

FLOCK CAMERAS IN WISCONSIN: A REVIEW FOR WAUSAU

To: City of Wausau — Common Council; Public Health and Safety Committee; Finance Committee

From: Felix Gallo

For the Council's 2027 budget deliberations, November 2026

The ask: end the program through the budget, saving \$100,000 over two years. Leave the \$50,000 Flock Safety line out of the 2027 budget, deliver written notice of termination for non-appropriation under Section 11.16 of the agreement the same day, and adopt an ordinance requiring a public Council vote before any department acquires surveillance technology again.

Bare section cites in this document ("Section 11.16") refer to the Master Services Agreement between the City of Wausau and Flock Group Inc., dated September 16, 2023, as attached to the Common Council's October 24, 2023 agenda packet, pp. 143–171; "the Pilot" refers to the Wausau Pilot & Review. All other sources are cited in the footnotes, in full at first mention and in short form thereafter, and are collected in Appendix C.

THE CASE ON TWO PAGES

1. The contract gives Flock Wausau's data, and the public was told otherwise. Section 4.3 grants Flock a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free license to so-called "anonymized"¹ Wausau data for other products, and Flock sells such data in products like "Traffic Analytics".² Through August 2026 the police department told residents "no data is sold to third parties".³ Upon their finding out that this was not true, Racine County's sheriff tore down his cameras and Sheboygan's chief asked to terminate.⁴

2. The cameras have not been shown to reduce crime, in Wausau or anywhere. Department of Justice-funded randomized studies find more stolen-car recoveries but no effect on other crime or arrests. The National Institute of Justice's CrimeSolutions registry rates plate readers "Ineffective" as a crime deterrent.⁵ Wausau's cameras log about 2.8 million vehicle sightings a year and officers run more than 10,000 searches; the department cites "over 30 cases" closed in three years yet has not attributed an official arrest or conviction count.⁶

3. The safeguards do not hold. Wausau sat on Flock's nationwide network for three years until May 2026, exposing all Wausau citizen data to every agency. A captain can switch it back on. Even today, 205 Wisconsin agencies (and by proxy anyone that can ask them to perform a search) can search the cameras, and the annual audit samples just 10 of 10,000 searches.⁷ Milwaukee's misuse was found by a victim, not an audit, and the detective assigned to investigate it was later charged with the same abusive conduct.⁸ Stevens Point ran stricter settings than Wausau and still suspended

¹ Although license plates may be removed, Flock cameras also record make, model, color, bumper stickers, roof racks, and damage. Most citizens in Wausau are either uniquely identifiable through that set of data or belong to a very small group.

² Shereen Siewert, "Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as Wausau, Marathon County contracts face scrutiny," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 4, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/04/wisconsin-agencies-pull-flock-cameras-as-wausau-marathon-county-contracts-face-scrutiny/>

³ Shereen Siewert, "Flock pullout reaches central Wisconsin as Stevens Point covers its cameras. Wausau and Marathon County still silent," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 7, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/07/flock-pullout-reaches-central-wisconsin-as-stevens-point-covers-its-cameras-wausau-and-marathon-county-still-silent/>

⁴ Shereen Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts say, why Wisconsin agencies are leaving, and where Marathon County and Wausau stand," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 24, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/24/is-flock-selling-your-data-what-the-contracts-say-why-wisconsin-agencies-are-leaving-and-where-marathon-county-and-wausau-stand/>

⁵ CrimeSolutions, National Institute of Justice, "Program Profile: License Plate Recognition Technology (as a Crime Deterrent)," May 16, 2013, <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/license-plate-recognition-technology-crime-deterrent> Christopher S. Koper, Cynthia Lum, Xiaoyun Wu, William Johnson, and Megan Stoltz, "Do license plate readers enhance the initial and residual deterrent effects of police patrol? A quasi-randomized test," *Office of Justice Programs / NIJ virtual library*, 2021, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/do-license-plate-readers-enhance-initial-and-residual-deterrent>

⁶ Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts..." (n. 4); Mike Leischner, "Wausau Police Captain Discusses FLOCK Camera Uses, Policies at Committee Meeting," *WSAU News/Talk 550 AM*, June 15, 2026, <https://wsau.com/2026/06/15/wausau-police-captain-discusses-flock-camera-uses-policies-at-committee-meeting/>

⁷ Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts..." (n. 4); Shereen Siewert, "23,000 license plate searches, no required audit: inside Marathon County's Flock policy," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 19, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/19/23000-license-plate-searches-no-required-audit-inside-marathon-countys-flock-policy/>

⁸ Evan Casey, "Second member of the Milwaukee Police Department charged with misuse of license plate reader system," *Wisconsin Public Radio*, July 9, 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/news/member-milwaukee-police-department-charged-with-misuse-of-license-plate-reader-system>

its cameras.⁹

4. The legal ground is shifting under the program. The Supreme Court held in June 2026 that police conduct a search when they obtain a person's cell-phone location data from a third party, "regardless of the quality or quantity of information" obtained;¹⁰ a conservative law firm sued 12 Wisconsin governments over Flock on that basis on September 10;¹¹ and Wisconsin's public-records law makes every image and search log a record the city must produce, which is what drove four Washington cities to shut their cameras off.¹²

5. Wisconsin is leaving, led by police. More than 40 Wisconsin agencies have ended or suspended Flock since November 2025, most of them in September 2026, including the Racine, Fond du Lac, Winnebago, Oneida, and Clark County sheriffs and the cities of Sheboygan, Oshkosh, Appleton, Kenosha, Stevens Point, Waukesha, and Racine.¹³ The attorney general has asked the Legislature to act, and a Republican legislator from Tomahawk wants to ban "unchecked" use.¹⁴ Nationally, more than 200 cities have cancelled, the company skipped a Senate hearing, and it is now weighing a sale.¹⁵

The decision in front of the council. The next \$50,000 invoice is due around December 15, 2026. If it is charged to the 2027 budget, as the Pilot's reporting assumes, leaving it out and giving notice under Section 11.16 by mid-November ends the program without penalty; if the finance director says it is charged to the 2026 budget, the council must first amend that budget by a two-thirds vote, and the exit otherwise saves \$50,000 rather than \$100,000. The clause, as attached to the October 24, 2023 council packet, reads: "Notwithstanding any other provision of this Agreement, all obligations of the Customer under this Agreement which require the expenditure of funds are conditioned on the availability of funds appropriated for that purpose. Customer shall have the right to terminate this Agreement for non appropriation with thirty (30) days written notice without penalty or other cost".¹⁶ The city attorney should confirm the signed copy matches and the invoice date. The same agreement renews itself for two years on December 15, 2028 unless either side gives notice 30 days before, so a notice of non-renewal should go out regardless. Marathon County's 10 cameras, which share nationwide with 1,455 agencies and seven federal agencies (!), are the sheriff's decision, and the council should ask him to follow.

Bottom line. One budget line and one letter end the program at no cost, and one ordinance keeps the next one from arriving without a vote. Nothing in the contract, in state law, or in the evidence requires the city to keep paying. Strike the appropriation, send the notice, and pass the ordinance.

THE SUPPORTING CASE

1. Wausau: what the city has, what it pays, and what the contract says

Wausau runs 20 Flock cameras at 11 entry points on the city's main corridors, installed between February and July 2023, under a five-year, \$250,000 sole-source agreement that runs to December 15, 2028.¹⁷ The city has paid \$197,547.95;

⁹Erik Pfantz, "Stevens Point to suspend Flock camera use in city over misuse concerns," Stevens Point Journal / USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin, republished by *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 7, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/07/stevens-point-to-suspend-flock-camera-use-in-city-over-misuse-concerns/>

¹⁰*Chatrie v. United States*, No. 25-112, 609 U.S. ____ (June 29, 2026) (slip op.), https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/25pdf/25-112_0am4.pdf Wikipedia, s.v. "Chatrie v. United States" accessed September 28, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chatrie_v._United_States

¹¹Evan Casey, "WILL Sues 11 Waukesha County Communities Over Flock Cameras," *Urban Milwaukee*, September 10, 2026, <https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/10/will-sues-11-waukesha-county-communities-over-flock-cameras/>

¹²Wis. Stat. § 19.36, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/19/ii/36> Beryl Lipton, "Washington Court Rules That Data Captured on Flock Safety Cameras Are Public Records," *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, November 12, 2025, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/11/washington-court-rules-data-captured-flock-safety-cameras-are-public-records>

¹³Rowan Flynn (Wausau Pilot & Review), *Watch Ledger data repository*, GitHub, build of September 26, 2026, <https://github.com/RowanFlynn/Pilot/wpr-watch-ledger> Richelle Wilson, "More than a dozen Wisconsin cities disable Flock cameras, cancel contracts," *Wisconsin Public Radio*, September 9, 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-cities-disable-flock-cameras-cancel-contracts>

¹⁴Ceara Hunsaker, "Candidates for Wisconsin Attorney General speak on public safety, flock cameras," *WSAW-TV*, September 16, 2026, <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/16/candidates-wisconsin-attorney-general-speak-public-safety-flock-cameras/> Sean White, "Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license plate reader cameras," *WSAW*, September 15, 2026, <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/15/rep-callahan-calls-ban-use-license-plate-reader-cameras/>

¹⁵Cyrus Farivar, "Cities terminate Flock contracts at record pace in August," *Ars Technica*, August 28, 2026, <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/08/cities-terminate-flock-contracts-at-record-pace-in-august/> Rohan Goswami, "Flock Safety weighs selling itself," *Semafor*, September 23, 2026, <https://www.semafor.com/article/09/23/2026/flock-safety-weighs-selling-itself>

¹⁶City of Wausau, Common Council, *Agenda Packet for the Regular Meeting of October 24, 2023*, 208 pp., Resolution 23-1012 at pp. 99–101 and Master Services Agreement at pp. 143–171 (copy on file)

¹⁷Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts..." (n. 4); Shereen Siewert, "Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One could leave for \$4,000. The other says it can't," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 7, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/07/will-wausau-and-marathon-county-drop-flock-one-could-leave-for-4000-the-other-says-it-cant/>

two \$50,000 payments remain, in December 2026 and December 2027.¹⁸ Police say more than 90% of city streets have no coverage.¹⁹ The camera sites are listed in Appendix B.

What the cameras do. Flock sells a subscription surveillance network, not a set of cameras. Each Falcon camera photographs the rear of every passing vehicle, reads the plate, and records a “vehicle fingerprint” of make, model, color, bumper stickers, roof racks, and damage, so a vehicle can be found even when no plate was read.²⁰ The images go to Flock’s servers, where each is compared against hotlists, including a database linked to the FBI’s National Crime Information Center; a match pages officers in real time.²¹ Officers can also search the stored images by plate, partial plate, or vehicle description, entering a “reason” that becomes the audit trail; that field was free text until late 2025.²² Wausau’s cameras logged 233,355 vehicle sightings in the 30 days ending September 1, 2026, according to the department’s own transparency portal, and officers have run 20,020 searches since 2023, more than 10,000 a year.²³ Essentially all of those images are of people suspected of nothing who are being surveilled ‘just in case’.

The settings. Wausau keeps images for 30 days unless an officer downloads them as evidence;²⁴ Flock’s own recommended default has been 7 days since August 2026, though existing customers keep their old periods unless they change them.²⁵ About 205 Wisconsin agencies can search Wausau’s cameras.²⁶ Nationwide lookup, which lets any Flock customer in the country query a city’s cameras, was on from 2023 until May 2026 as a police-department setting, and a captain can switch it back on.²⁷ While it was on, federal agencies ran nationwide queries that reached Wausau’s network, the last in July 2025; a June 2023 FBI query listed immigration as its reason, and the logs cannot show whether Wausau images were returned.²⁸ The department audits itself once a year by sampling 10 searches per six months out of more than 10,000, a sample police themselves call “very small”.²⁹

What the contract lets Flock do with the data. Section 4.1 says the city owns its data and Flock “does not own and shall not sell Customer Data.” Section 4.3 then lets Flock “collect, analyze, and anonymize” that data, “including the training of machine learning algorithms,” and grants Flock “a non-exclusive, worldwide, perpetual, royalty-free right to use and distribute such Anonymized Data ... for other development, diagnostic and corrective purposes, and other Flock offerings”.³⁰ Under that language Flock may train the models it sells to every other customer on Wausau’s images, build derived datasets from Wausau’s cameras, and distribute them inside products such as Traffic Analytics, forever and for free; neither “sell” nor “distribute” is defined. Racine County’s sheriff concluded that Flock “generates a separate data set from information collected by its cameras and markets that dataset to other government and private customers” through Traffic Analytics, and tore his cameras down; Flock’s position is that Traffic Analytics holds aggregate statistics on volume, vehicle types, and speed, keeps no plate data, and has historically been retained for five years.³¹ A Flock sales representative offered to sell Sheboygan five years of traffic data from the city’s own 15 cameras, which the mayor said the city had not been told the cameras were gathering.³² Section 5.3 separately lets Flock “access, use, preserve and/or disclose the Footage to law enforcement authorities, government officials, and/or third parties” whenever Flock “has

¹⁸Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2)

¹⁹Shereen Siewert, “Wausau police defend Flock camera program as other Wisconsin communities pull back,” *Wausau Pilot & Review*, June 10, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/06/10/wausau-police-defend-flock-camera-program-as-other-wisconsin-communities-pull-back/>

²⁰Wikipedia, s.v. “Flock Safety” accessed September 28, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flock_Safety

²¹*State v. Simonson*, No. 40732-2-III (Wash. Ct. App. Jan. 29, 2026) (unpublished), https://www.courts.wa.gov/opinions/pdf/407322_unp.pdf

²²Jason Koebler, “Cops Search Thousands of Flock Cameras for Reasons of ‘LMAO,’ ‘IDK,’ ‘Hehe,’ and ‘asdfg,’” *404 Media*, September 14, 2026, <https://www.404media.co/cops-search-thousands-of-flock-cameras-for-reasons-of-lmao-idk-hehe-and-asdfg/> (quoted in Alajaji, “The High Crime of ‘LMAO’: How Cops Are Treating...” [173])

²³B.C. Kowalski, “Wausau committee raises concerns about license plate cameras,” *Weekly Wausonian*, June 18, 2026, <https://www.thewausonian.com/p/wausau-flock-cameras-bridge-street-mission-pophal> Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Shereen Siewert, “Have you been Flocked? A new Wausau Pilot tool lets you check your own plate,” *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 7, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/07/have-you-been-flocked-a-new-wausau-pilot-tool-lets-you-check-your-own-plate/>

²⁴Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2); Brayden Dobbe, “Wausau police highlight use of FLOCK cameras, downtown patrol successes,” *WSAW-TV*, June 15, 2026, <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/06/16/wausau-police-highlight-use-flock-cameras-downtown-patrol-successes/>

