

Moreno Valley Citywide Camera System Q & A

The Moreno Valley Police Department has identified a Citywide Camera System as a way to enhance public safety without adding police officers. In other communities, the use of citywide camera systems has led to the identification and arrest of suspects in a multitude of crimes.

In an effort to educate the community, the Moreno Valley Police Department is holding Community Meetings to explain why and how the camera system will be used, and to seek input from Moreno Valley residents.

Below is a series of questions asked and answered at previous Community Meetings about the Citywide Camera System. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact the Moreno Valley Police Department at [\(951\) 486-6700](tel:9514866700) or by email at mvpd@moval.org.

Q: When you showed a map of the cameras at specific locations, some were in areas not encompassed in a shaded area, which denoted being in an area having a certain number of crimes. Why?

A: In addition to the areas of interest, it is important to encompass entry and exit points. By putting a camera at a location which allows either an entry or exit into the city, it allows us a better opportunity to identify someone of interest. Even a small piece of information such as a license plate can give us the information necessary to possibly identify a person.

Q: Community Advisory Meeting: where, what is it, when?

A: That is the meeting we are holding now and will hold in the future. These meetings are informative and designed to accommodate various work times for as many people in the community as possible.

Q: Are these meetings publicized?

A: They are. We are trying to make this program as transparent and well known to the community as possible. Information about this program will be posted on the City website. Feel free to email our Admin Sgt. at mvpd@moval.org with further questions. The Sgt. will respond as soon as reasonably possible.

Q: Are you considering doing these meetings on Saturday or if police are contacted can someone make a presentation at a community group?

A: We are open to having additional meetings as we will try to be flexible; however, we simply have to plan the meetings around our schedules. The more we can reach out and inform the community the better.

Q: Would you constitute a Community Advisory Meeting to meet quarterly to review and analyze the system and budget?

A: As for a quarterly meeting, we are not opposed to it; however, in order to conduct a regularly scheduled meeting requires having staff available to do so. At this

time, we have not looked into having additional meetings, but will look into such meetings at a later date. We know the value of the program and want the community to know it too. We realize the best way to do this is through these types of meetings. Regarding the budget, this is not new money. This is 2011 money which was saved through budgeting. We are not asking for new money. We will be looking at obtaining grants to help fund future camera system needs.

Q: Is there a control room for live video and audio?

A: Yes, there is a control room which will not have audio monitoring. We will be able to view live video. This monitoring room is not open to the general public. We do not want to record people's conversations. There will be one-way speakers in the parks. Other jurisdictions have had great success combating graffiti and vandalism, especially at night.

Q: Will the cameras be able to adapt to new situations and won't the criminals just move to other jurisdictions?

A: The department will try and move portable cameras with the ebb and flow of the current crime trends. We will keep constant assessment of the trends and we will strive to place cameras where they will be needed most. The community gives us an idea on where to find troubled areas. As for criminals moving out of our jurisdiction, we have no control over that. If criminals move out of Moreno Valley, then they are no longer a problem in our area.

Q: Will tax dollars be a constant issue? Will this money be used wisely?

A: This will always be an issue. We could tie into the cameras of private businesses. The business tie in would not cost the taxpayers any money and we are hoping to expand our camera system in the future. A number of businesses have cameras and are very supportive. We will look into the possibility of HOAs, private citizen fundraising, and grants to fund more cameras.

Q: What is the difference between red light and "traffic" cameras?

A: The cameras are not set up to be used for traffic enforcement. The material obtained on the cameras will not be snapped and used for revenue raising or for any traffic court purposes. It is important to have the support of the community. A red light camera captures identifying information on a vehicle as well as the violated vehicle code. Our cameras will capture criminal violators; however, for traffic violations, our cameras will not meet the burden in traffic court to convict on an infraction not witnessed by an officer.

Q: What is "Masking technology?"

A: Can be preset to block out or "mask" an area deemed private to protect a person's privacy. If a camera is turned toward a private window, the video will be blocked out and nothing can be seen from within that area.

Q: Will grants be used in the future?

A: Hopefully in the future. We will be searching for grants to aid in the expansion of our camera system.

Q: Will the cameras be able to be damaged or disabled?

A: The speakers at parks can dissuade people from attempting to vandalize a camera. We will do our best to prevent them from being spray painted or otherwise disabled. Other jurisdictions have had little problems in this area. Nothing is free from vandalism, but we anticipate very little problems with this.

Q: Is this new technology from what is being used in Riverside to prevent vandalism?

A: The cameras will be placed at different heights and they should be able to resist attempting to commit vandalism. All cameras have similar issues.

Q: Are you looking at doing partnerships with banks and/or credit unions?

A: We are willing to adapt to any system available. We would absolutely love to have a partnership with those establishments. One proposal to bidders is to have software to integrate with any system, such as a school, bank, or the mall. A partnership saves money as some of the cost is shared with another entity.

Q: What about using the cameras for identifying hit and run traffic collisions?

