



Additional candidate question: Onslow County ALPR cameras

1 message

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My answer regarding the cameras.

No. I do not support Onslow County's continued use, renewal, or expansion of PlateRanger or similar automated license-plate reader systems.

These cameras raise multiple concerns. To start with, they are a form of mass surveillance. They collect information about the movements of ordinary people, people who are not suspected of a crime, simply because they happen to drive on public roads. I do not believe the county government, or any government, should build or maintain a system that routinely tracks residents without individualized suspicion.

Then there is the access to the data. These systems rely entirely on people using that access responsibly. But we have already seen misuse by law enforcement, including in North Carolina.

We also have to consider the danger of overreliance on automated technology. A database can be outdated. A camera can misread a plate. A plate can be stolen, duplicated, or associated with the wrong vehicle. There have been reports across the country of people being stopped, detained, and even held at gunpoint after an automated license plate reader system produced incorrect or incomplete information. The consequences of getting it wrong can be terrifying, and potentially deadly, for an innocent person. A camera alert is not proof, and it should never be treated as proof.

Another important concern is the lack of meaningful public input. Communities across North Carolina have brought these programs into the open. Residents have been able to speak at meetings, question their elected officials, and influence whether their local government installs, renews, removes, or rejects these systems. Onslow County residents were not given that same opportunity before this system was put in place. A program that affects the privacy of every person who drives through our community should never be treated as a routine purchase made quietly in the background.

The unresolved financial questions surrounding the PlateRanger purchase make that lack of transparency concerning. Residents deserve a complete accounting of the funding source, approvals, contracts, payments, and renewal costs. But even if every financial record were produced, I would still oppose this program because I do not support mass surveillance as a routine function of government.

Public safety matters, but so do privacy, constitutional rights, and public trust. Law enforcement should have the resources to investigate specific crimes based on evidence and lawful investigative standards. That does not justify collecting location data on everyone who travels through our county. Onslow County should not renew, expand, or spend additional taxpayer funds on PlateRanger.

Thank you,
Rebecca

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