²⁵Sarah Roebuck, “Flock privacy updates: 7-day default for ALPR data, mandatory misuse safeguards,” *Police1*, August 14, 2026, <https://www.police1.com/technology/flock-safety-sets-7-day-default-for-alpr-data-adds-mandatory-misuse-safeguards>

²⁶Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Siewert, “Have you been Flocked? A new Wausau Pilot tool...” (n. 23)

²⁷Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

²⁸Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Siewert, “Wausau police defend Flock camera program as...” (n. 19)

²⁹Siewert, “23,000 license plate searches, no required...” (n. 7); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

³⁰City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16); Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2)

³¹Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

³²Siewert, “Flock pullout reaches central Wisconsin as...” (n. 3); Evan Casey, “Flock Safety cameras in Sheboygan covered up by city,” *Wisconsin Public Radio*, August 28, 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/news/flock-safety-cameras-sheboygan-covered-by-city>

a good faith belief” that doing so is “reasonably necessary,” a judgment the contract leaves to Flock.³³

The anonymization test is the city’s strongest ground. Section 1.1 defines Anonymized Data as data “permanently stripped of identifying details” so that a person “can no longer be identified directly or indirectly”.³⁴ Per-sighting records fail that test even with the plate removed, for two reasons. The fingerprint itself is close to unique: Flock’s order form lists vehicle type, make, color, state, and “other unique features like bumper stickers, decals, and roof racks,” and in a city of roughly 35,000 registered vehicles most such combinations describe one or two cars.³⁵ And the pattern of sightings identifies even a common car: a study of 1.5 million people’s mobility records found that four time-and-place points uniquely identified 95% of them.³⁶ A commuter who passes the same one of Wausau’s 11 camera sites at the same time in the same car each morning is one household. Flock’s own proposal to Wausau says the Falcon turns footage into evidence “even when a license plate isn’t visible”;³⁷ a record Flock sells as identifying without a plate cannot become anonymous by removing the plate. If Flock retains de-plated sighting-level records, as Racine County’s sheriff concluded it does, they are not “Anonymized Data” under the contract’s own definition, they remain confidential “geolocation information” under Section 5.1, and retaining them is a breach that Section 7.2 lets the city terminate for if uncured within 30 days.³⁸ Wausau’s 2023 contract is stronger on this point than Flock’s current form, which deleted the “shall not sell” sentence in February 2026.³⁹ The facts decide which case the city is in, and the city is entitled to ask; the written questions the city attorney should put to Flock are in Appendix B.

What the city was told. Between June and August 2026, Wausau police and the Marathon County sheriff’s office each told their oversight committees, in identical words, that the data “is not owned by Flock and no data is sold to third parties”.⁴⁰ The city attorney’s office has not said whether Section 4.3 was reviewed.⁴¹ Police told the Pilot in August that the city is “obligated to the full 5-year term”.⁴² The contract says otherwise: Section 11.16, quoted in full in Part I, conditions every payment on appropriated funds and allows termination for non-appropriation on 30 days’ written notice “without penalty or other cost”.⁴³ The council approved the agreement 9-1 on October 24, 2023, after a 5-0 Finance Committee vote on a motion by then-Alder Doug Diny, now the mayor; it dropped the \$500-per-camera exit clause of the 2023 one-year deal, added a two-year automatic renewal (Section 7.1), and capped Flock’s liability at one year’s fees while excluding “incomplete, corrupt, or inaccurate data” entirely (Section 9.1).⁴⁴ The full timeline is in Appendix B.

What police say the cameras have done. The department’s June 2026 defense memo lists hit-and-runs, retail thefts, domestic violence, drug cases, stolen vehicles, a kidnapping, a robbery, and a 2024 shooting whose suspect was located within 10 hours.⁴⁵ Capt. Benjamin Graham gave the Public Health and Safety Committee examples of “more than 30 cases” closed with camera evidence and said his monthly reviews of flagged searches had found no misuse.⁴⁶ Set against roughly 2.8 million vehicle sightings and 10,000 searches a year, 30 closed cases over three years is about ten a year, and the department has published no formal count of arrests, charges, or convictions attributable to the system.

Marathon County. The sheriff’s 10 cameras are a separate program the council does not control, but Wausau drivers pass them daily. The county shares nationwide with 1,455 agencies in 40 states, including seven federal agencies; ran 23,435 searches from January 2023 to April 2026, 45.5% of this year’s for drug cases; changed its audit policy in late 2023 from audits that “should be conducted on a regular basis” to audits command staff “may” conduct; and has denied records requests for audit logs and camera locations.⁴⁷ The sheriff’s office joined ICE’s 287(g) jail program in November

³³ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

³⁴ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

³⁵ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

³⁶ Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye et al., “Unique in the Crowd: The Privacy Bounds of Human Mobility,” *Scientific Reports* 3, no. 1376 (2013), <https://www.nature.com/articles/srep01376> (abstract consulted); Wikipedia, s.v. “Data re-identification,” accessed September 28, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_re-identification

³⁷ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

³⁸ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

³⁹ H.C. van Pelt, “The Deal has been Altered Further: Flock Publishes New Terms,” *Footnote4a*, February 16, 2026, <https://footnote4a.org/news/terms-feb2026>

⁴⁰ Siewert, “Flock pullout reaches central Wisconsin as...” (n. 3)

⁴¹ Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

⁴² Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

⁴³ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16); Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

⁴⁴ Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17); City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

⁴⁵ Siewert, “Wausau police defend Flock camera program as...” (n. 19)

⁴⁶ Leischner, “Wausau Police Captain Discusses FLOCK Camera...” (n. 6)

⁴⁷ Siewert, “23,000 license plate searches, no required...” (n. 7); Shereen Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras as more than a dozen Wisconsin agencies drop them,” *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 15, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/15/marathon-county-sheriff-will-keep-flock-cameras-as-more-than-a-dozen-wisconsin-agencies-drop-them/>

2025, suggesting a closer relationship with ICE than Wausau’s citizens may be aware of.⁴⁸ Nothing in Wausau’s settings stops the county, or any of the other partner agencies, from running a search at a federal agency’s request, which is the “indirect access” Flock’s chief executive has acknowledged.⁴⁹ The county’s contract keeps a \$500-per-camera exit clause, so it could leave for about \$4,000, and the sheriff needs no board vote to end it.⁵⁰

2. Does it work? The independent evidence

Fifteen years of controlled research, much of it funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, finds that plate readers produce more hotlist hits and faster recovery of stolen cars but little or no measurable effect on crime rates, arrests, or case clearances. The dramatic crime-reduction figures in circulation come from Flock’s marketing, not from controlled studies, and the best known of them has been disavowed by the police chief whose city supplied it.

What the controlled studies found

Study	Design	Finding
Lum, Hibdon, Cave, Koper and Merola, 2011 (George Mason, NIJ-funded)	Randomized experiment, 30 crime hot spots in two jurisdictions	LPR patrols “do not seem to generate either a general or offense-specific deterrent effect”
NIJ CrimeSolutions rating	Federal evidence review	License plate recognition as a crime deterrent rated “Ineffective”: “no statistically significant effects on general crime, auto-related crime, vehicle-theft calls for service, or auto-theft”
Taylor, Koper and Woods, 2012 (Mesa, Arizona, NIJ-funded)	Randomized trial	Readers scanned about eight times more plates and produced more hits and recoveries, but it was the manual-check unit without readers that correlated with reduced auto theft
Koper, Lum, Wu, Johnson and Stoltz, 2022	785 patrols at 33 hot spots, quasi-randomized	More stolen-vehicle recoveries “but not arrests”; “little clear evidence for the crime prevention efficacy”
National Institute of Justice summary	Literature summary	Readers “have been shown to increase arrests and recoveries of stolen vehicles,” but “their wider impacts on crime prevention and investigations remain unclear due to very limited rigorous evaluation”
Mourtgos and Adams, 2026 (preprint promoted by Flock)	216 Flock-adopting agencies, 2017-2023, event-study design	Vehicle theft down 11%; other property crime showed “no aggregate improvement”; clearances up 15.9%, but “the increase began during the final three pre-deployment months, weakening causal attribution to the cameras”. ⁵¹ The Institute for Justice notes trends in adopting agencies were already moving before installation ⁵²

Flock’s numbers. The “up to 70% reduction” claim came from San Marino, California, where Forbes found burglaries had risen 5% by 2023 and the police chief conceded the figure was not accurate.⁵³ The claim that Flock helps solve “10% of reported crime” rests on a non-peer-reviewed analysis of three months of data from 123 agencies; one of the two academics Flock named as overseers told 404 Media the data was “too varied and incomplete for us to do any type of meaningful statistical analysis”.⁵⁴ The Cobb County “60% reduction” was a before-and-after count in a single police beat with 13 cameras; it is the figure Flock’s 2023 proposal to Wausau presented as “<60% local crime reduction in Flock

⁴⁸ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Damakant Jayshi, “ACLU denounces Marathon County sheriff’s pending ICE partnership,” *Wausau Pilot & Review*, November 7, 2025, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2025/11/07/aclu-denounces-marathon-county-sheriffs-pending-ice-partnership/>

⁴⁹ Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20); Jay Stanley, “Flock Can Share Driver-Surveillance Data Even When Police Departments Opt Out, And Other Flock Developments,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, October 24, 2025, <https://www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/tracking-alpr-cameras/flock-massachusetts-and-updates>

⁵⁰ Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17); Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

⁵¹ Matthew West, *ALPRs and Vehicle Theft: An Explainer of “Working Paper: Automated License Plate Readers, Vehicle Theft, and Clearance”* (Institute for Justice, September 2026), <https://ij.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/ALPR-and-crime-study-external-explainer-V7.pdf> (quoting the paper’s abstract)

⁵² Christopher Ingraham, “Do Flock cameras actually reduce crime? The jury is still out,” *Institute for Justice*, September 17, 2026, <https://ij.org/do-flock-cameras-actually-reduce-crime-the-jury-is-still-out/> Autumn Billings, “The shaky evidence that Flock cameras reduce crime rates,” *Reason*, September 18, 2026, <https://reason.com/2026/09/18/the-shaky-evidence-that-flock-cameras-reduce-crime-rates/>

⁵³ Cyrus Farivar, “Flock installed AI cameras in this small city and claimed crime went down. It went up,” *Forbes*, February 29, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cyrusfarivar/2024/02/29/flock-ai-cameras-may-not-reduce-crime/> (headline and page metadata consulted)

⁵⁴ Jason Koebler, “Let’s Talk About the Flock Study That Says It Solves Crime,” *404 Media*, March 20, 2024, <https://www.404media.co/researcher-who-oversaw-flock-surveillance-study-now-has-concerns-about-it/> (quoted in Flock Safety via GlobeNewswire, “New Study Finds that Flock Safety is...” [67]); Flock Safety via GlobeNewswire, “New Study Finds that Flock Safety is Instrumental in Solving 10% of Reported Crime in U.S.,” press release, February 8, 2024, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/study-finds-flock-safety-instrumental-140000139.html>

cities”.⁵⁵ The Institute for Justice’s analysis of the 2026 study Flock now promotes found that thefts and arrests “were already trending in the favored direction months before Flock’s cameras were ever in use” and that its 11% vehicle-theft figure disappears when agencies are weighted equally.⁵⁶

What a city gets per scan. Austin, Texas, with nearly 500 cameras, counted 165 arrests, 133 prosecutions, and one missing person found over the life of its program, and ended it in June 2025 after an audit found 18% of searches undocumented.⁵⁷ Denver’s 12-month pilot produced 289 arrests against more than 2 million sightings a month, about one arrest per 85,000 sightings.⁵⁸ In a randomized trial in Vallejo, California, 37% of fixed-reader hits were misreads.⁵⁹ Wausau’s figures, roughly one closed case per 650 searches and per 280,000 images, are of the same order.⁶⁰ Marathon County’s 781 searches through August 12, 2026 were 45.5% drug cases; four, about half of one percent, were missing persons.⁶¹ Stolen cars come back anyway: the National Insurance Crime Bureau reports that more than 85% of stolen passenger vehicles are recovered, 34% within a day, with or without plate readers, and the only controlled estimate of what Flock adds is a median recovery 0.28 days faster.⁶²

Errors and wrongful stops. An Institute for Justice review published in July 2026 counted at least 27 wrongful stops of innocent drivers since 2018, most since 2023; officers drew guns in nearly two-thirds of them. About a third came from machine misreads and the rest from human error such as wrong hotlist entries or misread alerts.⁶³ An independent 2021 test by the security-industry publication IPVIM found Flock misidentified the state on about 10% of plates; Flock responded by refusing to sell cameras to IPVIM.⁶⁴ In Aurora, Colorado, Brittney Gilliam and four girls aged 6 to 17 were handcuffed face-down after a reader matched her Colorado SUV to a stolen Montana motorcycle; the city paid \$1.9 million.⁶⁵ In Volusia County, Florida, Lindsey Isaacs spent 13 days in jail in 2026, including solitary, after Flock data linked her SUV to a fatal hit-and-run that witnesses described as a different vehicle; she testified to a U.S. Senate subcommittee in September.⁶⁶ In Milwaukee, Amber Newell was stopped at gunpoint twice this summer because a homicide alert had not been cleared from her plate.⁶⁷

What \$50,000 a year buys elsewhere. The interventions with the strongest evidence are ones Wausau could fund instead:

- Street lighting: a randomized study across 40 New York public-housing developments reported “sizable reductions” in nighttime outdoor index crimes, about 36% by the authors’ estimate, with effects lasting three years; a 50-year systematic review finds an average 14% crime reduction.⁶⁸

⁵⁵City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16); Flock Safety via GlobeNewswire, “COBB COUNTY POLICE SEE OVER 60% REDUCTION IN ENTERING AUTO AND NON-RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY WITH FLOCK SAFETY LICENSE PLATE READERS,” press release, October 22, 2019, <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2019/10/22/1933059/0/en/COBB-COUNTY-POLICE-SEE-OVER-60-REDUCTION-IN-ENTERING-AUTO-AND-NON-RESIDENTIAL-BURGLARY-WITH-FLOCK-SAFETY-LICENSE-PLATE-READERS.html>

⁵⁶Billings, “The shaky evidence that Flock cameras reduce...” (n. 52); Ingraham, “Do Flock cameras actually reduce crime? The...” (n. 52)

⁵⁷Catharine Li, “Austin to end license plate data collection program following audit, community pushback,” *The Daily Texan*, June 15, 2025, <https://thedadilytexan.com/2025/06/15/austin-to-end-license-plate-data-collection-program-following-audit-community-pushback/>

⁵⁸“Denver Flock license plate readers: arrests, contract extension,” *Denverite*, April 3, 2025, <https://denverite.com/2025/04/03/denver-flock-license-plate-readers-arrests-contract-extension/> (headline and page metadata consulted)

⁵⁹Jason Potts, “Research in Brief: Assessing the Effectiveness of Automatic License Plate Readers,” *Police Chief*, March 2018, pp. 14-15, March 2018, <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/March%202018%20RIB.pdf> Lisa Fernandez and Brooks Jarosz, “More license plate readers are coming to Bay Area, but do they work?,” *KTVU FOX 2*, September 28, 2023, <https://www.ktvu.com/news/more-license-plate-readers-are-coming-to-bay-area-but-do-they-work>

