



MCP lends expertise to help implement ALPR program in Southeastern Pennsylvania

Location:

Greater Philadelphia metropolitan UASI region

Challenge:

After receiving a UASI grant, the Southeastern PA Regional Task Force (SEPARTF) needed a partner to help them simplify the complexity associated with implementing an ALPR program.

Solution:

Program and data management services
Database implementation services
Policy and governance development assistance

Results:

A model ALPR program that has played a key role in criminal investigations across the region, making the region a safer place.

BACKGROUND

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force (SEPARTF) is tasked with an enormous mission: to ensure the safety of millions of residents that live in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area. SEPARTF serves the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) region that includes Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware and Chester counties, as well as the City and County of Philadelphia.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2014, SEPARTF received a UASI grant to implement an automatic license plate reader (ALPR) system that would support public safety agencies throughout the region. While offering significant benefits for law enforcement, deploying ALPR technology is a complex undertaking. A typical system costs approximately \$16,000 to procure and install—per vehicle. Despite SEPARTF covering 95 percent of the implementation costs with the UASI grant, there was only enough money to install the technology in a fraction of the region’s patrol cars.

Additionally, numerous ancillary factors must be considered in order to ensure a

successful ALPR implementation successful, including:

- Servers must be implemented, secured and maintained for the massive amounts of data that is collected and stored by an ALPR system.
- Data collected from numerous hotlists and other data sources must be integrated and updated on a regular basis in order to be useful.
- First responders, including law enforcement and 9-1-1 dispatchers, must be trained on how to leverage the technology.

SEPARTF instinctively understood that the upside of ALPR was enormous, but they also knew that they needed a partner capable of turning its vision into reality. To that end, SEPARTF looked to Mission Critical Partners (MCP) for the needed guidance.

THE SOLUTION

Acting as program manager for the initiative, dubbed the Pennsylvania License Plate Recognition Network (PALPRN), MCP led the deployment efforts for approximately 130 ALPR tag-reading units throughout the region that typically scan more than 120,000 plates a day.



MCP also supported SEPARTF by decommissioning the license plate reader technology vendor's server software and transferring it to a secure, shared and CJIS-compliant cloud datacenter that adheres to various high-security standards and regulations. This was required to store the massive amounts of data collected by the PALPRN in the securest environment possible.

Because an ALPR system is only as good as the data it leverages, MCP helped SEPARTF build and implement a sound data collection and maintenance process that gathers, scrubs, stores and disseminates data to in-vehicle laptops.

After a license plate is scanned by an ALPR tag reader, the data can be cross-referenced with various databases. MCP worked with SEPARTF to look holistically at what it wanted to accomplish with the ALPR initiative, and then identified available hot lists and other data sources that could be incorporated into SEPARTF's ALPR cloud to meet its goals.

Key National Crime Information Center (NCIC) databases were cleansed and integrated, including those maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). MCP also incorporated data manually extracted from the Megan's Law database and converted it into an easily digestible format. The data is regularly scrubbed and updated. All of this is accomplished via customized software developed by MCP subject matter experts specifically for this purpose.

Additionally, MCP configured the database to house the hot lists, which deliver more than 6 million records daily. SEPARTF law enforcement officials are alerted if a license plate read by the PALPRN matches any of the hot-list records. Examples include vehicles that are the subject of an AMBER or SILVER alert; vehicles registered to persons who are suspected of a crime or a gang/terrorist group affiliation; or persons whose vehicle registration has been suspended or revoked.

Furthermore, MCP also provided SEPARTF with guidance on implementing strong policies that ensure proper data usage, access, auditing, security and storage.

A long-term, proactive approach to data management is critical for success. During implementation, MCP provided data management services that alleviated SEPARTF from the time-consuming and labor-intensive effort required to make its data operational. MCP designed SEPARTF's custom ALPR software to keep its program sustainable long-term. The data maintenance model MCP helped implement prevents stale data, ensuring that SEPARTF continues to act on opportunities to nab perpetrators. Furthermore, alarm fatigue—a side effect that occurs when outdated databases trigger false alarms—is eliminated as a result of MCP's support.

THE RESULTS

In the SEPARTF region, more than 41 million tags are scanned annually, and numerous examples of how the PALPRN has played a key role criminal investigation across the region can be cited. Since June 2015 alone, law enforcement has:

- Recovered more than \$2.3 million in value of stolen vehicles
- Detected and arrested more than 21 wanted criminals hiding in plain sight
- Arrested four Megan's Law offenders

With MCP's commitment and expertise, SEPARTF is able to operate a model ALPR program that has made the region it serves a safer place, by arming first responders with state-of-the-art technology that has played a transformative role in helping them carry out their mission.

About Mission Critical Partners

Mission Critical Partners is an industry leader with expertise in radio and wireless broadband; networks and Next Generation 9-1-1; public safety facilities and operations; and lifecycle management. Backed by a team of more than 80 experts who bring decades of experience to every project, MCP provides consulting and lifecycle management services that help transform our client's public safety systems and operations at every stage of their lifecycle: design, implement, build or manage.

For more information, visit
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