A: Yes, type of car, person driving, license plate, are all very important. Real time activity can follow a suspect as they try to flee. In order to do it, however, we need someone to man the monitoring station 24/7. A person in the monitoring station can direct the officers in the field to an observed crime or a possible location of a suspect. In the example mentioned, the cameras could be used to observe the crime, track the direction of travel, or used to identify a suspect.

Q: Does something alert the person in the control room to which monitor to watch when something happens?

A: Yes, notification can go off. We are working on having software which allows the camera system to communicate with the computer system at the dispatch center which in turn notifies the person monitoring the camera system of the alert.

Q: Will any of the cameras have facial recognition?

A: CAL-ID has the capability for facial recognition software. We are looking into having facial recognition cameras at our park cameras. The potential is there to be able to identify a wanted or known felon at our parks. We could create a list of people who are not supposed to be in the area or of those who have warrants. If someone on the list alerts the system, then an officer can be dispatched to the location. The whole purpose of the camera system is to enhance the quality of life to members of the City of Moreno Valley. In order to do this we realize community support is key and integral to its success.

Q: How long is the camera footage kept?

A: That depends on our storage. State law requires any regular police footage needs to be kept for a year. Public areas may be kept for a few weeks to 90 days. This is currently being addressed by the city attorney to make sure all laws are conformed with. All known footage of crimes will be booked into evidence and kept according to rules of evidence. Generally we will be able to download information before it is erased. There are non-criminal uses for the camera system as well. For example, during the holiday seasons, if traffic is observed to be backed up, then an officer could be dispatched to the congestion to do some traffic control.

Q: Is the proposed start up in November 2012?

A: The target date is in November of this year.

Q: How many cameras will there be?

A: This really depends upon what vendor we ultimately select. We must balance cost and quality of the camera system from the vendor to determine the final number of cameras. Each vendor may have a different proposal of a certain number of cameras at each location, thus changing the number of cameras we will have depending of the selected vendor. Also under consideration is the use of high quality cameras which can get details of targets cost more and may reduce the number of cameras purchased. It is too early to predict the number of cameras we will have. The goal for the winning company will be to eventually cover as much area as possible while staying within budget. There is going to be expansion of the camera system at a later date and we desire an initial infrastructure which will support this expansion and save us money in the long run by not having to build an additional infrastructure.

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Q: If dispatch is contacted because of someone is smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol in a park, can a responding officer do anything if the suspect has finished or discarded the illicit items prior to the officer's arrival?

A: While a crime generally has to be committed within an officer's direct presence in order for an arrest, the camera system will still have value in an instance like this. If the suspect, for example, hides the drugs he or she was carrying prior to the officer's arrival, it would allow the officer to know where he or she hid them. If the suspect is sufficiently inebriated when they officer arrives, the suspect may be arrested for public intoxication. However, one of the most important benefits of having the cameras in the parks will be the crime deterrence factor. They will be preventative in nature and dissuade criminals from committing illegal acts in the first place. This will help ensure parks are used for their intended purposes only.

Q: If some of the cameras are monitored by volunteers, are there assurances that these people will be trustworthy enough for such a responsibility?

A: All persons volunteering for such a position will be thoroughly screened and will have to pass a background check. Their fingerprints will be analyzed by the Department of Justice and possibly the Federal Bureau of Investigation for any criminal history. Once they have passed these stringent requirements, they will be subject to strict protocols which will be designed to curtail any abuse of the system. It is important to remember that if the system is abused we will lose it, and this system is too important to the community for that to happen.

Q: Will the cameras rely entirely on the operator moving the camera toward a suspect or incident?

A: Although the operator will be able to do this, the cameras are also automated. For example, an invisible line or "tripwire" can be drawn on the screen of the operating terminal which will automatically activate the camera whenever someone crosses this boundary. Also, the cameras will have the ability to target locations based on the severity of a call for service and will therefore be able to hopefully capture footage of any person or vehicle leaving a specific area.

Q: Will the cameras be aesthetically pleasing? Will they look obtrusive and unattractive?

A: One of our criteria for purchasing will be that the cameras must not look unsightly and not be an eyesore in the community. Most of the cameras will only be about one-foot long. They are significantly smaller than the red light camera systems used in cities such as Riverside. Although they will not be hidden, so as to increase their deterrence value, we are striving to make them non-obtrusive and blend in to a reasonable degree.

Q: Will these cameras be compatible with a Home Owners' Association camera systems?

A: It is possible that they could be. Such a proposition should be discussed with the HOA. We would be happy to speak about this, or just the camera system in general, at an HOA or community meeting.

Q: Regarding the community room where the public may view the camera footage: can anyone just come in and view the feed?

A: Most members of the community will be able to do so, but not everyone. Persons who have active warrants, who are suspects in pending cases, or who are registered sex offenders will be prohibited from using the viewing room. But any average, decent citizen should have no problems in participating in the community room.