⁶⁰Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Siewert, “Have you been Flocked? A new Wausau Pilot tool...” (n. 23); Leischner, “Wausau Police Captain Discusses FLOCK Camera...” (n. 6)

⁶¹Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

⁶²National Insurance Crime Bureau, “2023 Vehicle Theft Trends Report,” press release, May 9, 2024, <https://www.nicb.org/2023-vehicle-theft-trends-report> Scott M. Mourtgos and Ian T. Adams, “Working Paper: Automated License Plate Readers, Vehicle Theft, and Clearance,” *CrimRxiv*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.21428/cb6ab371.0dc24006> (not consulted directly; as summarized by Flock Safety, “Independent Study: Vehicle Thefts Fell 11% After Flock Cameras Went Live,” company blog, August 31, 2026, <https://www.flocksafety.com/blog/independent-study-vehicle-thefts-fell-11-after-flock-cameras-went-live>)

⁶³Christopher Ingraham, “Dozens of Innocent Motorists Have Been Pulled Over, Detained at Gunpoint, or Jailed Due to AI License Plate Camera Errors,” *Institute for Justice*, July 1, 2026, <https://ij.org/dozens-of-innocent-motorists-have-been-pulled-over-detained-at-gunpoint-or-jailed-due-to-ai-license-plate-camera-errors/>

⁶⁴Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

⁶⁵Minyvonne Burke, “Black family who was removed from car at gunpoint and handcuffed by police receives \$1.9M settlement,” *NBC News*, February 6, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/black-family-was-removed-car-gunpoint-handcuffed-aurora-colorado-police-rcna137444>

⁶⁶“Florida woman wrongfully jailed for 13 days due to Flock cam in tears during Senate testimony,” *WFLA*, September 2026, <https://www.wfla.com/news/florida/florida-woman-wrongfully-jailed-for-13-days-due-to-flock-cam-in-tears-during-senate-testimony/> (headline and page metadata consulted)

⁶⁷Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Amanda Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states, cities question surveillance network,” *Stateline*, republished by *Wausau Pilot & Review*, August 17, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/08/17/flock-safety-tightens-safeguards-as-states-cities-question-surveillance-network/>

- Monitored cameras in parking areas: a 40-year meta-analysis finds CCTV’s strongest effect on vehicle crime in parking lots when actively monitored, not blanket deployment.⁶⁹
- Investigative capacity: Boston’s investment in homicide investigation “significantly increased key investigative activities and improved Boston homicide clearance rates relative to existing trends”.⁷⁰
- Hot-spots policing: a Campbell systematic review finds significant crime reductions with diffusion of benefits rather than displacement.⁷¹
- Violence interruption: the READI Chicago randomized trial reported benefit-cost ratios the authors estimate at between 4 and 18 to 1.⁷²

None of these programs create a searchable record of every resident’s movements, and each has controlled evidence behind it, which the cameras do not.

3. Wisconsin: an exodus in progress

Wisconsin has about 2,125 mapped plate-reader cameras, 1,606 of them Flock’s, run by roughly 300 agencies, and since November 2025 more than 40 of those agencies have ended, suspended, or refused to renew, most of them in September 2026, citing what Flock does with data after capture and what its representatives told them.⁷³ USA TODAY’s public-records collection of Flock audit logs shows 1,867,858 searches by 6,312 users at 249 Wisconsin agencies between 2023 and 2026; Milwaukee police alone ran 289,296, and Wausau’s 20,020 (!) place it among the state’s heavier users.⁷⁴ The 49 agencies that publish a transparency portal alone recorded 7,022,808 vehicle sightings in a 30-day window, about one every half second statewide; 224 agencies disclose nothing.⁷⁵ Madison, the state’s second-largest city, has no Flock cameras and has a surveillance-technology ordinance.⁷⁶

Who has left, and why. The departures began in Verona, which voted not to renew in November 2025 after an audit showed 974 federal searches in one month; its council president said “Effectively, there is no way in and out of the city without being tracked,” and when Flock refused for months to remove the cameras, the city bagged them.⁷⁷ Oshkosh renewed in April 2026 and rescinded the next day, unanimously, after a Flock representative’s assurance that the system does not build a heat map of a vehicle’s movements proved untrue within 24 hours.⁷⁸ Dane County’s board voted 32-1 to strip the sheriff’s camera funding; Appleton’s mayor ended its contract in May because “concerns about the integrity of

⁶⁸Aaron Chalfin, Benjamin Hansen, Jason Lerner, and Lucie Parker, “Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of Street Lighting in New York City,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 2022, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10940-020-09490-6> (consulted in the copy at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25798>, accessed September 28, 2026); Aaron Chalfin, Benjamin Hansen, Jason Lerner, and Lucie Parker, “Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of Street Lighting in New York City,” *NBER Working Paper* 25798, May 6, 2019, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25798>

⁶⁹Google Scholar query page, “CCTV surveillance for crime prevention: a 40-year systematic review with meta-analysis,” 2019, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Piza+Welsh+Farrington+Thomas+2019+CCTV+meta-analysis> (headline and page metadata consulted)

⁷⁰Google Scholar query page, “Can homicide detectives improve homicide clearance rates?,” 2018, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Braga+Dusseault+2018+homicide+clearance+Boston> (headline and page metadata consulted)

⁷¹Google Scholar query page, “Hot spots policing and crime reduction: an update of an ongoing systematic review and meta-analysis,” 2019, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Braga+Turchan+Papachristos+Hureau+2019+hot+spots+policing> (headline and page metadata consulted)

⁷²Monica P. Bhatt, Sara B. Heller, Max Kapustin, Marianne Bertrand, and Christopher Blattman, “Predicting and Preventing Gun Violence: An Experimental Evaluation of READI Chicago,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 139, pp. 1-56 [per NBER page], 2024, <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Bhatt+Heller+Kapustin+Bertrand+Blattman+2024+READI+Chicago> (consulted in the copy at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w30852>, accessed September 28, 2026)

⁷³Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Wilson, “More than a dozen Wisconsin cities disable...” (n. 13)

⁷⁴Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13); Siewert, “Have you been Flocked? A new Wausau Pilot tool...” (n. 23)

⁷⁵Shereen Siewert, “Monday, from the Publisher: A new tool for watching the watchers,” *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 14, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/14/monday-from-the-publisher-a-new-tool-for-watching-the-watchers/>

⁷⁶George Wiebe, “More than 80 license plate cameras are operating in the Madison area,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 6, 2026, https://madison.com/news/local/crime-courts/article_8df7e143-f17b-4c37-91e7-2a903d9f47f2.html (text consulted in the Tribune Content Agency republication “With Exception, License Plate Cameras Take Hold in Wisconsin,” *Government Technology*, January 6, 2026, <https://www.govtech.com/public-safety/with-exception-license-plate-cameras-take-hold-in-wisconsin>)

⁷⁷Beatrice Lawrence, “AI-powered police cameras face pushback from Wisconsin communities,” *Wisconsin Public Radio*, December 19, 2025, <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-police-forces-use-cameras-track-vehicles-communities-worry-overreach> Jason Koebler, “Flock ‘Objects to Our Removing Their Equipment’: Emails Reveal Why a Town Put Bags Over Its Flock Cameras,” *404 Media*, July 22, 2026, <https://www.404media.co/flock-objects-to-our-removing-their-equipment-emails-reveal-why-a-town-put-bags-over-its-flock-cameras/> (quoted in Lawrence, “AI-powered police cameras face pushback from...” [156])

⁷⁸Sarah Lehr, “Dane County pulls funding for Flock license plate cameras,” *Wisconsin Public Radio*, April 20, 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/news/dane-county-flock-license-plate-cameras> Drew Best, “Oshkosh council rescinds Flock camera contract after ‘false statements’,” *WBAY-TV*, April 22, 2026, <https://www.wbay.com/2026/04/23/oshkosh-council-rescinds-flock-camera-contract-after-false-statements/> Emily Small, “Sturgeon Bay ends Flock contract, but drivers are still tracked beyond city limits,” *Door County Knock*, April 15, 2026, <https://doorcountyknock.org/2026/04/sturgeon-bay-ends-flock-contract-but-drivers-are-still-tracked-beyond-city-limits>

Flock’s underlying system have eroded our trust”.⁷⁹ Then, in September 2026, the Racine County sheriff tore his cameras down over Traffic Analytics, calling it “not what we agreed to, and it is not what the public was led to believe”;⁸⁰ the Fond du Lac and Winnebago County sheriffs and eight local departments suspended after their search logs, including active investigations, were released by out-of-state agencies responding to their own records laws, “without our knowledge or consent”;⁸¹ Sheboygan’s council voted unanimously to terminate after the sales offer described above, its mayor citing “an erosion of trust from Flock itself and how they were using our data”;⁸² Stevens Point, which ran 7-day retention, Wisconsin-only sharing, and monthly audits, covered its cameras because, in Mayor Mike Wiza’s words, “We really have no way of auditing where the Flock data goes once it’s collected”;⁸³ and Kenosha, Waukesha, the City of Racine, Neenah, Marinette, De Pere, Oconomowoc, Manitowoc, Cottage Grove, and the Clark and Jefferson County sheriffs followed.⁸⁴ Cottage Grove also ordered an ordinance barring plate readers of any brand.⁸⁵ The full list, with dates and reasons, is in Appendix B.

Who has stayed. Milwaukee kept its cameras with conditions: after two officers were charged, the mayor cut retention to 7 days, ended all sharing with outside agencies, and cut authorized users from about 370 to about 100, and 12 of 15 council members still demanded more before the 2027 budget.⁸⁶ Milwaukee County’s executive left Flock out of his budget.⁸⁷ Green Bay kept its 42 cameras after its chief stopped sharing outside Brown County, saying “two years’ worth of historic data about where every car went ... is just not appropriate”.⁸⁸ Marathon County, Wausau, and Plover are staying.⁸⁹

Misuse inside Wisconsin departments. Every case was found only after the fact, and two involved the people responsible for oversight. Menasha officer Cristian Morales used Flock to check whether his girlfriend had visited an abortion clinic and was sentenced in August 2026 to six months in jail.⁹⁰ Milwaukee officer Josue Ayala searched two ex-partners’ plates 179 times while on duty, entering “investigation” as the reason; a victim discovered it through a public lookup site, and Ayala pleaded guilty.⁹¹ Detective Tehrangi Chapman, the 22-year internal-affairs investigator assigned to the Ayala case, was then charged with felony misconduct for searching a person’s plate 17 times and placing a GPS tracker on the victim’s car.⁹² After Navy veteran Napoleon Jones filmed a traffic stop in Sussex and filed a complaint, Waukesha County deputies searched his plate more than 100 times, one testifying he was ordered to; his federal suit alleges First

⁷⁹Lehr, “Dane County pulls funding for Flock license...” (n. 78); Evan Casey, “Milwaukee Police updates use of Flock license plate reader system after officer charged with misconduct,” *Wisconsin Public Radio*, May 26, 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/news/milwaukee-police-flock-license-plate-reader-system-officer-misconduct>

⁸⁰Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2); WBAY news staff, “More Wisconsin communities stop use of Flock cameras,” *WSAW-TV, carrying a WBAY story*, September 6, 2026, <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/06/more-wisconsin-communities-stop-use-flock-cameras/>

⁸¹Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2); WBAY news staff, “More Wisconsin communities stop use of Flock cameras” (n. 80)

⁸²Casey, “Flock Safety cameras in Sheboygan covered up by city” (n. 32); Wilson, “More than a dozen Wisconsin cities disable...” (n. 13)

⁸³Chase Kmosena, “Flock cameras covered in Stevens Point,” *WXPR*, September 9, 2026, <https://www.wxpr.org/wisconsin-news/2026-09-09/flock-cameras-covered-in-stevens-point> Pfantz, “Stevens Point to suspend Flock camera use in...” (n. 9)

⁸⁴Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Jay Sirkin, “Waukesha Common Council votes to discontinue Flock Safety program after 2026,” *TMJ4 News*, September 16, 2026, <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/waukesha-county/waukesha-common-council-votes-to-discontinue-flock-safety-program-after-2026> Jason Zimmerman, “Green Bay keeps flock cameras with updated policy; De Pere to end contract,” *WBAY-TV*, September 14, 2026, <https://www.wbay.com/2026/09/15/green-bay-keeps-flock-cameras-with-updated-policy-de-pere-end-contract/> Bryan Polcyn, “Kenosha police ending Flock contract, moving to Axon,” *FOX6 News Milwaukee*, September 2, 2026, <https://www.fox6now.com/news/kenosha-police-ending-flock-contract-moving-axon>

⁸⁵Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

⁸⁶Casey, “Milwaukee Police updates use of Flock license...” (n. 79); Isiah Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year. Today cities are demanding safeguards,” *Wisconsin Examiner*, republished by *Wausau Pilot & Review*, August 29, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/08/29/flock-safety-spent-102000-lobbying-last-year-today-cities-are-demanding-safeguards/> Emilio De Torre, “Flock Cameras in Milwaukee: The Writing is on the Wall,” *Shepherd Express*, September 16, 2026, <https://shepherdexpress.com/news/issue-of-the-month/flock-cameras-in-milwaukee-the-writing-is-on-the-wall/>

⁸⁷James Stratton, “Milwaukee County executive plans to not renew Flock contract in 2027,” *WISN 12 News*, September 9, 2026, <https://www.wisn.com/article/milwaukee-county-executive-plans-to-not-renew-flock-contract-in-2027/73656395>

⁸⁸Beatrice Lawrence, “Green Bay police audit Flock data, suspend sharing in response to privacy concern,” *Wisconsin Public Radio*, August 20, 2026, <https://www.wpr.org/news/green-bay-police-audit-flock-data-suspend-sharing-privacy-concern> Zimmerman, “Green Bay keeps flock cameras with updated...” (n. 84)

⁸⁹Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

⁹⁰Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86); Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

⁹¹Isiah Holmes, “Milwaukee officer accused of misusing Flock surveillance cameras,” *Wisconsin Examiner*, republished by *Wausau Pilot & Review*, February 28, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/02/28/milwaukee-officer-accused-of-misusing-flock-surveillance-cameras/> Casey, “Milwaukee Police updates use of Flock license...” (n. 79)

⁹²Casey, “Second member of the Milwaukee Police...” (n. 8)

Amendment retaliation.⁹³ Milwaukee search logs obtained by the Wisconsin Examiner recorded reasons such as “HSI investigation,” referring to Homeland Security Investigations.⁹⁴

