August 18, 2011

Chief John Doe

Example Police Department

101 Main Street

Example, MA 02133

Dear Chief Doe,

I’m writing to inquire about your department’s use of a new and rapidly spreading technology, automatic license plate readers (ALPR). I am curious to know if your police department uses these machines, and if not, if you are working towards or interested in procuring any.

Over the past year, various police departments in Massachusetts have received grants from the state to buy ALPRs, or have used town or city funds to buy the cameras. I’m concerned that our town is using this technology absent a public conversation about the potential privacy impact ALPRs cause. While ALPRs can be used legitimately to make parking and traffic enforcement more efficient for law enforcement officers, ALPR becomes yet another tracking technology absent proper data protections governing storage and sharing of collected plate data. I don’t feel comfortable with the technology when it is used to gather intelligence and sweep up all collected plate data, including the personal travel information of ordinary people like me, who are not suspected of any wrongdoing.

If your department is using ALPR, could you please provide me with a copy of your data policy and your privacy policy governing ALPRs? Please also furnish any documents showing how the collected plate data is stored, shared and deleted, as well as any auditing requirements your department has to ensure data privacy, and find and punish abuse of the system.

If you desire, please consider this as a request under MA Public Records Law, G.L. c. 66, §10. If possible, please furnish all responsive documents in electronic form.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Address