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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CITYWIDE EFFORT TO UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE RECOVERY OF STOLEN VEHICLES

Multi-department operations to identify stolen vehicles, crack down on auto theft, empower victims

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today a new coordinated effort to locate stolen vehicles, as part of the City and the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) strategy to prevent auto thefts and carjackings and find justice for victims. The new effort expands the use of License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology on city trucks performing boot operations citywide.

"As part of our mission to prevent carjackings and cars from being stolen, we must also take action to help ensure vehicles can be returned to their owners," said Mayor Emanuel. "By harnessing an existing City process, we are able to more quickly identify stolen vehicles on streets throughout Chicago, returning them to their owners and preventing these vehicles from being involved in other violent crimes."

Automated LPR technology helps officers quickly identify stolen cars, return the vehicles to the rightful owner and apprehend offenders. The City is harnessing the Department of Finance (DOF) vehicle booting operation to feed license plates read throughout Chicago to the Office of Emergency Management and Communication's (OEMC) stolen car and other crime databases. Mounted on both sides of DOF booter vans, the LPR cameras can capture images of up to 3,200 license plates per van each shift.

The 26 DOF booter vehicles add to the existing OEMC 100 fixed (pole mounted) and CPD mobile LPR cameras. The DOF booters canvas the streets six days a week providing over 3,000 license plate reads per boot vehicle, per day. By collaborating with the OEMC, not only are the boot trucks identifying the vehicles that are boot eligible, but the LPR technology allows the City to match license plates against the list of stolen vehicles sent to the LPRs daily by the OEMC. If a vehicle is identified as stolen, CPD is notified by a 911 dispatcher.

Since March 2018, DOF booters have identified and reported to CPD over 190 hits from the stolen vehicle list.

"This targeted collaboration to use LPR technology is a great example of sharing resources to help victims of violent crime," said CPD Superintendent Eddie Johnson. "With the booter cameras acting as our additional eyes on the ground, we hope to use this data as a tool to expedite our efforts in apprehending and prosecuting car thieves and other violent offenders."

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This coordinated effort to quickly identify stolen cars through LPR cameras is part of the City's strategic plan to combat carjacking and car thefts, and its overall investment into technology for CPD that raises situational awareness and the likelihood of apprehension. As a result of these efforts, CPD has made 20% more arrests for vehicular hijacking compared to last year, and this weekend an offender was federally charged for committing this crime last week.

Earlier this week, CPD announced five new patrol vehicles have been equipped with License Plate Reader technology, all aimed at stopping auto thefts and carjackings, and recovering stolen vehicles. The City's strategic plan also includes a multi-agency vehicular hijacking task force comprised of local, state, and federal law enforcement partners and prosecutors identifies carjacking patterns and apprehends targeted offenders. Additionally, the City and CPD have proposed state legislation to hold persons caught driving stolen vehicles accountable, and help empower victims who have had their cars stolen to obtain justice. Finally, CPD's manpower continues to grow with new graduates leaving the Academy each month, allowing district command staff to focus resources towards those committing violent carjackings.

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