State law and the Legislature. Wisconsin has no statute on plate readers: no retention limit, no warrant requirement, no restriction on sharing.⁹⁵ The 2025 session’s grant bills, which would have paid local agencies to buy readers and on which Flock reported \$102,000 in Wisconsin lobbying, failed on March 23, 2026, along with two bills to restrict the devices.⁹⁶ Rep. Calvin Callahan (R-Tomahawk), a co-author of the grant bill and chair of the Assembly Consumer Protection Committee, said on September 15, 2026: “If these cameras cannot operate with warrants, judicial oversight, strict limits on data retention and real accountability, then they have no business operating in Wisconsin,” and promised a hearing in January 2027.⁹⁷ Attorney General Josh Kaul said the same month, “I also don’t want to live in a world where we have a surveillance state,” and his Republican challenger Eric Toney said safeguards are needed against out-of-state records releases.⁹⁸ On September 10 the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, a conservative public-interest firm, sued Waukesha County and 11 municipalities, arguing that searching the Flock database is warrantless location tracking.⁹⁹ Opposition now runs from the ACLU of Wisconsin to Republican legislators from the north and a conservative litigation shop.¹⁰⁰

4. The national picture, 2025 to September 2026

In 21 months Flock has gone from a fast-growing vendor to the subject of a Senate hearing its chief executive skipped, three federal bills, a Supreme Court decision that reopened the constitutional question, state-highway restrictions ordered by the Republican governors of Florida and Texas, and cancellations by more than 200 cities and counties. The company is now offering employees buyouts and exploring a sale.¹⁰¹

What the audit logs showed. The turn came in May 2025, when 404 Media obtained one Illinois department’s Flock audit logs and found more than 4,000 lookups run for ICE, as informal favors to federal agents or with reasons like “ICE WARRANT,” even though ICE had no Flock contract;¹⁰² later logs showed the FBI, Customs and Border Protection, the DEA, the Secret Service, and other federal agencies reaching the network.¹⁰³ The same month a Texas deputy searched 83,345 cameras for a woman who had a self-managed abortion, with the logged reason “had an abortion, search for female”; court records later showed a death investigation in which detectives asked prosecutors whether she could be charged, while Flock’s website called the reporting “clickbait” and said she “was being searched for as a missing person”.¹⁰⁴ City after city then opened its own logs. Bend, Oregon found 279 federal immigration queries in its first

⁹³ Autumn Billings, “Wisconsin Cops Used Flock Over 100 Times To Track a Navy Veteran After He Lawfully Recorded a Traffic Stop,” *Reason*, September 2, 2026, <https://reason.com/2026/09/02/wisconsin-cops-used-flock-over-100-times-to-track-a-navy-veteran-after-he-lawfully-recorded-a-traffic-stop/>

⁹⁴ Isiah Holmes, “Milwaukee PD accessed Illinois Flock cameras for classified investigation,” *Wisconsin Examiner*, May 30, 2025, <https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2025/05/30/milwaukee-pd-accessed-illinois-flock-cameras-for-classified-investigation/> Isiah Holmes, “Analysis of Flock use by Wisconsin cops reveals trends, raises questions,” *Wisconsin Examiner*, August 6, 2025, <https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2025/08/06/analysis-of-flock-use-by-wisconsin-cops-reveals-trends-raises-questions/>

⁹⁵ Wis. Stat. § 19.35, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/19/ii/35>

⁹⁶ Wis. A.B. 300, 2025–26 Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025), <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab300> Wis. S.B. 299, 2025–26 Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025), <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/reg/sen/bill/sb299> Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86)

⁹⁷ White, “Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license...” (n. 14)

⁹⁸ Hunsaker, “Candidates for Wisconsin Attorney General speak...” (n. 14)

⁹⁹ Casey, “WILL Sues 11 Waukesha County Communities Over...” (n. 11)

¹⁰⁰ Isiah Holmes, “Flock on shaky ground in Wisconsin as communities weigh privacy and safety,” *Wisconsin Examiner*, republished by *Wausau Pilot & Review*, June 4, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/06/04/flock-on-shaky-ground-in-wisconsin-as-communities-weigh-privacy-and-safety/>

¹⁰¹ Farivar, “Cities terminate Flock contracts at record pace...” (n. 15); Garrett Downs, “Flock, Axon dodge Senate hearing after invite from Chair Josh Hawley,” *CNBC*, September 23, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/09/23/flock-axon-senate-hearing-josh-hawley.html> Paresch Dave and Dhruv Mehrotra, “Flock Offers Employees Buyouts as Customers Flee,” *WIRED*, September 18, 2026, <https://www.wired.com/story/flock-is-offering-voluntary-buyouts-to-employees/> Goswami, “Flock Safety weighs selling itself” (n. 15)

¹⁰² Jason Koebler and Joseph Cox, “ICE Taps into Nationwide AI-Enabled Camera Network, Data Shows,” *404 Media*, May 27, 2025, <https://www.404media.co/ice-taps-into-nationwide-ai-enabled-camera-network-data-shows/> (headline and standfirst consulted; text behind a paywall)

¹⁰³ Joseph Cox, “ICE, Secret Service, Navy All Had Access to Flock’s Nationwide Network of Cameras,” *404 Media*, October 16, 2025, <https://www.404media.co/ice-secret-service-navy-all-had-access-to-flocks-nationwide-network-of-cameras/> (headline and standfirst consulted; text behind a paywall)

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Cox and Jason Koebler, “A Texas Cop Searched License Plate Cameras Nationwide for a Woman Who Got an Abortion,” *404 Media*, May 29, 2025, <https://www.404media.co/a-texas-cop-searched-license-plate-cameras-nationwide-for-a-woman-who-got-an-abortion/> (quoted in Maass, “Flock Safety and Texas Sheriff Claimed License...” [88]); Dave Maass and Rindala Alajaji, “Flock Safety and Texas Sheriff Claimed License Plate Search Was for a Missing Person. It Was an Abortion Investigation,” *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, October 7, 2025, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/10/flock-safety-and-texas-sheriff-claimed-license-plate-search-was-missing-person-it> Jason Koebler, “Texas Police Used AI to Write Report

three weeks, after a national-lookup setting that was on by default;¹⁰⁵ Lynnwood, Washington found nationwide lookup had been on for nine days and in that time outside agencies had run more than 100,000 searches;¹⁰⁶ Boston found other agencies could search its data despite a contract requiring sharing off.¹⁰⁷ The Electronic Frontier Foundation found more than 50 agencies had run hundreds of searches tied to protest activity,¹⁰⁸ and in September 2026 404 Media and EFF showed that thousands of searches across the network carried reasons like “LMAO,” “idk,” and “asdfg,” and more than 6,300 used “TBD”.¹⁰⁹

How Flock responded. Flock ended pilots that had given Homeland Security Investigations and Customs and Border Protection access to its network in August 2025, after its chief executive had told customers the company had no federal contracts.¹¹⁰ It added a federal-sharing toggle in January 2026 and a login warning in February.¹¹¹ In June 2026 the chief executive acknowledged ICE’s indirect access through local partners, said immigration agencies are “gonna go enforce immigration no matter what Flock does,” and added, “we can’t make that our problem as a company”;¹¹² the ACLU responded with a catalogue of Flock’s misstatements to Oshkosh, Loveland, and other councils and concluded that “reputable governments should not do business with disreputable companies”.¹¹³ On August 13, 2026 Flock cut its recommended retention to 7 days for new customers, made its misuse-detection tool mandatory by year end, and required case codes on searches;¹¹⁴ on September 23 it sent the Senate a letter promising further limits rather than sending its chief executive to testify.¹¹⁵

Security and misuse. In December 2025, 404 Media found at least 60 Flock cameras exposed on the open internet without a password;¹¹⁶ a researcher used an unauthenticated token on Flock’s website to map more than 170,000 of its cameras;¹¹⁷ leaked code for Flock’s OS Investigate product showed it correlating plate scans with Social Security numbers and relatives from commercial databases;¹¹⁸ and two members of Congress asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate.¹¹⁹ A Washington Post analysis in August 2026 counted nearly 50 officers charged with or accused of using

About Using Flock to Search for Woman Who Had Abortion,” *404 Media*, September 2, 2026, <https://www.404media.co/texas-police-used-ai-to-write-report-about-using-flock-to-search-for-woman-who-had-abortion/> (quoted in Maass, “Flock Safety and Texas Sheriff Claimed License...” [88])

¹⁰⁵Peter Madsen, “Federal Immigration Officials Made 279 Queries into Bend’s Flock Safety Data in its First Three Weeks,” *The Source Weekly*, May 6, 2026, <https://www.bendsource.com/news/localnews/federal-immigration-officials-made-279-queries-into-bends-flock-safety-data-in-its-first-three-weeks/>

¹⁰⁶Jenna Peterson, “Lynnwood becomes one of the 1st in the state to terminate Flock contract,” *The Daily Herald*, Everett, Wash., February 23, 2026, <https://www.heraldnet.com/2026/02/23/lynnwood-becomes-one-of-the-1st-in-the-state-to-terminate-flock-contract/>

¹⁰⁷Eve Zuckoff, “Flock Safety failed to secure Boston vehicle data during 2025 pilot, report finds,” *WBUR News*, September 14, 2026, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2026/09/14/flock-boston-police-pilot-surveillance-technology-report> Jon Brodtkin, “Boston dumps Flock, says it shared data nationwide in violation of contract,” *Ars Technica*, September 15, 2026, <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/09/boston-dumps-flock-says-it-shared-data-nationwide-in-violation-of-contract/>

¹⁰⁸Dave Maass and Rindala Alajaji, “How Cops Are Using Flock Safety’s ALPR Network to Surveil Protesters and Activists,” *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, November 20, 2025, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/11/how-cops-are-using-flock-safety-s-alpr-network-surveil-protesters-and-activists>

¹⁰⁹Koebler, “Cops Search Thousands of Flock Cameras for...” (n. 22); Rindala Alajaji and Dave Maass, “The High Crime of “LMAO”: How Cops Are Treating Flock’s Mass Surveillance As a Joke,” *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, September 14, 2026, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2026/09/high-crime-lmao-how-cops-are-treating-mass-surveillance-joke>

¹¹⁰Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20); Flock Safety, “Does Flock Share Data With ICE? Here’s Flock’s Answer,” January 6, 2026, <https://www.flocksafety.com/blog/does-flock-share-data-with-ice>

¹¹¹Flock Safety, “Does Flock Share Data With ICE? Here’s Flock’s...” (n. 110)

¹¹²Christie Smythe, “Flock CEO: “They’re Gonna Enforce Immigration No Matter What Flock Does,”” *IPVM*, June 24, 2026, <https://ipvm.com/reports/flock-ceo-immigration>

¹¹³Chad Marlow and Jay Stanley, “Flock Safety Credibility Lost as it Repeatedly Lies to City Councils, Police Departments, and Public Across the Country,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, July 2, 2026, <https://www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/tracking-alpr-cameras/flock-safety-credibility-lost-as-it-repeatedly-lies-to-city-councils-police-departments-and-public-across-the-country>

¹¹⁴Roebuck, “Flock privacy updates: 7-day default for ALPR...” (n. 25); Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” (n. 67)

¹¹⁵“Facing congressional scrutiny, Flock details new search guardrails,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 23, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/facing-congressional-scrutiny-flock-details-new-search-guardrails-5d47e0dc> (quoted in Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” [14]); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

¹¹⁶Jason Koebler, “Flock Exposed Its AI-Powered Cameras to the Internet. We Tracked Ourselves,” *404 Media*, December 22, 2025, <https://www.404media.co/flock-exposed-its-ai-powered-cameras-to-the-internet-we-tracked-ourselves/> (headline and standfirst consulted; text behind a paywall)

¹¹⁷Nikita Mazurov, “Flock Wants the Most Detailed Map of Its Surveillance Cameras Taken Offline,” *The Intercept*, September 24, 2026, <https://theintercept.com/2026/09/24/how-many-flock-devices-in-united-states-300000/> Jowi Morales, “Flock seeks to have security researchers’ map of Flock cameras taken down — unauthenticated flaw exposed 335,701 camera locations nationwide,” *Tom’s Hardware*, September 27, 2026, <https://www.tomshardware.com/tech-industry/cyber-security/flock-seeks-to-have-security-researchers-map-of-flock-cameras-taken-down-unauthenticated-flaw-exposed-335-701-camera-locations-nationwide>

¹¹⁸Dhruv Mehrotra and Dell Cameron, “Flock Has a Powerful New AI Tool for Police. We Got Its Code,” *WIRED*, August 19, 2026, <https://www.wired.com/story/flock-safety-os-investigate/>

¹¹⁹Suzanne Smalley, “Lawmakers ask FTC to probe Flock Safety’s cybersecurity practices,” *The Record from Recorded Future News*, November 3, 2025, <https://therecord.media/wyden-letter-ftc-flock-safety-investigate-cybersecurity-practices>

Flock for unauthorized purposes, and the Institute for Justice’s database lists 67 incidents of officers using plate readers to track romantic interests, nearly all ending in criminal charges.¹²⁰ Flock’s chief executive said in August 2026, “We knew this was a risk nine years ago,” and separately apologized for comparing activists to “terrorists and Antifa” (sic).¹²¹

Cancellations and government responses. The Institute for Justice’s cancellation database counted 227 local governments that had ended plate-reader contracts since the start of 2025, and Ars Technica counted 90 departures in August 2026 alone.¹²² Texas’s governor blocked state funding and its transportation department stopped issuing highway permits; Florida’s transportation department revoked approval for readers on state rights-of-way, citing “concerning reports of misuse, data privacy concerns, and surveillance schemes”.¹²³ Some departures, including Denver, Kenosha, and Grand Chute, moved to Axon readers rather than dropping the technology, which is why the council’s ordinance should cover every vendor.¹²⁴ Senator Josh Hawley’s Judiciary subcommittee held a hearing on September 23, 2026 at which a wrongfully jailed Florida driver, the Institute for Justice, an Arizona sheriff, and the ACLU testified; the chief executives of Flock, Axon, Motorola, and Verkada all declined to appear.¹²⁵ Three federal bills were introduced in September, including the bipartisan No FLOCK Act,¹²⁶ and a proposed nationwide class action against Flock was filed in Georgia on August 25.¹²⁷ Flock raised money at an \$8.4 billion valuation in April 2026, and in September opened voluntary buyouts and, according to Semafor, began weighing a sale, with Axon and Motorola Solutions named as possible buyers.¹²⁸ A city that signs a five-year contract with Flock today does not know who will own its data in 2028. A state-by-state summary of the cancellations is in Appendix B.

5. Legal exposure: the Fourth Amendment, open records, and liability

No court that binds Wausau has yet held that searching Flock’s database is a Fourth Amendment search, but the Supreme Court’s June 2026 decision in *Chatrue v. United States* removed the main reasoning courts had used to say it is not, the question is now before a Wisconsin circuit court, and Wisconsin’s open-records law makes every image and search log a public record the city must produce on request. The council does not need to wait for a ruling to act; the ruling, when it comes, is a reason not to be holding the data.

