Frequently Asked Questions

Permitting for the Installation and Maintenance of Public Safety Sensors

1. **What IS a public safety sensor?**

   A public safety sensor is a device used to collect and provide specific data for law enforcement and public safety purposes, often by transmitting collected data for additional processing. Example applications include license plate recognition (LPR), gunshot detection, public surveillance, and speed detection, although other similar uses are allowed. The use of accommodated sensors and all collected data must be strictly limited to law enforcement or public safety purposes.

2. **What IS NOT a public safety sensor?**

   Cameras, radar detectors, or other similar devices connected to any form of automated active traffic enforcement through the issuing of tickets or civil summons are not considered public safety sensors for the purposes of accommodation on ALDOT right-of-way (ROW). All requests for the accommodation of automated active traffic enforcement on ALDOT ROW must be accompanied by specific legislative authorization for their installation. Additionally, all requests for the accommodation of red-light running camera systems must follow the processes and procedures detailed in the ALDOT Red Light Running Camera Implementation Guide. ALDOT does not currently have a policy for accommodating the other forms of automated active traffic enforcement.

   Traffic monitoring cameras and advanced detection devices for traditional traffic engineering purposes are not considered public safety sensors. Such systems should be accommodated through an updated Agreement for the Installation and/or Operation and/or Maintenance of Traffic Control Signals and/or Roadway Lighting submitted to the local ALDOT Area Traffic Engineer.

3. **Who can apply for a permit to install public safety sensors?**

   ALDOT will only grant permits for public safety sensors to law enforcement agencies, whether connected to city/municipality, county, or State government.

4. **How do I apply to install a public safety sensor on ALDOT right-of-way (ROW)?**

   Applicants should submit a complete package, with Permit Form MB-14 and any required supporting documentation, by email to publicsafetysensors@dot.state.al.us for review and approval. If electronic submission is not an option, mail the package to:

   The Alabama Department of Transportation
   Attn: Maintenance Bureau, Permits & Operations
   1409 Coliseum Blvd.
   Montgomery, AL 36110

   ALDOT can only receive files of up to 25MB in size through email submission. If your files are greater than 25MB, then either split the package into multiple emails or submit the package by mail to the above address.

   Permit Form MB-14 can be downloaded here, found alongside other relevant manuals by going to www.dot.state.al.us and clicking on Business, then Permits and Agreements, and finally Public Safety Sensors. The form should be filled out completely, including both required signatures. Commonly required supporting documentation is listed in Question 17.

5. **How can a public safety sensor be accommodated on ALDOT ROW?**

   Public safety sensors can be installed through approved permit (1) as permanent sensors or (2) as portable sensors mounted on trailers.

   Permanent sensors can be mounted either on newly placed structures or as attachments to existing structures and should be positioned to monitor a specific corridor or intersection or where routes cross jurisdictional boundaries. Portable sensors should be mounted on trailers and placed at a specific location for a short period of time to provide monitoring in connection with an event or a specific investigation. If a portable sensor trailer has remained in a single position for a longer period (e.g., greater than thirty (30) days), that sensor may have become functionally permanent, and ALDOT and the agency should evaluate whether a permanent sensor should be installed near that location, or the trailer simply relocated.

   Sensors should use self-contained power sources, such as a solar panel, and should use wireless data transmission, such as cellular, when practical. Any sensor located within controlled-access ROW (e.g., interstate) must transmit wirelessly and run on self-contained power.

6. **Where can new structures for permanent sensors be installed on ALDOT ROW?**
   The installation of new structures will be restricted to locations approved by ALDOT personnel. Proposed locations should be outside of the established clear zone. Per Federal Highway Administration definition, the "Clear Zone is an unobstructed, traversable roadside area that allows a driver to stop safely, or regain control of a vehicle that has left the roadway. The width of the clear zone should be based on risk (also called exposure). Key factors in assessing risk include traffic volumes, speeds, and slopes. Clear roadsides consider both fixed objects and terrain that may cause vehicles to rollover."

   If ALDOT allows a structure to be located within the clear zone, that sensor must be mounted on a breakaway system from the ALDOT List of Qualified Materials, Sources, and Devices IV-5. Any installed posts must stand no more than 12 feet above ground level. Structures will not be allowed within the median of any divided highway. On controlled-access ROW (e.g., interstate highways, primarily), new structures may be accommodated near the limits of an interchange, preferably within the ramp limits of the interchange. New structures will not be accommodated at Rest Area or Welcome Center facilities.

7. **Where can permanent sensors be attached on ALDOT ROW?**
   Attachment of permanent sensors will be limited to existing utility and luminaire poles. ALDOT may also choose to accommodate attachment on the upright supports of overhead sign structures or on the upright supports of green destination signs.

