

# **CITY OF SANIBEL**

## **AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER (ALPR)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

In response to concerns and questions raised by Sanibel residents regarding SPD's use of Flock ALPR technology, the City has developed this FAQ to provide clear and accurate information about the technology and how it is used in Sanibel.

Sanibel uses automated license plate recognition technology as an investigative and traffic-management tool. This FAQ explains what the Sanibel specific technology does, how it may be used, the distinction between ALPR and Sanibel's school-zone speed cameras, and the Florida legal framework governing ALPR records and access.

#### **1. What is automated license plate reader (ALPR) technology?**

ALPR technology uses cameras to capture vehicle license plates and other characteristics that can be gleaned from rear-end-only pictures of a vehicle, such as body type, make, model, and color. This information is converted into searchable data to assist the Sanibel Police Department (SPD) with investigations involving stolen vehicles, missing or endangered persons, wanted persons, suspect vehicles, and other legitimate public-safety matters

#### **2. Why does the Sanibel Police Department use ALPR technology?**

Sanibel has used Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology since 2008 as an investigative and traffic-management tool. ALPRs support public safety needs and provide traffic analytics on vehicle volumes and classifications, helping the Sanibel Police Department deploy resources more effectively in an effort to mitigate on-island congestion.

#### **3. How long has Sanibel used ALPR technology, and which ALPR technology company does Sanibel contract with?**

Sanibel has used ALPR technology since 2008. The City initially purchased its ALPR system from NDI. In 2015, the NDI cameras were replaced with Genetec cameras provided by Johnson Controls. In 2022, Sanibel replaced the Genetec cameras with Flock Safety's Falcon ALPR cameras.

**4. What is the difference between the NDI, Genetic and Flock ALPR technology?**

Essentially, the technology is the same. All systems captured images of vehicle license plates. Flock; however, offers improved image resolution and has the ability to capture vehicle identifiers such as vehicle color, make, body type, missing or temporary plates, and vehicle types such as motorcycles, trailers, bicycles, and golf carts. All camera systems used between 2008 and 2026 provided inbound and outbound traffic counts.

**5. How many Falcon ALPR cameras does Sanibel have?**

Sanibel has three Falcon ALPR cameras. Two are located at the Causeway and capture license plate images of vehicles arriving on and departing the island. The third is located on Middle Gulf Drive.

**6. How are camera locations selected?**

Camera placement is based on SPD's operational needs. Because Sanibel is a barrier island with a single point of vehicular access at the Sanibel Causeway, two cameras at this location support public-safety operations and the collection of daily traffic counts. The Middle Gulf Drive location was also selected based on operational needs and to assist with public safety investigations.

**7. Are the cameras used for school-zone speed enforcement at The Sanibel School Flock cameras?**

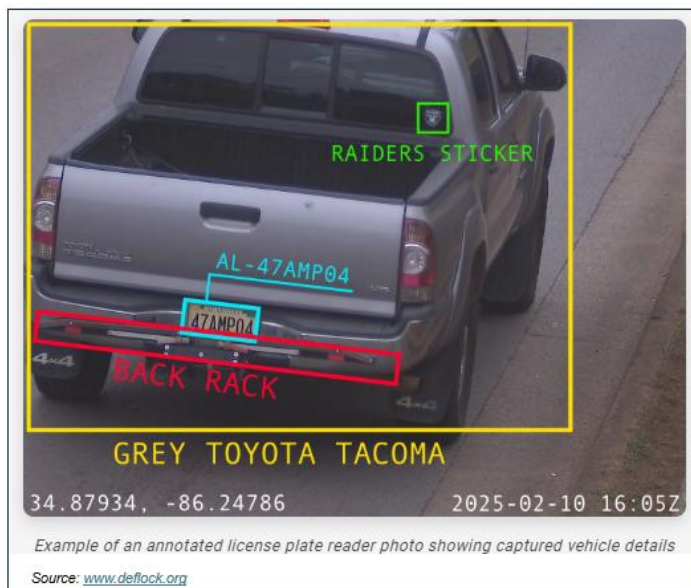
No. The cameras used for speed enforcement in The Sanibel School zone are provided by Altumint and operate only during designated school-zone enforcement periods. They are separate from Sanibel's Flock ALPR system and are not connected to or integrated with the Flock system.