¹²⁰Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” (n. 67); “How police officers used a vast network of cameras to spy on their exes,” *The Washington Post*, August 2, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2026/08/02/how-police-officers-used-vast-network-cameras-spy-their-exes/> (quoted in Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” [19]); Christopher Ingraham, “Police Have Reportedly Used License Plate Readers to Stalk Romantic Interests Dozens of Times in Recent Years,” *Institute for Justice*, April 27, 2026, <https://ij.org/police-have-reportedly-used-license-plate-readers-to-stalk-romantic-interests-at-least-14-times-in-recent-years/>

¹²¹Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

¹²²Institute for Justice, “Institute for Justice Unveils New Database Tracking Cancellations of License Plate Reader Contracts,” press release, August 26, 2026, <https://ij.org/institute-for-justice-unveils-new-database-tracking-cancellations-of-license-plate-reader-contracts/> Farivar, “Cities terminate Flock contracts at record pace...” (n. 15)

¹²³Rory Mir, “Victory! Austin Organizers Cancel City’s Flock ALPR Contract,” *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, June 6, 2025, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/06/victory-austin-organizers-cancel-citys-flock-alpr-contract> Ayden Runnels, “Texas freezes installation of Flock cameras on state roads,” *The Texas Tribune*, September 17, 2026, <https://www.texastribune.org/2026/09/17/texas-flock-camera-pause-highways-txdot/> David Ingram, “Florida bans Flock cameras and other license plate readers from state highways,” *NBC News*, August 31, 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/florida-bans-flock-license-plate-readers-state-highways-rcna595420>

¹²⁴Joseph Cox, “Cities Are Ditching Flock, Immediately Replacing It With Axon License Plate Readers,” *404 Media*, August 6, 2026, <https://www.404media.co/cities-are-ditching-flock-immediately-replacing-it-with-axon-license-plate-readers/> (quoted in Polcyn, “Kenosha police ending Flock contract, moving to Axon” [166]); Polcyn, “Kenosha police ending Flock contract, moving to Axon” (n. 84)

¹²⁵U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime and Counterterrorism, hearing, “Always Watching: Flock’s Nationwide AI Surveillance Network,” September 23, 2026, <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/committee-activity/hearings/always-watching-flocks-nationwide-ai-surveillance-network> Downs, “Flock, Axon dodge Senate hearing after invite...” (n. 101); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

¹²⁶Office of U.S. Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi, “Krishnamoorthi and Cloud Introduce Bipartisan No FLOCK Act to Crack Down on Abuse of License Plate Readers,” press release, September 15, 2026, <https://krishnamoorthi.house.gov/media/press-releases/krishnamoorthi-and-cloud-introduce-bipartisan-no-flock-act-crack-down-abuse> Office of U.S. Representative Greg Steube, “Rep. Steube Introduces FLAFO Act to Rein In Warrantless ‘Flock Safety’ Surveillance,” press release, September 24, 2026, <https://steube.house.gov/press-releases/rep-steube-introduces-flafo-act-to-rein-in-warrantless-flock-safety-surveillance/>

¹²⁷Tim Darnell, “Georgia woman files class action suit against Flock Safety,” *Atlanta News First*, September 4, 2026, <https://www.atlantaneewsfirst.com/2026/09/04/georgia-woman-sues-flock-safety-claims-aggressive-license-plate-tracking/> Olivia Prentzel, “2 Boulder residents sue over city’s use of Flock cameras, citing widespread privacy violations,” *The Colorado Sun*, May 28, 2026, <https://coloradosun.com/2026/05/28/lawsuit-boulder-police-flock-cameras/>

¹²⁸Cory Weinberg and Julia Hornstein, “Police Tech Startup Flock Safety Valued at \$8.4 Billion Amid Civic Protests,” *The Information*, April 17, 2026, <https://www.theinformation.com/articles/police-tech-startup-flock-safety-valued-8-4-billion-amid-civic-protests> (headline and standfirst consulted; text behind a paywall); Joedy McCreary, “Flock tracks your license plate. We tracked the \$2M it spent on lobbying,” *Arkansas Advocate*, republished from *OpenSecrets*, August 31, 2026, <https://arkansasadvocate.com/2026/08/31/flock-tracks-your-license-plate-we-tracked-the-2m-it-spent-on-lobbying/> Dave, “Flock Offers Employees Buyouts as Customers Flee” (n. 101); Goswami, “Flock Safety weighs selling itself” (n. 15)

Where the Fourth Amendment stands. *Carpenter v. United States* (2018) held that historical cell-site location records require a warrant, but its caveat that it did not reach “conventional surveillance techniques and tools, such as security cameras” became the sentence courts cite to uphold plate readers.¹²⁹ A Virginia trial court held in June 2024 that warrantless use of Norfolk’s 172-camera Flock network was a search;¹³⁰ a federal judge in the civil case over the same network ruled for the city in January 2026, reasoning that 176 cameras with 21-day retention could not track “the whole of a person’s movements,” and that ruling is on appeal in the Fourth Circuit.¹³¹ *Chatrie*, decided June 29, 2026, then held that police conduct a search when they obtain a person’s cell-phone location data from a third party, “even though for only a limited time,” and that “Where the Fourth Amendment applies, it applies regardless of ‘the quality or quantity of information’ the government obtains”.¹³² The opinion does not mention plate readers, and it distinguished surveillance “confined to public roads,” a distinction plate-reader defenders will cite; the Institute for Justice argues the quantity holding undercuts the “not comprehensive enough” reasoning of the decisions favorable to cities. A federal district judge in California held on September 10, 2026 that plate-reader database queries are not searches;¹³³ the same day the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty sued Waukesha County and 11 municipalities in Waukesha County Circuit Court, arguing that warrantless searches of the “Flock Location Database” are searches under *Chatrie* and seeking a warrant requirement, not removal.¹³⁴ So far Flock and its customers “have prevailed in cases brought under both pathways,” suppression motions and civil suits,¹³⁵ but the decisions most favorable to cities predate *Chatrie* and a Wisconsin court now has the question. If the trend turns, cities holding the data face suppressed evidence in pending prosecutions and civil claims under Section 1983. A Washington case shows a quieter risk: deputies let Flock’s 30-day deletion run in a case they were prosecuting, and the trial court threw out the charge for “governmental mismanagement,” because a 30-day auto-delete destroys evidence for defendants as readily as for police.¹³⁶ The cases are listed in Appendix B.

Wisconsin’s constitution and statutes. Article I, Section 11 of the Wisconsin Constitution mirrors the Fourth Amendment, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court has generally read it in step with federal doctrine, so *Chatrie* and the cases that follow it set the floor here.¹³⁷ The Legislature has already decided that phone location data needs a warrant: Wis. Stat. 968.373 requires one to “track a communications device,” and 968.375 requires one for records of a device’s location.¹³⁸ It has said nothing about vehicle location. The body-camera law, Wis. Stat. 165.87, shows what a statute on retention, purpose, and audits looks like;¹³⁹ two bills to write one for plate readers failed on March 23, 2026, and Rep. Callahan’s January 2027 hearing is the next opportunity.¹⁴⁰

Open records: every image is the city’s record. Wisconsin’s public-records law carries “a presumption of complete public access” under which “only in an exceptional case may access be denied”.¹⁴¹ A “record” includes any “electronically generated or stored data”.¹⁴² Section 19.36(3) makes records “produced or collected under a contract” with a vendor available “to the same extent as if the record were maintained by the authority,” which puts Flock-hosted images, hotlists,

¹²⁹Wikipedia, s.v. “Carpenter v. United States” accessed September 28, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpenter_v._United_States

¹³⁰Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20); Electronic Privacy Information Center - Updates, “Vehicle Fingerprinting Through Pervasive Camera Surveillance Likely Violates Fourth Amendment, Court Finds,” February 11, 2025, <https://epic.org/vehicle-fingerprinting-through-pervasive-camera-surveillance-likely-violates-fourth-amendment-court-finds/>

¹³¹Joe Dodson, “Judge holds Norfolk’s license plate reader use constitutional,” *Courthouse News Service*, January 27, 2026, <https://www.courthousenews.com/judge-holds-norfolks-license-plate-reader-use-constitutional/> “Norfolk license plate reader lawsuit gains momentum after U.S. Supreme Court ruling,” *13News Now*, 2026, <https://www.13newsnow.com/article/news/local/mycity/norfolk/norfolk-license-plate-reader-lawsuit-gains-momentum-after-us-supreme-court-ruling/291-7785e25b-7a48-4d3e-8560-b456b4925dc5> (headline and page metadata consulted)

¹³²*Chatrie*, slip op. (2026) (n. 10); Wikipedia, “Chatrie v. United States” (n. 10)

¹³³Elizabeth Nolan Brown, “No Warrant, No Suspicion, No Problem: Flock and Border Cellphone Searches Excluded from 4th Amendment Rules,” *Reason*, September 21, 2026, <https://reason.com/2026/09/21/no-warrant-no-suspicion-no-problem-flock-and-border-cellphone-searches-excluded-from-4th-amendment-rules/> Jeff Welty, “Quick Thoughts About Flock Cameras, the Fourth Amendment, and the Courts,” *North Carolina Criminal Law* (UNC School of Government blog), September 14, 2026, <https://nccriminallaw.sog.unc.edu/2026/09/14/quick-thoughts-about-flock-cameras-the-fourth-amendment-and-the-courts/>

¹³⁴Casey, “WILL Sues 11 Waukesha County Communities Over...” (n. 11); Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, “New WILL Lawsuit Targets Warrantless, No Limits Government Surveillance,” press release, September 10, 2026, <https://will-law.org/new-will-lawsuit-targets-warrantless-no-limits-government-surveillance/>

¹³⁵Welty, “Quick Thoughts About Flock Cameras” (n. 133)

¹³⁶*Simonson* (Wash. Ct. App. 2026) (n. 21)

¹³⁷Wis. Const. art. I, § 11, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/constitution/wi_unannotated

¹³⁸Wis. Stat. § 968.373, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/968/373>

¹³⁹Wis. Stat. § 165.87, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/165/87>

¹⁴⁰Wis. A.B. 576, 2025–26 Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025), <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab576> Wis. A.B. 883, 2025–26 Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025) (relating to limiting the use of automatic registration plate readers), <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab883> Wis. A.B. 300, 2025–26 Leg. (n. 96); White, “Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license...” (n. 14)

¹⁴¹Wis. Stat. § 19.31, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/19/ii/31>

¹⁴²Wis. Stat. § 19.32, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/19/ii/32/2>

and search logs squarely in the city's custody.¹⁴³ Denial requires a request-by-request "specific demonstration" of need,¹⁴⁴ and a requester who wins in court collects attorney fees, damages of at least \$100, and up to \$1,000 in forfeitures for an arbitrary denial.¹⁴⁵ Unlike body-camera footage, plate-reader data has no statutory exemption. Washington's version of this law produced a November 2025 ruling that Flock images must be released to anyone who asks, after which Lynnwood, Redmond, Olympia, and Mountlake Terrace shut their cameras off rather than become a public lookup service for every plate in town; one requester there has collected more than \$300,000 from 15 governments.¹⁴⁶ Wisconsin agencies have already lived the mirror image: Fond du Lac and Winnebago counties quit after agencies in other states released their search logs, including active investigations, under those states' laws.¹⁴⁷ Wausau's own audit logs are already in USA TODAY's hands through records requests, and the Wausau Pilot's Watch Ledger lets any resident look up which agencies can search Wausau's cameras.¹⁴⁸ Marathon County's blanket refusal to release audit logs and camera locations is the kind of denial Section 19.37 penalizes.¹⁴⁹

Liability for stops and misuse. A wrongful stop that begins with an unverified hit is a claim against the city under *Monell*, and the Ninth Circuit has held that a jury may find a Fourth Amendment violation where officers drew guns on a misread plate.¹⁵⁰ Marathon County's own policy concedes "an alert alone cannot justify detaining anyone".¹⁵¹ Officer misuse is prosecuted under Wis. Stat. 946.12, misconduct in public office, as in the Milwaukee cases, and the stalking statute, Wis. Stat. 940.32, expressly covers "monitoring or recording the activities of the victim" by "any other electronic means".¹⁵² Wisconsin's breach-notification law defines personal information narrowly enough that a leak of plate-and-location data would likely fall outside it, leaving residents with no notice right if Flock's servers are breached, as its Condor cameras were in 2025.¹⁵³

Immigration law does not require sharing. The federal statute cities are warned about, 8 U.S.C. 1373, bars restrictions on exchanging information about a person's citizenship or immigration status; vehicle location data is neither. The Seventh Circuit, which covers Wisconsin, twice struck down federal attempts to condition Byrne JAG grants on immigration cooperation, and the 2025 executive orders targeting "sanctuary" jurisdictions are under a preliminary injunction.¹⁵⁴ Wausau has blocked federal share requests and turned off nationwide sharing since May 2026 without any reported federal consequence.¹⁵⁵ Wisconsin's own bill to compel sheriff cooperation with ICE was vetoed on April 3, 2026 and the override failed.¹⁵⁶ Ending the program is the strongest form of not sharing.

What other states have done. At least 16 states had statutory retention limits by 2019, and 2026 added Washington, New Mexico, Connecticut, and Kentucky; the direction is uniform, toward short retention and purpose limits, and the laws are summarized in Appendix B.¹⁵⁷ Even under the strictest of them, cities keep leaving: Virginia's 21-day purge did not stop the Norfolk litigation, and Illinois's ban on immigration sharing was violated through the network before the

¹⁴³Wis. Stat. § 19.36 (n. 12)

¹⁴⁴Wis. Stat. § 19.35 (n. 95)

¹⁴⁵Wis. Stat. § 19.37, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/19/ii/37>

¹⁴⁶Lipton, "Washington Court Rules That Data Captured on..." (n. 12); Jenna Peterson, "Mountlake Terrace cancels Flock Safety contract," *HeraldNet*, December 5, 2025, <https://www.heraldnet.com/2025/12/05/mountlake-terrace-cancels-flock-safety-contract/>; Isaac Stone Simonelli, "Man sued local governments in WA over Flock records. He's won \$300K," *Cascadia Daily News*, August 20, 2026, <https://www.cascadiadaily.com/2026/aug/20/a-man-has-sued-local-governments-in-wa-over-flock-records-hes-gotten-300k/>

¹⁴⁷Siewert, "Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as..." (n. 2)

¹⁴⁸Wausau Pilot & Review, "The Watch Ledger: Flock Cameras in Wisconsin," September 5, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/the-watch-ledger-flock-cameras-in-wisconsin/>

¹⁴⁹Siewert, "23,000 license plate searches, no required..." (n. 7)

¹⁵⁰*Green v. City and County of San Francisco*, 751 F.3d 1039 (9th Cir. 2014) (not consulted directly; see [75])

¹⁵¹Shereen Siewert, "License plate readers, a Chief Deputy ordinance rewrite and a \$595,000 squad car ask go before Marathon County committee Tuesday," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, August 8, 2026, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/08/08/license-plate-readers-a-chief-deputy-ordinance-rewrite-and-a-595000-squad-car-ask-go-before-marathon-county-committee-tuesday/>

¹⁵²Wis. Stat. § 946.12, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/946/ii/12> Wis. Stat. § 940.32, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/940/ii/32>

¹⁵³Wis. Stat. § 134.98, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/134/98> Wikipedia, "Flock Safety" (n. 20)

¹⁵⁴Congressional Research Service, Legal Sidebar LSB11321 (2025), https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/LSB/HTML/LSB11321.web.html (not consulted; see [143]); Wikipedia, s.v. "City and County of San Francisco v. Donald J. Trump 3:25-cv-01350 (N.D. Cal.)" accessed September 28, 2026, <https://clearinghouse.net/case/46136/>

¹⁵⁵Siewert, "Wausau police defend Flock camera program as..." (n. 19)

¹⁵⁶Wis. A.B. 24, 2025–26 Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025) (relating to county sheriff assistance with certain federal immigration functions), <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab24>

¹⁵⁷Kayla Susalla, "Automatic License Plate Readers Face Growing State Restrictions in 2026," *MultiState*, September 23, 2026, <https://www.multistate.us/insider/2026/9/23/automatic-license-plate-readers-face-growing-state-restrictions-in-2026>

state caught it.¹⁵⁸ A retention statute limits how long a record exists. It does not change who can search it while it does.