   Attachment within controlled-access ROW (e.g., interstate) will be limited to the upright supports of overhead sign structures and to the upright supports of green destination and/or blue information signs. Accommodation for attached sensors will not be made on any other type of roadway sign—regulatory, warning, cultural interest, recreational, memorial, etc. Devices proposed for controlled-access routes (e.g., interstates) may be permitted near the limits of an interchange within one (1) mile each direction of the centerline of the crossing route. Attachments will not be accommodated at Rest Area or Welcome Center facilities.

   Attachment will not be allowed within the median of any divided highway or over any travel lanes.

8. Can I attach permanent sensors to traffic signal poles?

Yes, ALDOT will allow attachment to traffic signal poles, or the wooden traffic signal power disconnect poles at signalized intersections, on ALDOT ROW. Applicants must have permission from the pole owner to pursue attachment. The local government must also have an Agreement for the Installation and/or Operation and/or Maintenance of Traffic Control Signals and/or Roadway Lighting for that signal and maintains signal operations. If ALDOT handles signal maintenance through a Special Work Authorization (SWA), the appropriate ALDOT Area Traffic Engineer must approve placement.

9. Are there any special requirements for attaching to traffic signal poles?

All attachments will be limited to the structure of the pole. No attachment will be allowed on any mast arm or strain wire or over any travel lanes. Any attachment should be banded or strapped to the pole. If the chosen LPR system requires a box to house equipment for power and cellular or wireless data transmission near the sensor, accommodation may be made at a minimum height of 10 feet above ground level, and the box may be no larger than 24 in. x 24 in. x 18 in. Solar panel attachments for power may also be made under the same conditions.

The pole cannot be drilled to facilitate attachment or to create additional entry points. Only existing weather heads or other existing entry points may be used to install necessary wiring or fiber. (NOTE: If a pole was drilled to supply power during the installation of any sensors prior to August 1, 2022, the Applicant does not need to make changes to the power supply; however, weather protection— via silicone sealing or similar sealing procedure—must be incorporated into the existing taps.)

If local government forces maintain the signal, existing conduit and traffic signal cabinets may be used, provided the Applicant has received permission from the cabinet owner and appropriate space exists within the cabinet. If no space remains in the cabinet, a separate smaller cabinet to receive hardline fiber, etc. from the existing conduit may be installed nearby but cannot be attached to the traffic signal pole. If the local government uses ALDOT forces for maintenance under an SWA, a separate cabinet and conduit must be used, and ALDOT forces will not be responsible for any vendor equipment.

If any public safety sensor equipment, at any time, interferes with signal operation, all said equipment must be removed.

10. How many permanent sensors can be attached to a new or existing structure?

ALDOT will allow only one device per structure for green destination and blue information sign structures. Applicants will also be limited to one device per structure as a rule for all other circumstances unless (1) the Applicant can demonstrate, using engineering documentation signed and sealed by a professional engineer licensed in the state of Alabama, that a given structure can safely support more than one device and (2) ALDOT allows the placement of more than one sensor on said structure.

11. Where can a portable public safety sensor be temporarily placed on ALDOT ROW?

Portable sensors cannot be placed on controlled-access ROW (e.g., interstates).

Portable sensors may be accommodated within non-controlled-access ROW at ALDOT discretion, provided the Applicant accounts for applicable road safety provisions, including but not limited to appropriate sight distance for visibility, clear zone requirements, and lack of interference with maintenance operations.

In no case will a portable sensor be located immediately adjacent to a traveled way, within the limits of a safety shoulder, or within the median of any divided highway.

All such sensors should remain in a single location for a period no greater than thirty (30) days in duration. The Applicant should notify the local ALDOT District Office when the sensors are first placed on ROW and any time said sensors are relocated.

12. What approvals are required to place my LPR on ALDOT right-of-way (ROW)?

All public safety sensors on ALDOT ROW will require an ALDOT permit. LPRs also require approval from the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) under Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Administrative Code requirements. Approval from both agencies is required for proper accommodation on ALDOT ROW.

13. What if my LPR is not located on ALDOT right-of-way (ROW)?

All LPRs in the state require approval from the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) under Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Administrative Code requirements.

14. Are there any specific requirements for speed detection sensors?

Sensors for speed detection should only provide active readouts of vehicle speed and should not record any speed information in connection with passing vehicles. If the sensor will be mounted to an existing Speed Limit sign, the sensor must conform to the requirements of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), 2009 Edition; specifically, the guidance from Sections 2B.13 and 2L.04.

15. Can more than one public safety sensor location be permitted with a single permit application?

A consolidated "batch" application for the accommodation of multiple sensors may be submitted using a single agreement and package, provided that all sensors are within a single entity's jurisdiction and within the limits of a single ALDOT District.

Proposed sites within a consolidated application will be evaluated individually, and one or more sites may be denied without resulting in the denial of the application entirely. Individual sites may become ineligible in the future without revoking an entire permit.

