Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy and Acting Attorney General Platkin Announce $10 Million Investment in License Plate Recognition Technology to Combat Rise in Auto Thefts Fueling Violent Crime in New Jersey

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*Funding Responsive to Spike in Vehicle Thefts in Suburban and Urban Areas Statewide*

**MARLBORO** – Governor Phil Murphy and Acting Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin today announced a $10 million investment in automated license plate recognition (ALPR) technology to reduce violent crime and motor vehicle theft in New Jersey through the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

The funds will be used to purchase and expand existing high-speed, automated camera systems to capture and store computer-readable images of license plates in a centralized database accessible to law enforcement. The technology will be installed at both fixed locations throughout New Jersey and mounted on mobile units. This equipment provides law enforcement agencies additional tools to address the increase in motor vehicle thefts and a corresponding rise in violent crime seen in both suburban and urban areas of New Jersey.

"The alarming uptick we are seeing in vehicle theft is unacceptable, and our administration is making investments to combat these occurrences statewide," **said Governor Murphy.** "To aid law enforcement in this endeavor, an investment in ALPR technology will provide them with the tools they need to reduce these incidents and make our communities safer."

"Thanks to Governor Murphy, we are investing significant resources to give law enforcement officers the tools they need to combat the rise in auto thefts across the state," **said Acting Attorney General Platkin.** "Because stolen vehicles are increasingly used in the commission of violent shootings, deploying these automated license plate readers will save lives."

Through the Murphy Administration's $10 million ALPR program, a portion of the funding will be allocated to the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) to deploy cameras along major roadways that run throughout the state. Intelligence gathered will be shared by NJSP in real-time through the Regional Operations Intelligence Center and Real Time Crime Centers operated by the NJSP with relevant law enforcement partners as appropriate for investigative and operational need.

The remaining funding will be made available to county and local law enforcement agencies, through a competitive process, for the purchase, installation, and expansion of additional units and systems, in strategic locations throughout the communities they serve. All entities receiving funding under the program must abide by ARP rules and agree to share captured license plate information with the NJSP.

The investment into ALPR technology advances ongoing efforts by OAG to combat the rise in auto thefts, including public service campaigns to raise awareness of the risks associated with leaving cars unlocked with the key or key fob inside. In March, OAG expanded the NJSP Auto Theft Task Force by adding detectives and prosecutors, as well as bringing on additional police departments from around the state. Additionally, $125,000 in federal Justice Assistance Grant funds is being made available to maximize the Task Force's capabilities.

"The allocation of these financial resources to increase the use of automated license plate reader technology is, quite simply, a game changing moment in terms of our investigative capabilities," **said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police**. "This investment will undoubtedly help combat the growing number of motor vehicle thefts and the associated rise in violent crime. I commend Governor Murphy and Acting Attorney General Platkin for their staunch efforts in supporting law enforcement's mission to target auto theft and make our communities safer."

"Marlboro police officers do a great job for our community and I support their efforts 100% but they need to have the tools to do their job effectively," **said Marlboro Mayor Jonathan Hornik.** "I reached out to Governor Murphy to share my concerns and thank him for his meaningful acknowledgement of the unique needs and concerns of New Jersey's many suburban communities."

"Today's visit to Marlboro Township highlights Governor Murphy's commitment to work hand in hand with local law enforcement agencies as we strive to continually improve our service to the communities we have sworn to protect," **said Marlboro Chief Peter Pezzullo.** "I am sure that I speak for other law enforcement leaders throughout the state when I say that Governor Murphy's investment in these technologies will help provide much needed data that can be utilized to detect possible criminal actors in a wide variety of investigations."

The State has seen a serious spike in motor vehicle theft since the pandemic's onset, an all-time high of 14,320 vehicles in 2021 in comparison to the previous five years. The first quarter of 2022 is on track to have a 53% increase in motor vehicle thefts from 2020. Increases in motor vehicle theft have occurred across the state, in both suburban and urban areas. Stolen cars are frequently associated with other violent crimes, particularly shootings. A significant percentage of individuals who commit auto theft offenses have also been involved in shootings.

"Communities throughout New Jersey have witnessed an increasing number of stolen motor vehicles and this funding will help upgrade technology available to law enforcement and provide additional tools to help bolster our ability to investigate these serious crimes," **said NJSPBA Executive Vice-President Marc Kovar.** "We appreciate Governor Murphy's initiative in working to secure this critical funding and would also like to remind everyone of the importance of locking your car doors and taking your key fob along with you as you exit your vehicle."

"We need to do many things to stop the rise in car thefts in our shore communities and this announcement today is one of the many pieces which will help combat it. This allocation will help make our communities safer, our roadways less likely to be used for criminal enterprise, such as human trafficking or gun-running, and will enable

officers to stem the rising tide of motor vehicle thefts across the state," **said Senator Vin Gopal.** "I commend Governor Murphy and Acting Attorney General Platkin for seeing this urgent need, and responding to help suburban law enforcement enhance their capabilities, increase efficiency and better protect the neighborhoods they patrol by implementing the very latest in anti-crime technologies."

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## Key Initiatives

Economy & Jobs (/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

Education (/governor/initiatives/#Education)

Environment (/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

Health (/governor/initiatives/#Health)

Law & Justice (/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

Transportation (/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

## News & Events

Press Releases (/governor/news/news/562020/approved/news_archive.shtml)

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Public Addresses (/governor/news/addresses)

Executive Orders (/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

Administrative Orders (/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

Direct Appointments (/governor/news/appointments)

Advice and Consent Appointments (/governor/news/acappointments)

Statements on Legislation (/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

Administration Reports (/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

Transition Reports (/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

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