6. Why settings and safeguards do not hold

Every safeguard now proposed for Flock has already been tried somewhere and has failed in a documented way, because each one lives inside a company-controlled system the city cannot inspect. Stevens Point ran the strictest configuration in central Wisconsin, with 7-day retention, Wisconsin-only sharing, and monthly audits, and still suspended its cameras in September 2026 because the problem was the company, not the settings.¹⁵⁹

The safeguard	What it promises	Where it failed
“We only share within Wisconsin”	Outsiders cannot search Wausau’s cameras	Wausau’s own setting was nationwide from 2023 until May 2026, and a captain can restore it. ¹⁶⁰ Bend, Lynnwood, and Boston found sharing on without their knowledge. ¹⁶¹ Any of the 205 partner agencies can search on a federal agency’s behalf, which Flock’s chief executive calls “indirect access,” ¹⁶² and the county cameras ringing the city share with 40 states ¹⁶³
“Data is deleted after 30 days”	Nothing about a resident persists	Section 4.3 licenses Flock’s “anonymized” derivatives forever; Flock says Traffic Analytics data has been kept for five years, and a Flock representative offered Sheboygan five years of its own data. ¹⁶⁴ Wausau’s 30 days is four times Flock’s own recommended default ¹⁶⁵
“Every search is logged and audited”	Misuse will be caught	Wausau samples 10 of more than 10,000 searches; Marathon County’s policy says audits “may” occur. ¹⁶⁶ Milwaukee’s Josue Ayala typed “investigation” 179 times and was caught by his victim, and the detective assigned to his case was charged with the same conduct ¹⁶⁷
“It cannot be used for immigration or abortion cases”	Sensitive uses are filtered by design	A June 2023 FBI query that reached Wausau’s network listed immigration as its reason. ¹⁶⁸ A Texas deputy searched 83,000 cameras for a woman who had an abortion; ¹⁶⁹ a Menasha officer checked whether his girlfriend had visited an abortion clinic. ¹⁷⁰ Flock’s federal-sharing toggle arrived in 2026, after exposure, as a company setting the company can change ¹⁷¹
“The vendor tells us the truth”	The council can rely on Flock’s representations	Oshkosh’s police found Flock’s heat-map denial untrue within 24 hours. ¹⁷² Wausau told residents “no data is sold to third parties” while Section 4.3 sat in the contract. ¹⁷³ Flock’s chief executive said the company had no federal contracts while a Customs and Border Protection pilot was running, and Flock’s website called the Texas abortion search a missing-person case. ¹⁷⁴ The ACLU’s conclusion: “Reputable governments should not do business with disreputable companies” ¹⁷⁵
“We can leave if it goes wrong”	The city stays in control	Verona bagged its cameras after Flock refused removal for months. ¹⁷⁶ Littleton, Massachusetts found five cameras switched back on after the town disabled them, and Cleveland’s kept running after its contract expired. ¹⁷⁷ Section 10.1 bars the city from touching Flock’s hardware during the term, and Section 7.2 obliges Flock to remove it afterward only within “a commercially reasonable time period” ¹⁷⁸

¹⁵⁸ Illinois Secretary of State, “Giannoulis audit finds license plate reader company in violation of state law,” press release, August 25, 2025, <https://www.ilsos.gov/news/2025/august-25-2025-giannoulis-audit-finds-license-plate-reader-company-in-violation-of-state-law.html> (headline and page metadata consulted)

¹⁵⁹ Pfantz, “Stevens Point to suspend Flock camera use in...” (n. 9)

¹⁶⁰ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

¹⁶¹ Madsen, “Federal Immigration Officials Made 279 Queries...” (n. 105); Peterson, “Lynnwood becomes one of the 1st in the state to...” (n. 106); Zuckoff, “Flock Safety failed to secure Boston vehicle...” (n. 107)

¹⁶² Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

¹⁶³ Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

¹⁶⁴ Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2); Casey, “Flock Safety cameras in Sheboygan covered up by city” (n. 32)

¹⁶⁵ Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” (n. 67)

¹⁶⁶ Siewert, “23,000 license plate searches, no required...” (n. 7)

¹⁶⁷ Holmes, “Milwaukee officer accused of misusing Flock...” (n. 91); Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86)

¹⁶⁸ Siewert, “Wausau police defend Flock camera program as...” (n. 19)

¹⁶⁹ Koebler, “Texas Police Used AI to Write Report About...” (n. 104)

¹⁷⁰ Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86)

¹⁷¹ Flock Safety, “Does Flock Share Data With ICE? Here’s Flock’s...” (n. 110)

¹⁷² Best, “Oshkosh council rescinds Flock camera contract...” (n. 78)

¹⁷³ Siewert, “Flock pullout reaches central Wisconsin as...” (n. 3)

¹⁷⁴ Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20); Maass, “Flock Safety and Texas Sheriff Claimed License...” (n. 104)

¹⁷⁵ Marlow, “Flock Safety Credibility Lost as it Repeatedly...” (n. 113)

¹⁷⁶ Koebler, “Flock ‘Objects to Our Removing Their...” (n. 77)

¹⁷⁷ Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

“Flock’s August 2026 reforms fix this”	7-day default, mandatory Audit Assistance, case codes	The 7-day default applies to new customers, and the audit tool can be defeated by “button-mashing” or gibberish; ¹⁷⁹ the ACLU notes officers already “circumvented search-purpose restrictions by entering vague or meaningless explanations”. ¹⁸⁰ None of the reforms is in Wausau’s contract
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The structural problem. Milwaukee’s council demanded seven safeguards from its police department in 2026: case numbers on every search, automated misuse detection, independent auditing, a warrant requirement for immigration searches, public reporting, a list of every agency that can search its data, and more.¹⁸¹ Every one of those depends on features, logs, and settings that Flock builds, hosts, and can change. A city can write a policy for its own officers; it cannot write one for the 205 other agencies with access, for the company’s engineers, or for the company’s next product. The only setting Wausau fully controls is whether the cameras are on.

The bipartisan civil liberties problem

The case for ending the program does not require agreement about who might abuse a record of everyone’s movements. It requires only a concern that someone will. In 1975 and 1976 the Senate’s Church Committee examined what federal agencies had done with the surveillance tools of their day under every president from Franklin Roosevelt to Richard Nixon, and found that “intelligence excesses, at home and abroad, have been found in every administration. They are not the product of any single party, administration, or man”.¹⁸² The CIA and FBI ran twelve mail-opening operations between 1940 and 1973, the largest of which opened more than 215,000 letters; from the early 1960s until 1973 the NSA kept a watch list of 1,200 American citizens and domestic groups, “many of whom were active in the anti-war and civil rights movements,” placed there “without prior judicial warrant or even the prior approval of the Attorney General”; and the FBI’s COINTELPRO was “designed to ‘disrupt’ groups and ‘neutralize’ individuals deemed to be threats to domestic security,” with targets that included Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.¹⁸³ Every one of those programs was built for a purpose its operators considered legitimate, and the committee’s chairman, Senator Frank Church, warned on NBC’s *Meet the Press* in August 1975 that such a capability “at any time could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left”.¹⁸⁴

The present moment sharpens the point from both directions. On September 25, 2025 the White House issued National Security Presidential Memorandum 7, “Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence,” three days after an executive order designating anti-fascism protestors as a domestic terrorist organization. It directs the Joint Terrorism Task Forces to carry out “a comprehensive national strategy to investigate, prosecute, and disrupt entities and individuals engaged in acts of political violence,” directs the Treasury to trace funding streams, and lists as indicators “anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity,” “extremism on migration, race, and gender,” and “hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality”.¹⁸⁵ Flock’s chief executive has compared activists to “terrorists and Antifa”.¹⁸⁶ The FBI, ICE, the Secret Service, and the Postal Inspection Service have reached the Flock network through local partners without contracts of their own;¹⁸⁷ more than 50 agencies have run searches tied to protests;¹⁸⁸ a Texas deputy used 83,345 cameras to look for a woman who had an abortion;¹⁸⁹ and the Marathon County sheriff’s office, whose cameras share nationwide, joined ICE’s 287(g) program in November 2025.¹⁹⁰ A reader who trusts the current administration should ask how the same directive reads under the next one. A reader who does not already has the answer. Whatever definition of an enemy a future official adopts, a searchable record of where every Wausau car has been is what turns a label into a list of addresses.

¹⁷⁸Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

¹⁷⁹Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

¹⁸⁰Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” (n. 67)

¹⁸¹Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86)

¹⁸²U.S. Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, Book II, S. Rep. No. 94-755 (1976), https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94755_II.pdf

¹⁸³Church Committee, *Book II* (1976) (n. 182)

¹⁸⁴Frank Church, interview on *Meet the Press*, NBC, August 17, 1975, quoted in Wikipedia, s.v. “Church Committee,” accessed September 28, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Committee

¹⁸⁵The White House, National Security Presidential Memorandum NSPM-7, “Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence,” September 25, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/> Executive Order, “Designating Antifa as a Domestic Terrorist Organization,” September 22, 2025

¹⁸⁶Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

¹⁸⁷Cox, “ICE, Secret Service, Navy All Had Access to...” (n. 103); Koebler, “ICE Taps into Nationwide AI-Enabled Camera...” (n. 102)

¹⁸⁸Maass, “How Cops Are Using Flock Safety’s ALPR Network...” (n. 108)

¹⁸⁹Cox, “A Texas Cop Searched License Plate Cameras...” (n. 104); Maass, “Flock Safety and Texas Sheriff Claimed License...” (n. 104)

¹⁹⁰Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Jayshi, “ACLU denounces Marathon County sheriff’s...” (n. 48)

The coalition against the cameras is already bipartisan. Senator Josh Hawley chaired the Senate hearing;¹⁹¹ Representatives Thomas Massie and Eric Burlison filed the Flock-Off Act and Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi and Michael Cloud the bipartisan No FLOCK Act;¹⁹² Florida’s governor ordered readers off state highways and Texas froze funding and permits;¹⁹³ the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty is suing Waukesha County while the ACLU of Wisconsin campaigns against the same cameras;¹⁹⁴ Rep. Calvin Callahan of Tomahawk says readers that cannot operate with warrants “have no business operating in Wisconsin,” and Attorney General Josh Kaul says he does not want “a surveillance state”.¹⁹⁵ They disagree about nearly everything else, but they agree that the Fourth Amendment’s ban on general searches was written by people who had lived under a government that treated its critics as enemies, and that a device which records everyone in order to find anyone is the general search in modern form. The council does not need to decide who the next abuser will be. It needs only to decline to keep the record that would make the abuse easy.

7. The money and how to exit

Ending the program saves the city \$100,000 in remaining payments, costs nothing in penalties if the council uses the non-appropriation clause, and removes an uninsured liability that has cost other cities up to \$1.9 million per wrongful stop.

Item	Amount	Source
Annual payment	\$50,000 (20 cameras at \$2,500)	196
Paid to date	\$197,547.95 since 2023	197
Remaining if the contract runs to term	\$100,000 (December 2026 and December 2027)	198
Cost to exit under Section 11.16	\$0, with 30 days’ written notice, if the council does not appropriate the funds; the clause as attached to the 2023 packet says “without penalty or other cost”	199
Cost per closed case	About \$6,500, using the department’s own examples of “more than 30 cases” against payments through September 2026	200
Marathon County’s program	\$26,500 a year, grant-funded; \$4,000 to exit	201

The 2023 trade. Police told the council in October 2023 that a five-year term would lock in \$2,500 per camera ahead of a rise to \$3,000 and “save \$50,000 over the life of the deal”.²⁰² The price of that discount was the exit clause, which under the one-year deal would have cost \$10,000 to exercise, and the department now cites the missing clause as the reason it cannot leave. The non-appropriation clause makes that argument moot: Flock’s own contract conditions every payment on appropriation, and the council controls appropriation.

Costs that do not appear on the invoice. Officers ran more than 10,000 searches last year, and a captain reviews flagged searches monthly and writes an annual audit.²⁰³ The city answers records requests for logs, locations, and audits. Every wrongful stop is a potential Section 1983 claim against the city, not Flock, whose contract disclaims liability for “incomplete, corrupt, or inaccurate data” and caps everything else at one year’s fees.²⁰⁴ Aurora paid \$1.9 million, Contra Costa County \$49,500, and Detroit settled a similar case for stops that began with a plate-reader hit or search.²⁰⁵ Every officer who misuses the system is a criminal case, an internal investigation, and a potential civil claim; Milwaukee has had two this year.²⁰⁶ Wausau voters approved a public-safety funding referendum in April 2026 by 89 votes;²⁰⁷ every

¹⁹¹ Senate Judiciary, “Always Watching” hearing (2026) (n. 125)

¹⁹² Office of Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), “Krishnamoorthi and Cloud Introduce Bipartisan...” (n. 126); Office of Rep. Greg Steube (R-FL), “Rep. Steube Introduces FLAFO Act to Rein In...” (n. 126)

¹⁹³ Ingram, “Florida bans Flock cameras and other license...” (n. 123); Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” (n. 67)

¹⁹⁴ Casey, “WILL Sues 11 Waukesha County Communities Over...” (n. 11); Holmes, “Flock on shaky ground in Wisconsin as...” (n. 100)

¹⁹⁵ White, “Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license...” (n. 14); Hunsaker, “Candidates for Wisconsin Attorney General speak...” (n. 14)

¹⁹⁶ Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

¹⁹⁷ Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2)

¹⁹⁸ Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2)

¹⁹⁹ Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

²⁰⁰ Leischner, “Wausau Police Captain Discusses FLOCK Camera...” (n. 6)

²⁰¹ Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

²⁰² Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

²⁰³ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

²⁰⁴ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

²⁰⁵ Burke, “Black family who was removed from car at...” (n. 65); Lisa Fernandez, “Sheriff pays East Bay privacy advocate nearly \$50K in license plate reader case,” *KTVU FOX 2*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.ktvu.com/news/sheriff-pays-east-bay-privacy-advocate-nearly-50k-in-license-plate-reader-case> Lawrence Hodge, “Police Wrongly Arrest Woman Using License Plate Scanner Data For A Shooting She Wasn’t Involved In,” *Jalopnik*, September 17, 2024, <https://www.jalopnik.com/police-wrongly-arrest-woman-using-license-plate-scanner-1851649701/>

²⁰⁶ Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86)

public-safety dollar is contested, and \$50,000 a year redirected to lighting, investigators, or monitored cameras in parking areas buys interventions with stronger evidence and no surveillance record.