16. What if I have already installed public safety sensors on ALDOT ROW without a permit?

For any public safety sensors already placed or erected on State ROW, law enforcement agencies have until January 31, 2023, to submit requests to allow those devices to remain. Even installations erected under a prior agreement with ALDOT must be permitted under these new requirements. For areas with multiple existing sensors, each agency can submit a single consolidated application for all devices within their jurisdiction and within the limits of a single ALDOT District.

All existing devices must be brought into compliance with current ALDOT requirements for public safety sensors. If a permit application has not been submitted for a specific device before February 1, 2023, that unpermitted facility will be considered an unlawful encroachment and ALDOT will pursue removal per established encroachment procedures.

17. What needs to be included for my permit submittal to be considered complete?

The following items (see next page) represent the most common requirements from applicants for submittals of this type. Applicants can consult the District Office Permit Coordinator prior to submission to help develop a complete permit application based on the scope of an individual proposal. To find which District personnel to contact, visit the Public Safety Sensors webpage. ALDOT, at Departmental discretion, may require additional information not listed herein to better define project scope or variance to common procedures.

17. (continued)

- A complete MB-14 Permit Form
- Originating Agency Identifier (ORI) for the Applicant
- For each and every LPR Vendor, a CJIS Vendor Verification Permit (LPR) document from ALEA
- North arrow and legend
- Posted Speed Limit
- Scale
- Highway plan view (i.e., overhead/satellite perspective) including:
  - ❖ Interstate or State highway numbers and milepost to the nearest 0.01 mile
  - ❖ Highway width (include median width if multiple lanes)
  - ❖ All travel ways if multiple lane and service roads
  - ❖ Name and direction of nearest town each way
- Distance from edge of traveled way to sensor location
- Lat/Long for each device location
- Indication of device orientation and field of view
- Device specifications (including power source, method of data transmission, and manufacturer details)
- If external fiber or power connection required/allowed:
  - ❖ Depth of Bury along path to connection point (36” minimum beneath the flow line of ditch all ROW, 48” minimum under pavement). Additional depth may be required at Departmental discretion.
  - ❖ Survey of existing utilities and possible conflicts (2’ minimum separation from existing buried utilities)
  - ❖ Compliance with relevant Utility Permitting requirements—found at ALDOT’s website (www.dot.state.al.us) by going through Business > Permits and Agreements > Public Safety Sensors > Permitting Resources > Utilities Manual
- Diagram/image of structure, whether attachment or installation
  - ❖ If new structure for permanent installation, a survey of existing utilities in ground is required.
  - ❖ New structures must be breakaway systems selected from the ALDOT List of Qualified Materials, Sources, and Devices.
  - ❖ Mounting height of sensor should be provided.
- Stopping sight distance profile for portable facilities, when deemed necessary
- Temporary traffic control plans for placement/installation
- Applicable ALDOT standard permitting notes

18. Where can I find information for mileposts on ALDOT ROW?

ALDOT has published an ArcGIS map/feature server for mileposts in Alabama, MileMarker_ALDOT. This feature server can be added to any existing GIS application. Otherwise, measurements can be made from the online version of this map.

19. Do I need a bond to install public safety sensors on ALDOT ROW?

No. Since these devices will only be permittable to law enforcement agencies connected to city/municipality, county, or State government, ALDOT will waive the standard performance bond requirements.

20. How long does it take for ALDOT to review a permit once it has been submitted?

ALDOT has a target review and approval period of 90 days for all permit types.

21. Who at ALDOT must review the submitted permit package for approval?

The permit package will be reviewed by the appropriate ALDOT District office, Area office, and the Central Office. The Central Office has final approving authority.

22. If approved, how long is a public safety sensor valid?

Approved permits will be valid for a contract period of three (3) years. The applying law enforcement agency will be responsible for maintaining internal record of the renewal timeline for any active permit(s) and for seeking reapplication in a timely manner to avoid any lapse in permitted accommodation.

23. What would cause my permit to be denied or revoked, or would delay its processing?

Applicants must provide a verifiable ORI and any relevant CJIS Vendor Verification Permit (LPR) document from ALEA as part of their application. Processing for permit applications without this information/documentation will be **delayed** until this information is provided and verified.

Applications for a public safety sensor at a location that cannot be approved by ALDOT will be **denied**.

Any data collected via public safety sensor cannot be monetized or remonetized post-collection or used for purposes beyond the scope of the agreement(s) approved as part of a permit. Failure to abide by this condition or any of the provisions in Permit Form MB-14 will result in any connected permit agreement being **revoked**.

24. If I have any additional question(s), who do I contact?

Please send your question(s) regarding this permitting process and the accommodation of public safety sensors on ALDOT ROW to publicsafetysensors@dot.state.al.us. Any question(s) regarding the packet required by ALEA for a vendor to seek approved status or regarding ALEA's role in regulating LPRs can be submitted to sbi.investigations@alea.gov.