposed at this time	N/A

Time Constraints:

N/A

ANTICIPATED RESULT IF NOT APPROVED:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: RPD Policy 341- Public Safety Technology Data Governance
Attachment B: RPD Policy 612 - Automated License Plate Readers (attached)

Attachment C: Keep Washington Working Act (full text)
Attachment D: Enrolled Senate Bill (current version as of February 2026)
Attachment E: Investigative ALPR Camera Location Map