How to stop paying. The council's authority is plain: Wis. Stat. 62.11(5) gives it "management and control of the city property, finances ... and the public service," and Wis. Stat. 65.90 makes the annual budget its instrument.²⁰⁸ Section 11.16 contains none of the limiting language, "shall not be based on discretionary budget decisions," that Flock added to its February 2026 form terms;²⁰⁹ the 2023 resolution authorized a contract "in substantial compliance" with the attached text, so the city attorney should confirm the signed copy matches and should check Wisconsin case law on non-appropriation clauses before the vote.²¹⁰ The clause is not a termination-for-convenience right. It is triggered by a budget decision, so the council must leave the money out first and send the notice second. The order form bills each contract year in advance with 30 days to pay, so the next \$50,000 invoice should issue around December 15, 2026;²¹¹ no city official has said which year's budget carries it, and if the finance director says 2026, removing the money takes a budget amendment by two-thirds of the members-elect under Wis. Stat. 65.90(5).²¹² Timing is tight. The council adopted the 2026 budget on November 11, 2025, the mayor vetoed it the next day, and the override, which takes eight of eleven votes, came on November 25.²¹³ A repeat in 2026 would put the notice past November 15 and the end of the 30 days past the invoice date. The first sentence of Section 11.16 still removes the payment obligation once the money is out of the budget, but a late notice hands Flock an invoice to argue over, so the council should adopt the budget and direct the notice at the same meeting and have the clerk send it that day by email and certified mail, as Section 11.15 provides. The budget and any directing resolution are both subject to mayoral veto under Wis. Stat. 62.09(8)(c).²¹⁴ Expect Flock to delay removal, as it did in Verona: Section 10.1 bars the city from touching Flock hardware during the term but does not survive termination, and Section 7.2 obliges Flock to remove the hardware afterward only within "a commercially reasonable time period," so the city attorney should confirm that covering the cameras once the notice period has run does not breach the agreement.²¹⁵ Whatever the council decides, the clerk should also send written notice of non-renewal before November 15, 2028, because Section 7.1 otherwise renews the agreement for two more years.²¹⁶

8. What we ask the Council to do

The council should end the Flock program through the 2027 budget, using the contract's non-appropriation clause, and adopt an ordinance so that no city department buys mass-surveillance technology again without a public vote. The steps below are ordered by what the council controls directly.

1. **Strike the \$50,000 Flock appropriation from the 2027 budget** and direct the city attorney to deliver written notice of termination for non-appropriation under Section 11.16 the same day, and in any case by November 15, 2026, or 30 days before the invoice date the finance director confirms. If the finance director reports that the December 2026 invoice is charged to the 2026 budget, first amend that budget by the two-thirds vote Wis. Stat. 65.90(5) requires. Plan for a veto: the 2025 cycle ran from adoption on November 11 to override on November 25. Send a separate written notice of non-renewal under Section 7.1 at the same time, so the agreement cannot renew by default in 2028.
2. **Direct the police department, effective on the date of notice, to disable all 20 cameras, revoke every sharing relationship, and preserve nothing beyond evidence already downloaded for open cases.** If Flock has not removed the hardware within 30 days, direct public works to cover the cameras, as Verona and Sheboygan did, once the city attorney confirms Section 10.1 no longer applies after termination.

²⁰⁷ Mike Leischner, "Local Election Results for April 7th, 2026," *WSAU News/Talk 550 AM*, April 7, 2026, <https://wsau.com/2026/04/07/local-election-results-for-april-7th-2026/>

²⁰⁸ Wis. Stat. § 62.11, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/62/i/11/5> Wis. Stat. § 65.90, <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/65/90>

²⁰⁹ Pelt, "The Deal has been Altered Further: Flock..." (n. 39)

²¹⁰ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16); Siewert, "Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One..." (n. 17)

²¹¹ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

²¹² Wis. Stat. § 65.90 (n. 208)

²¹³ Damakant Jayshi, "Wausau approves 2026 budget with slight tax increase," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, November 12, 2025, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2025/11/12/wausau-approves-2026-budget-with-slight-tax-increase/> Damakant Jayshi, "City Council leaders say Diny vetoed budget because he 'did not get his way'," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, November 14, 2025, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2025/11/14/city-council-leaders-say-diny-vetoed-budget-because-he-did-not-get-his-way/> Damakant Jayshi, "Wausau City Council overrides mayor's veto on 2026 budget," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, November 25, 2025, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2025/11/25/wausau-city-council-overrides-mayors-veto-on-2026-budget/>

²¹⁴ Wis. Stat. § 62.09(8)(c), [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/62.09\(8\)\(c\)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/document/statutes/62.09(8)(c))

²¹⁵ City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

²¹⁶ Isiah Holmes, "Verona has waited months for Flock cameras to come down after canceling contract," *Wisconsin Examiner*, February 2, 2026, <https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2026/02/02/verona-expected-to-begin-work-to-removing-flock-cameras/>

3. **Require written certification from Flock** that all Wausau data, including anonymized and aggregated derivatives, has been deleted and is not included in Traffic Analytics or any other product, and reserve the city’s claims for breach of the contract’s “shall not sell” promise. Before that, put the written questions in Appendix B to Flock; the answers determine whether the city also has a breach claim under Section 1.1.
4. **Adopt a surveillance-technology ordinance** requiring council approval after a public hearing before any department acquires, funds, or uses automated license plate readers, audio detection, drones, or similar technology of any vendor, with mandatory annual public reporting for anything approved. Cottage Grove ordered such an ordinance on September 21, 2026, and Madison has one.²¹⁷
5. **Adopt a resolution asking the Marathon County Board and Sheriff Billeb** to terminate the county’s contract for the \$4,000 exit fee, or at minimum to end nationwide and federal sharing, cut retention to 7 days, and change the audit policy from “may” to “shall”.²¹⁸
6. **Direct the police department to report to the council**, before the budget vote, the number of arrests, charges, and convictions from 2023 to 2026 in which Flock data was material, so the record of what \$197,547.95 bought is complete.
7. **Register the city’s support** for statewide legislation at the Assembly Consumer Protection Committee hearing in January 2027.²¹⁹

²¹⁷Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13); Wiebe, “More than 80 license plate cameras are operating...” (n. 76)

²¹⁸Siewert, “23,000 license plate searches, no required...” (n. 7)

²¹⁹White, “Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license...” (n. 14)

APPENDIX A — DRAFT RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NO. ____

A resolution ending the City of Wausau’s automated license plate reader program and establishing council oversight of surveillance technology

WHEREAS, the City of Wausau has operated 20 Flock Safety automated license plate reader cameras since 2023 under a five-year agreement at \$50,000 per year, and has paid \$197,547.95 to date; and

WHEREAS, those cameras recorded 233,355 vehicle sightings in the 30 days ending September 1, 2026, nearly all of vehicles suspected of no offense, and the data is searchable by approximately 205 outside agencies; and

WHEREAS, Section 4.3 of the agreement grants Flock Safety a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free right to use anonymized city data in other Flock products, and Flock Safety has marketed such data to other customers as “Traffic Analytics”; and

WHEREAS, more than 40 Wisconsin law enforcement agencies, including the Racine County Sheriff’s Office, the Fond du Lac and Winnebago County Sheriff’s Offices, Dane County, and the cities of Sheboygan, Oshkosh, Appleton, Kenosha, Stevens Point, Waukesha, and Racine, have ended or suspended their Flock Safety programs in 2026, citing the company’s handling of their data and misrepresentations to their governing bodies; and

WHEREAS, controlled research funded by the United States Department of Justice has found no measurable effect of license plate readers on crime rates or arrests, and the police department has not reported arrests, charges, or convictions attributable to the program; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin law contains no limit on retention, sharing, or use of license plate reader data, and the Wisconsin public records law makes every image and search log a record subject to disclosure; and

WHEREAS, Section 11.16 of the agreement provides that all city obligations requiring the expenditure of funds “are conditioned on the availability of funds appropriated for that purpose” and that the city may terminate the agreement for non-appropriation on thirty days’ written notice “without penalty or other cost”;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of Wausau:

1. No funds are appropriated in the 2027 budget, or in any later budget, for the Flock Safety master services agreement approved by Resolution 23-1012 on October 24, 2023 and effective December 15, 2023, or for any automated license plate reader service. [If the Finance Director reports that the December 2026 invoice is chargeable to the 2026 budget, add: The 2026 budget is amended under Wis. Stat. 65.90(5) to remove any appropriation available for that agreement, and no 2026 funds shall be expended on it after the effective date of this resolution.]
2. The City Attorney shall deliver written notice of termination for non-appropriation under Section 11.16, and written notice of non-renewal under Section 7.1, on the effective date of this resolution, by email and by certified mail to the addresses in Section 11.15 of the agreement, and the Police Department shall disable all cameras and terminate all data-sharing relationships on the date notice is delivered.
3. The City Attorney shall demand written certification from Flock Safety that all city data, including anonymized and aggregated derivatives, has been deleted, and shall preserve the city’s claims under the agreement.
4. No department shall acquire, fund, accept as a gift, or use automated license plate readers, audio surveillance devices, unmanned aircraft, or any technology that collects identifying information on the public without prior approval of the Common Council by ordinance following a public hearing.
5. The Common Council respectfully requests that the Marathon County Board and the Marathon County Sheriff terminate the county’s Flock Safety agreement.

6. The Police Department shall report to the Public Health and Safety Committee within 60 days the number of arrests, charges, and convictions from 2023 to 2026 in which license plate reader data was material.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2026.

The resolution's fourth clause is the durable part. Contracts end; the ordinance decides whether the next vendor, the next chief, or the next grant brings the cameras back without a vote.

APPENDIX B — REFERENCE MATERIAL

B1. Wisconsin agencies that have left, suspended, or covered their cameras

Date	Agency	What happened and why
Sept. 25, 2026	Manitowoc	Mayor Justin Nickels: not renewing; cameras off since Sept. 5 ²²⁰
Sept. 21, 2026	Cottage Grove	Village Board unanimously deactivated nine cameras and ordered an ordinance barring plate readers of any brand ²²¹
Sept. 17, 2026	Neenah (unanimous); Marinette (9-0); Clark County Sheriff	Early terminations; Clark County cited privacy ²²²
Sept. 15-16, 2026	City of Racine (mayor broke a 7-7 tie); Oconomowoc (5-2); Waukesha (no funding past 2026); Lake Mills; Sun Prairie; Wautoma	Loss of trust; Lake Mills cited search data shared outside the agency without authorization ²²³
Sept. 14, 2026	De Pere	Chief ended use immediately; cameras bagged until the contract expires Nov. 15 ²²⁴
Sept. 10, 2026	UW-Milwaukee Police; Jefferson County Sheriff (suspended)	Jefferson County: 2025 case data made public without consent ²²⁵
Sept. 8-9, 2026	Sheboygan (15 cameras; unanimous); Menasha (7-1); Stevens Point (suspended); Waupaca County (2027 funding cut)	Sheboygan: a Flock representative offered to sell the city five years of its own traffic data; Mayor Ryan Sorenson cited “an erosion of trust from Flock itself and how they were using our data.” Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza: “We really have no way of auditing where the Flock data goes once it’s collected” ²²⁶
Sept. 4-5, 2026	Racine County Sheriff (cameras torn down); Fond du Lac County Sheriff with Fond du Lac, North Fond du Lac, Ripon, and Waupun police (suspended); Winnebago County Sheriff with Fox Crossing, Neenah, UW-Oshkosh, and Winneconne (suspended)	Racine: Flock keeps anonymized data up to five years and markets it as “Traffic Analytics”; Sheriff Christopher Schmaling: “not what we agreed to, and it is not what the public was led to believe.” Fond du Lac agencies: their search logs, including active investigations, were released by out-of-state agencies; “Those decisions were made without our knowledge or consent” ²²⁷
Sept. 2-3, 2026	Kenosha	Ended a year early for Axon readers; Chief Patrick Patton cited undisclosed tracking capabilities ²²⁸
Aug. 25, 2026	Oneida County Sheriff; Chetek (3-1)	Oneida: privacy and public opposition; Chetek’s two cameras had been installed in May without the mayor’s or council’s knowledge ²²⁹
July 2026	Stoughton (July 28, seven months into a two-year term); Kaukauna (July 9)	Contract ended by resolution; contract allowed to lapse ²³⁰
June 2026	UW-Madison Police (June 26); Ashland (June 30); Grand Chute (June 2, unanimous, 23 cameras to Axon)	Ashland cited downtime, slow service, and community concerns ²³¹
May 2026	Appleton (May 6); Fitchburg (May 26, unanimous); McFarland (May 15, cancelled before buying)	Appleton Mayor Jake Woodford, in the city’s May 6, 2026 statement ending its contract: “concerns about the integrity of Flock’s underlying system have eroded our trust” ²³²
April 2026	Dane County (Apr. 17, 32-1 to strip \$80,000 for 24 sheriff’s cameras); Oshkosh (Apr.	Dane County Supervisor Chad Kemp: “I have severe concerns about the ethics of this company.” Oshkosh: a Flock representative told the council

²²⁰Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²²¹Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²²²Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²²³Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Sirkin, “Waukesha Common Council votes to discontinue...” (n. 84); Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²²⁴Zimmerman, “Green Bay keeps flock cameras with updated...” (n. 84)

²²⁵Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²²⁶Casey, “Flock Safety cameras in Sheboygan covered up by city” (n. 32); Wilson, “More than a dozen Wisconsin cities disable...” (n. 13); Kmosena, “Flock cameras covered in Stevens Point” (n. 83)

²²⁷Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2); WBAY news staff, “More Wisconsin communities stop use of Flock cameras” (n. 80)

²²⁸Polcyn, “Kenosha police ending Flock contract, moving to Axon” (n. 84)

²²⁹Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²³⁰Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²³¹Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²³²Casey, “Milwaukee Police updates use of Flock license...” (n. 79)

	22, unanimous rescission of a 5-2 renewal passed the night before); Sturgeon Bay (Apr. 7); Monona	the system does not build a heat map of a vehicle's movements; Police Chief Dean Smith's staff found that untrue ²³³
Nov. 2025 to Feb. 4, 2026	Verona	Council voted not to renew; Council President Mara Helmke: "Effectively, there is no way in and out of the city without being tracked." An October audit showed 974 federal searches in one month. Flock refused to remove the cameras for months, so the city bagged them ²³⁴

B2. Where Wausau's cameras are

The department released all 20 locations and installation dates to the Wausau Pilot in 2026.²³⁵ The crowd-sourced camera map behind the Pilot's Watch Ledger shows 13 cameras tagged to the department and seven untagged Flock cameras inside the city, 20 in all, on the corridors below; positions are approximate and the street names come from reverse geocoding, so the department's list governs.²³⁶ WSAW reported at installation in May 2023 that "about 20 of them were mounted on utility poles throughout the City of Wausau";²³⁷ if so, only the camera, solar panel, and clamps are Flock's property under Section 10.1, and the state Department of Transportation's right-of-way permit registry lists permits for the Marathon County sheriff's cameras but none for Wausau police, which indicates the city's poles stand on street rights-of-way the city itself controls.²³⁸ The deployment plan the contract requires (Section 10.2) and the Customer Implementation Guide (Exhibit C) are not in the council packet and should be requested with the audits.

