

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1013 (Cervantes) – As Amended June 15, 2026

Policy Committee:	Transportation	Vote:	11 - 4
	Privacy and Consumer Protection		9 - 2

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill generally requires a public agency to delete automated license plate recognition (ALPR) information after 30 days and makes various requirements of ALPR operators and end users.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Prohibits a public agency from retaining ALPR information for more than 30 days after the date of collection unless the information is retained in the evidence file of an active investigation or criminal proceeding or matches information on an authorized “hot list” and, as of January 1, 2027, requires such a public agency, within 14 days, delete all ALPR information that has been held for more than 30 days and has not been retained in the evidence file of an active investigation or criminal proceeding or matches information on an authorized hot list.
- 2) Limits law enforcement agency use of ALPR information to locating vehicles or persons when either are reasonably suspected of being involved in the commission of a public offense or locating an individual who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.
- 3) Generally requires, with certain exceptions, an ALPR operator that accesses ALPR information or that provides access to such information to maintain a record of the case file number to a specific law enforcement or public safety incident or investigation that justifies the search query.
- 4) Effective January 1, 2027, requires any or modified contractual agreement between a public agency and an ALPR vendor, manufacturer or supplier mandate that no default access is provided to any national ALPR database and that an agency’s collected scans are by default not accessible to any other agency, but allows a law enforcement agency to manually implement agency-to-agency sharing with other California state law enforcement agencies only as authorized by specified Department of Justice (DOJ) order.
- 5) Requires any ALPR operator and any ALPR end user to (a) have safeguards for managing which employees can see the data from their systems and (b) require data security training and data privacy training for all employees that access ALPR information.
- 6) Requires the DOJ, upon appropriation, to conduct annual random audits on a public agency that is an ALPR operator or ALPR end-user.

- 7) Excludes from the definition in existing law of an ALPR end-user and an ALPR operator the following, as specified: (a) a transportation agency, (b) a public transit operator, (c) a local department of transportation or public works department and (d) an airport or airport operator when collecting, accessing or using ALPR information solely for parking access control, fee calculation, lost-ticket resolution, fraud prevention or transaction dispute resolution in an airport parking facility.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) The DOJ estimates eventual ongoing annual costs of approximately \$2.6 million to administer the bill, with DOJ's costs ranging from \$3.0 million and \$3.8 million in the first three years of implementation (General Fund). The DOJ attributes these costs to the bills direction to DOJ, upon appropriation, to conduct annual random audits, which, the DOJ contends, will require it to implement a new electronic case management system, at a one-time cost of \$950,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026-27 and ongoing annual costs of \$125,000 for licensing and subscription fees, as well as \$300,000 annually for oversight of the system by the Department of Technology. The DOJ costs also include salaries and related expenses for a staff of four in its Justice Data and Investigative Services Bureau, of three in its Application Development Bureau and of four in its Enterprise Services Bureau.
- 2) Annual costs (various funds) of an unknown amount, but likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars at least, to each state agency that operates ALPRs, such as the California Highway Patrol. For example, the Air Resources Board, which operates ALPRs for several of its vehicle air pollution programs, provided the committee with an estimate of \$3.8 million to implement the bill and \$3.3 million annually ongoing to carry it out (Air Pollution Control Fund).
- 3) Potential annual costs (General Fund) of an unknown amount, but likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars at least, to reimburse local public agency costs to comply with this bill. The state would incur these cost only if a local agency or agencies filed a claim with the Commission on State Mandates and the commission determined the state liable for reimbursement.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** The author describes ALPRs as “a powerful surveillance technology that can invade the privacy of all individuals and violate the rights of entire communities” and notes “known breaches of ALPR data and technology in recent years, indicating potential cybersecurity threats.” The author intends this bill to provide “robust safeguards and crucial oversight regarding the use of ALPR throughout our state” so that “the privacy of Californians is respected and preserved, while also maintaining compliance with existing laws that safeguard vulnerable communities.”
- 2) **Background.** An ALPR is an automated system that captures images of a license plates through a fixed or mobile camera. Law enforcement agencies in California use ALPRs to capture license plate numbers and compare them against a database of vehicles of interest, such as stolen vehicles and those suspected of being used in the commission of a crime. Such a database of vehicles is known as a “hot list.”

As use of ALPRs in California grew, so did concern about the use and retention of license plate images and the misuse—both real and potential—of those images. In 2013, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) issued a report, “You Are Being Tracked,” that warned ALPRs “open the door to abusive tracking, enabling anyone with access to pry into the lives of his boss, his ex-wife, or his romantic, political, or workplace rivals.” The ACLU report also made numerous recommendations regarding ALPR data use, security and retention, including the following recommendation: law enforcement agencies must not store data about innocent people for any lengthy period.

Soon thereafter, the Legislature approved SB 34 (Hill), Chapter 532, Statutes of 2015, which created numerous requirements regarding the privacy and use of ALPR data, including that a public agency not sell or share ALPR information, except to another public agency and only under certain circumstances, and that an operator of an ALPR system use ALPR information only for authorized purposes.

In 2019, the State Auditor audited four large law enforcement agencies (see “California State Auditor Report 2019-118”) and found, among other things:

- The four agencies had accumulated a large number of ALPR data, nearly none of which are related to criminal investigations.
- The four agencies had not implemented all of the requirements of SB 34.
- Poorly developed and incomplete policies contributed to the agencies’ failure to implement ALPR programs that reflect the privacy principles in SB 34.
- Three of the reviewed agencies shared their ALPR images widely, yet the State Auditor found no evidence that the agencies had always determined whether an entity receiving shared images had a right and a need to access the images or even that the receiving entity was a public agency.

The State Auditor made several recommendations to the Legislature:

- Require DOJ to draft and make available on its website a policy template that local law enforcement agencies can use as a model for their ALPR policies.
- Require DOJ to develop and issue guidance to help local law enforcement agencies identify and evaluate the types of data they are currently storing in their ALPR systems.
- Establish a maximum data retention period for ALPR images.
- Specify how frequently ALPR system use must be audited and that the audits must include assessing user searches.

In October 2023, the DOJ issued guidance to state and local law enforcement agencies regarding the governance of ALPRs, asserting that California law prohibits ALPR information from being shared with federal agencies or local agencies outside of the state of California. The bulletin included a template use policy that recommended law enforcement agencies maintain ALPR data for 60 days to six months.

Last year, the author introduced SB 274, which is similar to this bill and, like this bill, faced strenuous opposition from law enforcement groups. Ultimately, the Governor vetoed SB 274, asserting the bill did not:

strike the delicate balance between protecting individual privacy and ensuring public safety. For example, it may not be apparent, particularly with respect to cold cases, that license plate data is needed to solve a crime until after the 60-day retention period has elapsed. Conversely, restrictions on inter-agency data sharing may impair solving crimes in real time, such as highway shootings, where the suspect may be rapidly crossing jurisdictional boundaries. Further, by restricting law enforcement agencies' use of ALPR information only for locating persons or vehicles suspected of involvement in crimes, this bill would prevent the use of this information to locate missing persons.

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