**8. Other than the Falcon ALPR technology, does Sanibel use any other Flock products, cameras, or tools?**

No. Sanibel only uses the technology available through its Falcon ALPR cameras. In addition to capturing a vehicle's license plate number, body type, make/model, color, and traffic counts, the technology can capture or provide:

- Plate state and type, including standard or temporary plates
- Vehicles with missing or no plates
- Visible vehicle identifiers, such as roof racks, window stickers, toolboxes, trailers, bike racks, decals, and other distinguishing features that could be key in a criminal investigation (see image from the deflock.org website below). The system cannot search or track specifically for letters, phrases or any specific characteristics of window stickers or decals.

- Date, time, and camera location associated with a vehicle capture
- Hot-list and real-time alerts
- Camera/network sharing with other jurisdictions



**9. Can you be more specific about what other Flock products Sanibel does not use?**

Yes, Sanibel does not use any of the following Flock products that citizens are concerned with:

- Sanibel has not deployed Raven cameras and does not have audio surveillance capabilities. Sanibel is not interested in obtaining such technology.
- Sanibel has not deployed Condor cameras and does not have people tracking capabilities. Sanibel is not interested in obtaining such technology.
- Sanibel has not deployed the FreeForm tool and does not have people tracking or scene searching capabilities. Sanibel is not interested in obtaining such technology.

**10. Does Sanibel use ALPR technology for general surveillance?**

No. Sanibel does not use ALPR technology for general surveillance. General surveillance refers to the routine or continuous monitoring of persons, vehicles, or lawful activity without a specific public-safety or authorized purpose. Sanibel uses ALPR data for legitimate public-safety matters and traffic analysis, not to continuously monitor individuals or their activities.

**11. Do the Falcon ALPR cameras record audio?**

No. The Falcon ALPR cameras do not record audio. They capture vehicle images and associated information as previously described in this document and collect vehicle-count data.

**12. Do the Falcon ALPR cameras use facial recognition?**

No. The Falcon ALPR cameras do not have facial recognition capabilities. They capture vehicle images and associated information as previously described in this document and collect vehicle-count data.

**13. Can Falcon ALPR cameras capture or retrieve a vehicle's VIN?**

No. Falcon ALPR cameras do not capture, read, or retrieve vehicle identification numbers (VINs).

**14. How long is the ALPR data retained?**

Sanibel contracts with Flock, as it has with previous ALPR vendors, to retain ALPR data for one year. Flock's standard retention period is 30 days; however, Sanibel maintains a longer retention period due to the large number of seasonal residents. For example, a seasonal resident may return to Sanibel and discover that a burglary occurred while they were away. Retaining ALPR data for one year can provide valuable investigative information in these and similar cases.

**15. Who owns and controls Sanibel's ALPR data?**

The City's 2022 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Flock states that Flock owns the data. However, Flock's current standard Terms and Conditions state that all rights, title, and interest in customer data belong to and are retained by the customer. Flock also states that customers control access, sharing, retention, and deletion of their data. The City Attorney and City Manager are reviewing these provisions and have requested an updated MOU from Flock to clarify Sanibel's data ownership and control. The updated MOU will be presented to the City Council for approval.

**16. Can Sanibel's ALPR data be shared with other law enforcement agencies?**

Yes, SPD can control how its ALPR data is shared with other law enforcement agencies. Flock also provides Statewide and National Lookup features that, when enabled, allow authorized participating law enforcement agencies to search ALPR data across participating camera networks for legitimate law-enforcement purposes. Searches require a documented offense type and are maintained in an audit trail. Federal agencies are not permitted to participate in Flock's Statewide or National Lookup networks. Participating in the Statewide and National Lookup allows Sanibel to search data from outside jurisdictions that participate in the Lookup to investigate Sanibel crimes.

**17. Do federal law enforcement agencies have access to Sanibel's ALPR data?**

Federal agencies are excluded from the nationwide and statewide Lookup Network and do not have automatic or "back-door" access to Sanibel's ALPR data. According to Flock, federal access is disabled by default and may occur only through an authorized one-to-one sharing relationship when permitted by the local agency and applicable law, or when disclosure is required through valid legal process.

**18. Does Flock sell or otherwise monetize Sanibel's ALPR data by providing it to law enforcement agencies or other organizations?**

No. Flock is not a data broker and does not sell Sanibel's or any agency's ALPR data.

**19. Is Sanibel's ALPR information a public record?"**

Generally, all public records related to the City's contracts and employment of ALPR's are exempt from public records requests, pursuant to the security and surveillance techniques exemption detailed in Section 119.071(2)(d), Florida Statutes. Additionally, Florida law protects certain ALPR images and data from public disclosure when they contain or provide personal identifying information. The law does allow limited disclosure in specific circumstances, such as for legitimate criminal justice purposes or, in some cases, to the individual associated with a registered license plate.

