

More Than Half Of 2023 East St. Louis Homicide Cases Cleared

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EAST ST. LOUIS – The Illinois State Police (ISP) is adding another tool in its toolbox to help reduce and solve violent crime in the Metro East. Earlier this year, ISP began coordinating the installation of automated license plate readers (ALPRs) in the Metro East. Already, 45 ALPRs have been installed and are operational along Interstate 55, Interstate 70, and Interstate 64 in the Metro East. ISP will continue to work with Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to install more than 30 additional ALPRs along highways throughout the Metro East area before the end of the year.

“This force-multiplying technology is a game changer in deterring and solving crime,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “We have seen the impact license plate readers have made in Chicago through the reduction of expressway shootings and we anticipate seeing similar crime reduction in the Metro East.”

ALPRs are specialized cameras that take still photographs of license plates to identify vehicles that may have been used in the commission of a crime. ISP uses images from the ALPRs to track the path of a suspect vehicle, which can lead to the apprehension and arrest of suspects.

ISP began installing ALPRs on Chicagoland expressways following the enactment of the [Tamara Clayton Expressway Camera Act](#) on January 1, 2020. Clayton was on her way to work in February 2019 when she was tragically shot and killed while driving on Interstate 57 near Cicero Avenue in Chicago. The cameras have been critical in reducing crime on the expressways. The total number of Chicago area expressway shootings dropped 47% in 2022 compared to 2021. The number of non-fatal injury expressway shootings in the Chicago area was cut in half and the number of expressway homicides decreased by 88%.

The effectiveness of the ALPRs is already being seen in the Metro East. On July 5, 2023, the East St. Louis Police Department and the ISP Public Safety Enforcement Group (PSEG) responded to reports of a shooting. A male victim struck by gunfire died as a result of his injuries. ALPRs were instrumental in identifying the suspect vehicle, which led to the identification of the suspect who has since been charged with First Degree Murder.

In another instance, ISP received an ALPR alert on a vehicle for which the owner was wanted on an active warrant. An ISP Trooper matched the physical description of the driver with the wanted subject and initiated a stop for a traffic violation. The driver was arrested on two active warrants out of Missouri for Resisting Arrest and First Degree Assault. Troopers also seized four guns during the course of the stop.

The ALPRs are another tool helping ISP solve crime and close cases. Already in 2023, PSEG has a homicide clearance of 69%. Homicide investigations often can take months and even years to solve.

Originally, ISP received \$12.5 million from the IDOT Road Fund Grant to purchase specialized cameras, as well as cover the costs of engineering, permitting, and labor associated with installation, controllers, servers/software, electrical power, and communications equipment required to install ALPR systems. Due to the program's success in the Chicago area, on June 6, 2022, Governor J.B. Pritzker signed an extension of the Tamara Clayton Act, allowing cameras to be installed in 21 more counties in

Illinois, including in the Metro East. An additional \$20 million has been appropriated to implement this expansion, called Tamara Clayton 2.0.

“Automatic License Plate Readers are a crucial investment to bolster public safety efforts and protect our citizens,” said State Senator Christopher Belt (D-Swansea). “By funding ALPRs, we can better enable our law enforcement agencies to detect stolen vehicles, wanted suspects, and other criminal activity. This is big for the Metro East and will further aid law enforcement in responding to emergencies effectively while protecting our community.”

“I think that these ALPRs will definitely benefit our community,” said East St. Louis Police Department Chief Kendall Perry. “With the increase of stolen vehicles and the rise in crime on our highways and streets, these cameras will be a great asset in, not only solving crimes, but deterring a lot of criminal activity.”

The images captured by the ALPR cameras will not be used for petty offenses, such as speeding. The license plate numbers captured in the images are compared against law enforcement databases such as the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), the Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS), and the Department of Homeland Security. An ALPR “alert” occurs when a license plate number has been positively matched with vehicles listed in the law enforcement databases above.

Installing cameras along Metro East interstates in strategic locations based on high violent crime areas (crimes such as shootings, aggravated vehicular hijackings, firearm trafficking), will aid criminal investigations and prosecution of felonious crimes involving vehicles. ALPRs deter and help solve crime, making communities safer.