

IDOT Allocates \$12.5 Million To Assist ISP Investigations Of Expressway Shootings

February 11 2021 11:33 AM



SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced today it will provide \$12.5 million to the Illinois State Police (ISP) for the purchase and installation of automated license plate readers (ALPR) and software to aid in the investigation of Cook County expressway shootings. ALPR installations at 47 locations will include specialized cameras to read the license plate numbers of vehicles moving in traffic. The installations will also include a communication system to backhaul the video

images to a central location where additional software is used to query and match license plates to existing license plate and vehicle databases. This will help agents investigating expressway shootings.

“No one should feel afraid for their life or safety on Illinois expressways, and I’ve directed my administration to work collaboratively and creatively to ensure we have assets in place to protect the public,” Governor JB Pritzker said. “Tamara Clayton’s tragic death must not be forgotten, and we must do everything we can to prevent more expressway shootings.”

“The ISP welcomes this important step toward expanding force-multiplying technology we have long needed to protect the public,” said Illinois State Police Director Brendan F. Kelly. “With funding secured, the next step is to execute the plan, and start collecting the evidence we need to detect and deter crime on our interstates.”

“Making sure Illinois highways are as safe as possible always is our No. 1 priority at IDOT,” said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “This agreement, made possible through the efforts of the General Assembly and Gov. Pritzker, is another step in that direction. We look forward to continuing our partnership with ISP and law enforcement throughout the state in finding new ways to protect the public.”

The \$12.5 million grant from IDOT will cover the costs of engineering, permitting, and labor associated with the purchase and installation of readers, controllers, servers /software, electrical power, and communications equipment required to install ALPR systems. The maintenance of the ALPR systems for up to two years is also included in this agreement.

The Tamara Clayton Expressway Camera Act (Expressway Camera Act) was signed into law on July 12, 2019 and became effective on Jan. 1, 2020. On Feb. 4, 2019, Ms. Clayton was on her way to work when she was tragically shot and killed while driving on Interstate 57 near Cicero Avenue. ISP investigators responded and the investigation into her death remains open and ongoing. The Expressway Camera Act requires the ISP, IDOT, and Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA) to conduct a program to increase the number of cameras along expressways in Cook County. The images from these cameras will not be used for petty offenses, such as speeding.

“Today is a victory for Tamara Clayton and her family,” said Rep. Thaddeus Jones, who sponsored the bill. “By implementing this camera technology, we are not going to stop the number of shootings on the expressways; however, this technology will be used as a tool to catch those people who are using our expressways as their own personal shooting range. We have had enough these senseless shootings,” he concluded.

"I am gratified today to see that the Illinois State Police and Illinois Department of Transportation have taken another step to enact the Tamara Clayton Expressway Camera Act," said Sen. Jacqueline Y. Collins, the bill's sponsor. "It is our duty as a state to protect people who travel our roads. It's my hope that the addition of these cameras will deter further crime. Tamara was an honest, hardworking person who was just trying to get to work. We must do everything in our power to prevent such senseless loss."

"I am pleased that law enforcement and transportation agencies are partnering to end the violence on our expressways," said State Senator Ram Villivalam, who chairs the Senate's Transportation Committee. "We need to protect our commuters by ensuring those who commit violent crimes on the road will be held accountable."

"This is the first step in using available technologies to make the Chicagoland expressways safer for everyone," said Rep. John. D'Amico, who chairs the House Transportation Committee. "Motorists in our state should rest assured that violence on our expressways will not be tolerated."

As of Feb. 10, 2021, a total of 27 expressway shootings on the Cook County area expressway systems has been reported; 11 shootings resulted in injuries, 3 shootings with fatalities, and a total of 14 gunshot victims. In 2020, there were a total of 128 reported expressway shootings. This unprecedented number included 49 shootings with injuries, 7 shootings with fatalities and a total of 72 gunshot victims. In 2019, the total number of reported expressway shootings was 52; 21 shootings with injuries, 3 shootings with fatalities and a total of 35 gunshot victims.

One shooting is too many and ISP is committed to working with the administration, stakeholders, and relevant state agencies, such as IDOT to make our roadways safer for drivers. The increased installation of cameras along Cook County expressways will be a valuable tool for investigating expressway shooting offenses.