Despite public records exemptions existing to protect much of the information from disclosure, in response to concerns and questions raised by Sanibel residents regarding SPD's use of Flock ALPR technology, the City has developed this FAQ to provide clear and accurate information about the technology and how it is used in Sanibel.

**20. Who within the City of Sanibel has access to Sanibel's ALPR data?**

Access to Sanibel's ALPR system is limited to sworn Sanibel Police officers, Dispatchers and authorized City IT staff all of whom have completed recurring required Florida Department of Law Enforcement training and passed certification testing. Access is provided only as necessary for official duties through individual user accounts. Authorized users receive training on lawful use, privacy, system operation.

**21. What safeguards do SPD have in place to help prevent misuse of the ALPR system?**

SPD limits ALPR access to authorized sworn officers, dispatchers and qualified City IT personnel who have completed required training and certification. Users have individual accounts, and system activity and searches are logged. Access and activity records are audited weekly and monthly by IT personnel, with any irregularities elevated to the SPD command staff (internal) and the IT Director (external) for review.

The system may only be used for authorized official purposes, and misuse may result in loss of access and disciplinary action. Florida's confidentiality requirements for ALPR information provide an additional legal safeguard.

**22. How is Sanibel's Falcon ALPR program funded and how much has been spent?**

The ALPR system expenses are funded in the IT Department budget. The FY26 expense to date related to the Flock ALPR system is \$3,900. From FY23, the expense was \$2,850. In FY24, the expense was \$3,561. In FY25, the expense was \$3,900.

**23. Has Flock recently strengthened its privacy and misuse safeguards?**

Yes. In August 2026, Flock announced additional safeguards intended to strengthen privacy, security, accountability, and local control of ALPR systems. These include reducing its recommended/default data-retention period from 30 days to seven days, requiring automated auditing for potential misuse, implementing account lockouts for abnormal activity, requiring case codes for searches, providing agencies greater control over permissible search purposes, and strengthening account security. Sanibel will evaluate these changes as they become available to determine how they complement the safeguards already used by SPD.

**24. Who can I contact with additional questions?**

Chief William Dalton, Sanibel Police Department, 800 Dunlop Road, Sanibel, Florida 33957. Non-emergency police services: 239-472-3111. General Police Department email: [police@mysanibel.com](mailto:police@mysanibel.com). Emergencies: 911.

City Manager Dana A. Souza, 800 Dunlop Road, Sanibel, Florida 33957, 239-472-3700.

## APPENDIX QUESTIONS

### **25. What information, other than the vehicle image itself, is available through Sanibel's Falcon ALPR system?**

The Falcon ALPR cameras capture images of the rear of a vehicle only.

Searches within the Flock system may use criteria such as vehicle color, missing plates, and common vehicle body types, including bicycles, trailers, motorcycles, and golf carts. This search capability is a function of Flock's AI-based processing systems, not of the camera itself. The presence of visible identifiers, such as bumper stickers, toolboxes, luggage racks, and window stickers, may also be used as search criteria. For example, if authorized personnel searched "Vehicles with bumper stickers", the system would generate a list of vehicles with bumper stickers.

However, an important distinction is that neither the camera nor SPD's access provides any capability to search for the specific characteristics, letters, or phrases of window or bumper stickers. For example, if authorized personnel searched vehicles with a "Sanibel bumper sticker", the system would be unable to generate a list of vehicles based on the word Sanibel (or any other word or character).

### **26. Does Flock's ALPR system generate information about a vehicle that could not otherwise be identified by a person carefully reviewing a similar image or video from a non-ALPR camera?**

No. The system does not detect or infer anything about a vehicle that is not visible in the image itself. The system does not identify the driver, occupants, or registered owner from the image, and it does not derive any attribute of the vehicle that is not observable to the human eye.

### **27. Does it primarily automate the identification and organization of that information?**

Yes, Flock automates the identification and organization of observable vehicle information from the still images captured by its Falcon cameras, allowing investigators to search large amounts of data much more quickly and identify potentially relevant investigative leads. In cases involving an immediate threat or an urgent need to locate a person or vehicle, those time savings can be critical to public safety.

### **28. What does Flock consider a "search" for purposes of its new case-code requirement? Does the requirement apply only when searching shared**

**Statewide or National Lookup data, or does it also apply when SPD searches data captured by Sanibel's own Falcon cameras?**

A license plate search within the Flock system currently requires the user to select an Offense Type from a standardized drop-down menu. This requirement applies whether SPD searches data from Sanibel's own cameras or uses Statewide or National Lookup.

