

No action taken at bridge camera meeting

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - No action was taken at a meeting regarding the controversial proposal to outfit the Clark Bridge with license-plate-reading (LPR) cameras.

The meeting took place in Alton Wednesday morning and was not open to the public. Officers from the Alton Police Department joined with the Madison County Sheriff's Office, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the mayors of both Alton and Godfrey. Its purpose was to look at the feasibility of installing the cameras.

Godfrey Mayor Mike McCormick said he was hoping to see the possible costs of such a project, but that was not possible at this time. He said another contractor for such a camera system was there to present a proposal, which he said could prove to be cheaper for everyone.

"I was hoping we would have some information to be able to divide up the costs of the project, but really nothing happened," McCormick said. "Another camera company came to give us a presentation, which may save us some money, so that was pretty good."

Alton Police Chief Jason Simmons said the feasibility of such cameras was in question. He said IDOT would have to do additional calculations regarding camera positioning, adding possible wind gusts and other weather conditions would be a factor in the final decisions.

McCormick added camera placement on the bridge could also be challenging, because many of the positions proposed are already weighted to their absolute maximums.

While this meeting was not open to the public, Simmons assured public meetings would occur prior to any such camera installations due to the controversial nature of LPR cameras and privacy concerns.

The idea for placing the cameras on the Clark Bridge was considered by the Alton Police Department several years ago, but the financial impact would have been too much. However, with recent crimes in Godfrey perpetrated by Missouri residents, the Village of Godfrey has agreed to work with Alton to fund the cameras.

Simmons said he believes the cameras would make crime coming from Missouri decrease. The cameras would alert his department if vehicles crossing the bridge were reported stolen or owned by someone with a warrant.

If installed, the cameras would read and scan the license plates of all vehicles crossing the Clark Bridge.