



OFFICE OF SHERIFF JAMES L. BERRONG

The Honorable Board of Commissioners
Blount County Commission
359 Court Street
Maryville, Tennessee 37804

July 21, 2026

Dear Commissioners:

I write on behalf of Sheriff James L. Berrong and the men and women of the Blount County Sheriff's Office to address, directly and factually, the comments offered by several concerned citizens at the July commission meeting regarding our Office's use of Flock Safety's Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology. We welcome this conversation. Public trust is earned through transparency, and I want to ensure the Commission and the community it serves have accurate information rather than the misinformation now circulating nationally.

First, our use of this technology is lawful, ethical, and consistent with the highest professional standards. It is governed by our published General Order § 2.17.10 and Tennessee Law (Tenn. Code Ann. § 55-10-302), and our CALEA-accredited agency meets or exceeds the national standard governing ALPR use (CALEA Standard 41.3.9). These cameras read license plates and basic vehicle characteristics only. They do not use facial recognition, and they do not identify any person by face, gender, or race.

I want to be firm and unmistakably clear on one point in particular: we do not use Flock to track individuals, and we do not perform any form of artificial-intelligence analysis on the public at large. This is an investigative tool—one instrument in our proverbial investigative toolbox— and is primarily used to generate leads after a crime and to alert deputies to vehicles already flagged in national databases such as stolen vehicles, wanted persons, missing persons, AMBER/Silver/Blue Alerts, and registered sex offenders. Every search of historical data requires a documented reason and a case number; every alert requires independent human verification before any law enforcement action, and every action in the software is logged and audited.

Our privacy safeguards exceed what the law requires. Tennessee law permits ALPR data retention for up to 90 days absent an evidentiary need; our agreement with Flock restricts our access to just 30 days, after which the data is destroyed and becomes wholly inaccessible to us. Failure to destroy the data, or use of the data without our consent, violates our agreement with Flock Safety and likely violates several laws. We do not sell data to any private party, ever. Likewise, BCSO has not approved Flock Safety to use any data owned by BCSO for any purpose, including sales to third parties.

The benefits of ALPR technology in Blount County are real and significant. This technology has helped us locate missing and endangered persons, recover citizens' stolen vehicles and property, monitor sex offenders near our schools, disrupt drug trafficking, and apprehend violent offenders with active arrest warrants.

I'd also like to briefly address a novel topic in law enforcement across the nation: Drones as a First Responder, or DFR for short. Both our Office and the Blount Real-Time Operations Center (ROC) have explored DFR with Flock Safety in addition to several other vendors. DFR Technology is a good concept and may have a future role within our community.

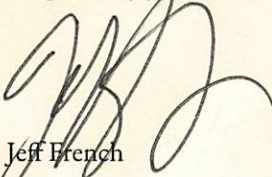
However, at this point, I've determined that the DFR landscape isn't ripe for investment by BCSO. After evaluating several aspects of our community and existing DFR technology, and on the advice of the ROC, our community is best served by the existing investment in several investigative technologies, as we await DFR technology to decrease in price and increase in capability. We've maintained an open line of communication with these vendors to stay on top of the latest technology, including DFR. We will approach the commission when the benefits and capabilities of DFR match the taxpayer investment involved.

Similarly, our approach to deploying a DFR program, and any new investigative technology, will follow the same developmental approach as our existing investigative technology, embracing transparency and ensuring the moral, ethical, and legal use that benefits our community to the greatest extent possible. BCSO is proud to embrace the opportunities afforded to us through the Commission's funding, and we intend to continue innovating to the greatest extent while ensuring that we are following the best practices and legal guardrails established at the time.

I invite you to check out the public transparency portal we have published at **BCSO.info/alprportal**. There, in real time, the public can review our full general order, our current search totals and camera counts, our data-retention period, and the hotlist sources our system draws upon. I hope that, by sharing the most accurate and up-to-date information, we can clarify the operational capacity and procedures of our investigative technology straight from the source.

Should you or any constituent have questions or concerns, I invite you to contact me directly. On behalf of Sheriff Berrong, thank you for your service to Blount County and for your continued support of this office and the deputies who protect our community every day.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff French', written over a horizontal line.

Jeff French
Chief Deputy