Two additional fields are currently available but are not required by Flock:

- Case Number – identifies the associated case when one exists. In some circumstances, a case number may not yet have been assigned when an ALPR search is necessary.
- Reason – allows the user to provide additional information explaining the purpose of the search.

Sanibel can configure either or both of these fields to be mandatory.

On August 13, 2026, Flock announced an additional safeguard that will require a case code for all law-enforcement searches by the end of 2026. Flock has stated that an emergency exception will be available when necessary, but use of that exception will be flagged for administrator review.

Importantly, a Falcon camera capturing a vehicle image is not itself a user-initiated search. The search requirements apply when an authorized user queries ALPR data within the Flock system. Flock records each query with the user and timestamp for subsequent review and auditing

**29. Is it correct that the data associated with a Falcon ALPR capture is limited to the date, time and location of the capture, license plate information, and observable vehicle characteristics??**

That is partially correct. The Falcon camera captures a still image of the vehicle along with the date, time, and location of the capture. Flock's processing systems then analyze the image to identify and convert the license plate information and observable vehicle characteristics into searchable data. A search of that data must be initiated by an authorized user; the system does not independently initiate investigative searches.

**30. What vehicle information does the Falcon ALPR system generate from a captured image?**



When performing a search in the Flock software, the information output includes the plate state, tag number, a photo of the vehicle rear, the location of the camera, and a details button.

Selecting the details button provides additional information from Flock's system, such as vehicle body type (truck, SUV, etc.), make, color, and identifiers (roof rack, etc.), as well as the number of times the plate has been identified within the search range. This screen also includes an option to expand the search area, such as statewide or nationwide.

**31. What is the step that converts the license plate characters into an owner's name and address? Is this a search? What is the source of data used for this information?**

The step that converts license plate characters into owner information is a separate, external search performed by an authorized officer, dispatcher, or IT staff member using state law enforcement data systems. These searches are logged, audited, and reviewed by both City and state personnel.

**32. What are the general types of situations in which SPD uses or searches the Flock ALPR system?**

The following are typical law-enforcement situations in which Flock is used:

- **Missing and Endangered Persons:** Assisting with investigations involving Silver Alerts, AMBER Alerts, juvenile runaways, suicidal individuals, and other missing or endangered persons.
- **Stolen Vehicles:** Locating stolen vehicles entering Sanibel and identifying vehicles stolen on the island and subsequently driven off island.
- **Reckless Driving and Road-Rage Incidents:** Investigating reported reckless driving, road rage, and other dangerous driving behavior.
- **Stalking and Protective-Order Violations:** Assisting investigators in developing information related to reported stalking and violations of protective orders.
- **Thefts and Burglaries:** Identifying potential suspect vehicles and developing investigative leads in crimes involving residences, construction sites, beach parking lots, vehicles, and other locations. Because many suspects may travel to and from Sanibel, ALPR information can be particularly useful in these investigations.
- **Wanted Persons and Arrest Warrants:** Assisting with locating wanted persons and individuals with outstanding arrest warrants.
- **Fraud and Scam Investigations:** Developing investigative leads in fraud and scam cases affecting Sanibel residents.

- **Officer Safety:** Alerting officers to vehicles associated with wanted, dangerous, or potentially armed individuals and providing relevant information before officers make contact.
- **Traffic-Related Crimes:** Assisting with investigations involving hit-and-run crashes, impaired driving, stolen license plates, and other traffic-related offenses.

**33. Can currently available or emerging AI technology allow a civilian to identify license plates and vehicle characteristics from standard video in a manner similar to Flock's technology?**

Yes. The ability to use software to identify license plate information from video captured by standard, non-ALPR cameras has existed for many years and has become increasingly accessible. This capability does not necessarily require modern artificial intelligence; traditional computer-vision and optical character recognition technologies can identify plate characters when the license plate is sufficiently clear and legible in the video.

**34. What information is logged when an SPD user performs a search in the Flock system?**

For each SPD search, the Flock system logs the user, date and time of the search, scope of the search (Sanibel cameras, Statewide Lookup, or National Lookup), license plate or other search criteria, required offense type, case number (when available), vehicle filters (such as type or color), time period searched, and type of search performed.

These search logs provide an audit trail that allows Sanibel to review who conducted a search, when it was conducted, and the purpose and scope of the search.