

Fountain Valley, Calif., Adds to License Plate Scanner Lineup

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(TNS) — Police in Fountain Valley, Calif., are getting a mounted automated license plate reader to help find vehicles that are stolen or involved in other crimes.

The reader, which resembles a red-light camera and uses infrared technology to scan plates in the immediate vicinity, will be mounted on a streetlight on the northeast corner of Brookhurst Street and La Hacienda Avenue, just south of Mile Square Regional Park. Brookhurst is one of the city's main roads.

The reader comes to Fountain Valley through the federally funded Urban Area Security Initiative grant program by way of the Anaheim Police Department, which will install and maintain the device. Fountain Valley already has two similar units inside patrol cars.

Five Orange County cities, including Huntington Beach and Laguna Beach, have fixed plate readers, Fountain Valley police Capt. Rob Sweaza told the City Council on Tuesday before council members unanimously agreed to the acquisition.

Once a license plate is scanned, it is compared with stolen vehicles or those used in a crime. "Hits" are sent in real time to police dispatchers, who broadcast the information to officers.

Sweaza said the readers scan mostly for stolen cars or plates, though they can turn up more complex cases.

In 2017, he said, one of Fountain Valley's mobile readers returned a match on a stolen car. Police tracked down the vehicle and arrested the three occupants after finding a cache of ammunition inside, just stolen during a burglary, he said.

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