



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Police

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: October 17, 2022

Re: FUSUS System Follow-Up Report

Executive Summary

This report is a follow-up to the questions and concerns generated from the October 3, 2022 pre-Council presentation by FUSUS representatives. Questions were raised about a public process to hear concerns, provide education and training about the product, and describe how FUSUS would be used by the Columbia Police Department (CPD). Reference materials attached to this report include questions/answers provided before the FUSUS presentation, email responses from other agencies currently using the product, a DRAFT policy, and an email from FUSUS briefly outlining resources they will provide to continue educational and operational outreach.

Discussion

FUSUS is a platform that allows citizens to decide and control if and how they choose to participate. There is no attempt by the City to add cameras for the purpose of general surveillance. All video storage and placement are the property and discretion of the owner. FUSUS, as it relates to surveillance, is simply a more efficient and timely mechanism to view and recover video and images that are currently available without FUSUS.

Cameras and camera systems that are privately owned are a great benefit to the community. Police often obtain video for reported crimes by going place-to-place and conducting canvasses. These canvasses are personnel-intensive. There are most often delays and sometimes inability to obtain copies of videos for days, and sometimes weeks, because private cameras are of different brands, use different software platforms, and there are few people within businesses that can access them and/or operate the software. Additionally, our citizens post videos on social media, burn DVDs, transfer to thumb drives, and otherwise make footage available. FUSUS allows citizens to share video from diverse platforms in one place.

CPD has looked at different ways to work with citizens to address crime issues. Our mission is to "protect and serve by partnering with the community to solve problems and responsibly enforce the law." Empowering citizens and engaging them in the process of solving crimes that affect quality of life is a benefit of this system. In addition to video and photo sharing and providing a virtual tip-line, the system allows for messaging to the public during critical events by the supervisor managing the scene. All of these mechanisms support the foundational principles of good policing that partner the police with an empowered community to address crime issues.



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The public and the police will have to be educated about the tools available to address crime. This product can be effective, efficient, and utilized in a way that best serves our community. So that the public is well informed about the product and how it will be used, there will be a public process to discuss and edit a draft policy (Policy Meeting). Also, before implementation, there will be a public meeting in the North Precinct and in the South Precinct (Informational Meetings). These meetings will educate the public about the platform, how they can receive information during critical incidents, and how they can participate, if they choose. Although there have been presentations both online and in-person for members of the business and public school community (with some Council member attendance), we believe the additional meetings will help provide information and context to others who have not yet attended a session.

CPD will set dates for Educational Meetings if the product is approved. If approved, these meetings will better inform the public about the product so that the Policy Meetings will be more productive and meaningful.

In addition to CPD outreach and education efforts, FUSUS has agreed to participate in meetings and help educate the public through their outreach plan. FUSUS has a team of individuals specifically assigned to outreach, and they help educate the public during the implementation phase.

In addition to training for the public, our staff will be trained to use the product and trained to follow the policy and procedures. We will provide special sessions of departmental training for those identified who will access the platform and/or supervise the use of the platform. This training curriculum will be dependent on the agreed upon policy and procedures, once they are approved. The concern that this system could lead to bias should be addressed. The FUSUS platform does not identify people based on race. Additionally, it does not use facial recognition. It does search for physical objects. This could include a backpack, a bicycle, vehicle or other items. The use of cameras to capture and quickly disseminate images of the actual people and vehicles involved in criminal activity greatly reduces or eliminates stopping cars or people based on general descriptions in the area of a reported crime. Instead, officers will have the images of the person or the car in cases where an image is available. Additionally, courts and prosecutors have grown to expect the unbiased footage from cameras. We will be more likely to address those involved in the criminal activity with less impact on others who might own a car similar in description or match a general description of someone reported to be involved in activity.

The use of cameras will not change our efforts to reduce the number of people going to the jail. We have significantly reduced the number of “arrested” individuals going to jail, as many are released on summonses and given a court date. That process is not related to the use of cameras.

It is important, as law enforcement officers, that we arrest people who commit crimes (whether or not they require bond is a court policy decision) and that they be given due process and equal protection under the law. Having incriminating and the potential for



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exculpatory video evidence available for both the prosecution and the defense is important and lends to fairness and impartiality.

Our community often asks why there are multiple officers at a scene where the activity does not appear to warrant such a response. Officers are sent based on the reported activity and the description/information provided by a dispatcher who is not on the scene. This technology gives supervisors the tools to observe a scene and, in some instances, to assess the operational need prior to officers arriving.

In places where people gather, we would have the ability to quickly locate and address active assailants. The ability to identify where a person is in a school, a sports field, a mall, or an entertainment district has the potential to save lives. The citizen controls of the system allow for access only during dispatched calls.

We do not have the staff to conduct general surveillance nor would we allow general surveillance. We are simply asking to access information that already exists more quickly and efficiently. We would ask participants not to share video of non-public spaces and would work with them to ensure only publicly viewable spaces were included. Camera placement, access or registry of cameras is completely voluntary. The system has a built-in audit trail function that allows supervisors to review who viewed a camera and when they viewed it.

The use of existing camera systems to aid in the detection and apprehension of violators is empowering for our community members. Community members have asked for timely alerts that give them the ability to take precautions during critical incidents, which is a function of this system.

This system empowers citizens and gives them complete control to assist in creating safer spaces while working with the police as partners. The safeguards built into the system, and those addressed through training and policy, will ensure it is used responsibly while protecting privacy.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A

Long-Term Impact: N/A

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Safe Neighborhoods, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)



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Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
N/A	N/A

Suggested Council Action

This is a report for future consideration of a contract with FUSUS.