Corridor (as geocoded)	Cameras mapped	Facing	Tagged to Wausau PD
Grand Avenue (Business 51), three sites from the Longfellow area south to the city line	4	300, 120, 115-160, 300	2 of 4
Bridge Street, west and east of the river	3	8, 100, 240	2 of 3
South 17th Avenue near West Thomas Street	2	315, 150	2 of 2
West Thomas Street and East Thomas Street	2	100, 240	2 of 2
Highway 52 Parkway, two sites on the west side	2	120, 270	2 of 2
Stewart Avenue, River District	2	200, 80	1 of 2
Sherman Street at the western city line (Town of Stettin per the geocoder)	2	120, 260	1 of 2
Merrill Avenue, northwest side	1	110	1 of 1
South 1st Avenue, River District	1	13	0 of 1
East Wausau Avenue	1	270	0 of 1

B3. How the city got here

Date	What happened
Sept. 24, 2026	Mayor Doug Diny has not said whether his 2027 budget funds the December payment; police have not said whether they consider the non-appropriation clause available ²³⁹
Sept. 15, 2026	Rep. Calvin Callahan (R-Tomahawk) calls for banning "unchecked" government use of plate readers and promises an Assembly Consumer Protection Committee hearing in January 2027 ²⁴⁰
Sept. 15, 2026	Sheriff Chad Billeb says Marathon County will keep its 10 cameras ²⁴¹
Sept. 11, 2026	Former District 3 alder Tom Kilian, the lone "no" vote in 2023, urges the council to end the program through the budget ²⁴²

²³³Lehr, "Dane County pulls funding for Flock license..." (n. 78); Best, "Oshkosh council rescinds Flock camera contract..." (n. 78); Small, "Sturgeon Bay ends Flock contract, but drivers..." (n. 78)

²³⁴Lawrence, "AI-powered police cameras face pushback from..." (n. 77); Koebler, "Flock 'Objects to Our Removing Their...' (n. 77)

²³⁵Siewert, "23,000 license plate searches, no required..." (n. 7)

²³⁶Flynn, *Watch Ledger* (n. 13)

²³⁷Hannah Borchert, "New street cameras help Wausau police solve crime like never before," WSAW-TV, May 16, 2023, <https://www.wsaw.com/2023/05/16/new-street-cameras-help-wausau-police-solve-crime-like-never-before/>

²³⁸City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16); Wisconsin Department of Transportation, right-of-way permit records for license plate reader cameras (released May 28 and June 2, 2026; snapshot of August 9, 2026 in the Watch Ledger data repository), <https://github.com/RowanFlynnPilot/wpr-watch-ledger>

²³⁹Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts..." (n. 4)

²⁴⁰White, "Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license..." (n. 14)

²⁴¹Siewert, "Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras..." (n. 47)

²⁴²Kilian: Wausau should reject Flock cameras and the post-9/11 surveillance state," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, September 11, 2026, <https://wausau-pilotandreview.com/2026/09/11/kilian-wausau-should-reject-flock-cameras-and-the-post-9-11-surveillance-state/>

Sept. 8, 2026	Stevens Point covers its 10 cameras; Wausau's mayor, chief, and sheriff do not respond to questions ²⁴³
August 2026	Chief Matthew Barnes: "Different leadership and different constituents. Our authority for this comes from the citizens we serve," and if elected officials end it, "that is their decision" ²⁴⁴
June 15, 2026	Public Health and Safety Committee briefing; members "generally supportive," ask for annual audit presentations; no vote ²⁴⁵
May 2026	Police switch off nationwide lookup after three years opted in ²⁴⁶
Oct. 24, 2023	Council approves the five-year sole-source agreement 9-1; police say locking in \$2,500 per camera before a rise to \$3,000 saves \$50,000; the exit clause is dropped and a two-year automatic renewal is added ²⁴⁷
Sept. 12, 2023	Finance Committee approves the sole-source purchase 5-0 on a motion by then-Alder Doug Diny after Capt. Graham describes cases the test system helped solve; Diny raises concerns about the threshold for use, Watson asks whether the cost continues, and staff say it will be added to the budget without a budget request ²⁴⁸
Feb. to July 2023	20 cameras installed at 11 locations ²⁴⁹
Jan. 10, 2023	City signs the one-year, \$57,000 agreement, expiring December 31, 2023, with a \$500-per-camera exit clause ²⁵⁰
Sept. 27, 2022	Council approves the purchase 7-2 after a 4-0 Finance Committee vote; then-Deputy Chief Barnes presents; year one paid by a \$57,000 state ARPA allocation grant ²⁵¹

B4. Where the Fourth Amendment stands

Case	Court and date	What it held
<i>United States v. Jones</i>)	U.S. Supreme Court, Jan. 2012	Four weeks of GPS tracking is a search; Justice Alito, joined by three others, wrote that "longer term GPS monitoring in investigations of most offenses impinges on expectations of privacy," and Justice Sotomayor warned that aggregated location reveals "trips to the psychiatrist, the plastic surgeon, the abortion clinic"
<i>Carpenter v. United States</i>	U.S. Supreme Court, June 2018	Historical cell-site location records require a warrant; the third-party doctrine does not cover "detailed, encyclopedic, and effortlessly compiled" location data. The opinion's caveat that it did not reach "conventional surveillance techniques and tools, such as security cameras" became the sentence courts cite to uphold plate readers
<i>Commonwealth v. McCarthy</i>	Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Apr. 2020	A driver has "a constitutionally protected expectation of privacy in the whole of his public movements" that plate-reader networks could implicate; four cameras on two bridges did not cross the line, and the court signalled a pervasive network would
<i>Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle v. Baltimore Police Dept.</i>	Fourth Circuit en banc, June 2021	Warrantless access to citywide aerial surveillance data that let police make "deductions from the aggregate of individuals' movements" was a search under <i>Carpenter</i> 2 F.4th 330
Norfolk Circuit Court criminal ruling	Virginia state trial court, June 2024	Warrantless use of Norfolk's 172-camera Flock network was a search under <i>Jones</i> ²⁵²
<i>Schmidt v. City of Norfolk</i>	E.D. Va., filed Oct. 2024; on appeal, Fourth Circuit No. 26-1227	Motion to dismiss denied; summary judgment for the city on Jan. 27, 2026 by Judge Mark Davis, who found that 176 cameras in 75 clusters with 21-day retention could not track "the whole of a person's movements," even though the plaintiffs' cars had been photographed 475 and 325 times in four months. ²⁵³ The Institute for Justice's appeal argues <i>Chatrle</i> changes the analysis; the ACLU, EFF, and Cato have filed briefs ²⁵⁴
<i>United States v. Porter</i>	Fifth Circuit, Mar. 17, 2026	Periodic hits from about ten public-road cameras were not a search because the data "was not as comprehensive as cell-site location data"; decided three months before <i>Chatrle</i>

²⁴³Siewert, "Flock pullout reaches central Wisconsin as..." (n. 3); Adam Mueller, "Stevens Point mayor says ending use of Flock cameras 'very likely'," WSAW, September 8, 2026, <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/09/stevens-point-mayor-says-ending-use-flock-cameras-very-likely/>

²⁴⁴Siewert, "Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One..." (n. 17)

²⁴⁵Kowalski, "Wausau committee raises concerns about license..." (n. 23); Leischner, "Wausau Police Captain Discusses FLOCK Camera..." (n. 6)

²⁴⁶Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts..." (n. 4)

²⁴⁷City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16); Siewert, "Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One..." (n. 17)

²⁴⁸City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

²⁴⁹Siewert, "Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts..." (n. 4); Borchert, "New street cameras help Wausau police solve..." (n. 237)

²⁵⁰City of Wausau, *Agenda Packet*, Oct. 24, 2023 (n. 16)

²⁵¹Heather Poltrock, "License plate reader cameras to likely be installed in Wausau next year," WSAW-TV, September 28, 2022, <https://www.wsaw.com/2022/09/28/license-plate-reader-cameras-likely-be-installed-wausau-next-year/> Siewert, "Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One..." (n. 17)

²⁵²Wikipedia, "Flock Safety" (n. 20); Electronic Privacy Information Center - Updates, "Vehicle Fingerprinting Through Pervasive Camera..." (n. 130)

²⁵³Dodson, "Judge holds Norfolk's license plate reader use..." (n. 131)

²⁵⁴13News Now, "Norfolk license plate reader lawsuit gains..." (n. 131)

<i>State v. Simonson</i>	Washington Court of Appeals, Jan. 29, 2026 (unpublished)	Reversed a dismissal entered after Spokane County deputies let the Flock images in a stolen-truck case auto-delete at 30 days and never produced the audit log; held the defendant’s suppression motion would have failed because a Flock photo of a plate “in plain view on a public road did not disturb his private affairs” and is “analogous to a law enforcement officer visually noting a license plate number.” The trial court had warned that Flock “stores and retains searchable patterns of data that can be used to track a person’s activities” and that deputies had used historical Flock data to learn where a suspect “had previously been frequenting other parks and trailheads”; petition for review pending ²⁵⁵
<i>Chatrie v. United States</i>	U.S. Supreme Court, June 29, 2026	Police conduct a Fourth Amendment search when they obtain a person’s cell-phone location data from a third party: “An individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy in records about his cell phone’s location, and police intrude on that constitutionally protected interest when they demand the information, even though for only a limited time, and from a third-party tech company.” The Court rejected the government’s argument that two hours of data was too little: “Where the Fourth Amendment applies, it applies regardless of ‘the quality or quantity of information’ the government obtains.” 5-4, Justice Kagan writing; warrant questions remanded. ²⁵⁶ The opinion does not mention plate readers, and it distinguished <i>Knotts</i> , the beeper case, partly because that surveillance “was confined to public roads” while phone data follows a person into private places, a distinction plate-reader defenders will cite. The Institute for Justice argues the quantity holding undercuts the “not comprehensive enough” reasoning of <i>Porter</i> and <i>Schmidt</i>
Unnamed case, C.D. Cal.	Federal district court, Sept. 10, 2026	Judge Virginia A. Phillips held that “automated license plate reader database queries are not searches within the meaning of the Fourth Amendment,” in a case the University of North Carolina’s criminal-law blog identifies as <i>United States v. Thomas</i> ²⁵⁷
<i>WILL v. Waukesha County et al.</i>	Waukesha County Circuit Court, filed Sept. 10, 2026	The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, for NoCams Muskego and other Waukesha County residents, sued the county and Brookfield, Delafield, Elm Grove, Hartland, Menomonee Falls, Mukwonago, Muskego, New Berlin, Oconomowoc, Pewaukee, and Waukesha, arguing warrantless searches of the “Flock Location Database” are searches under <i>Chatrie</i> and seeking a warrant requirement; WILL’s deputy counsel: “We’re not asking that the cameras be taken down”. ²⁵⁸ No ruling yet

B5. What other states have done

State	Law	Core rule
Virginia	HB 2724 (2025) , effective July 1, 2025	Data purged after 21 days “in such a manner that such data is destroyed and not recoverable by either the vendor or the law-enforcement agency”; use limited to reasonable-suspicion investigations, missing persons, warrants, stolen vehicles; misuse is a misdemeanor
Illinois	2023 amendment to the Vehicle Code; Secretary of State audit, Aug. 25, 2025	No sharing for immigration or abortion enforcement; the state found Flock in violation and ordered federal access cut
Washington	SB 6002, signed Mar. 30, 2026 ²⁵⁹	21-day retention, enumerated permitted uses
Connecticut	SB 397 (2026), effective Oct. 1, 2026	21-day retention
Oregon	2026 law	30-day cap, as reported by Oregon press
New Mexico	SB 40 (2026)	No sharing for immigration enforcement
Minnesota	Minn. Stat. 13.824	60-day retention for non-hit data, logging and audit duties, public notice
California	Civ. Code 1798.90.5 (SB 34, 2015); Attorney General bulletin, Oct. 2023	Usage and privacy policy, logging, private right of action; no sharing with out-of-state or federal agencies

²⁵⁵*Simonson* (Wash. Ct. App. 2026) (n. 21)

²⁵⁶*Chatrie*, slip op. (2026) (n. 10); Wikipedia, “*Chatrie v. United States*” (n. 10)

²⁵⁷Brown, “No Warrant, No Suspicion, No Problem” (n. 133); Welty, “Quick Thoughts About Flock Cameras” (n. 133)

²⁵⁸Casey, “WILL Sues 11 Waukesha County Communities Over...” (n. 11); WILL, “New WILL Lawsuit” (2026) (n. 134)

²⁵⁹“Washington ALPR bill SB 6002,” *Axios Seattle*, February 19, 2026, <https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2026/02/19/washington-alpr-bill-sb-6002> (headline and page metadata consulted)

²⁶⁰Wikipedia, s.v. “Automatic number-plate recognition” accessed September 28, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automatic_number-plate_recognition

New Hampshire	RSA 261:75-b	Non-hit data deleted within 3 minutes ²⁶⁰
Wisconsin	None	No retention, purpose, sharing, or audit rule

B6. Cancellations outside Wisconsin

Where	Examples	Trigger
Texas	Austin (June 2025), Hays County, San Marcos, Pflugerville (Aug. 2026), Plano, Hutto; Gov. Abbott blocked state funding Aug. 28, 2026 and TxDOT stopped issuing highway permits Sept. 8; hundreds of the state's roughly 13,000 Flock cameras have been shut down ²⁶¹	Audit found 18% of searches undocumented; unauthorized outside agencies; state politics
Florida	The state transportation department revoked approval for readers on state highway rights-of-way on Aug. 31, 2026, citing "concerning reports of misuse, data privacy concerns, and surveillance schemes"; about 98% of the state's cameras sit on private or local property and are unaffected ²⁶²	Misuse and surveillance concerns cited by the governor
Colorado	Denver council voted to end; replaced with Axon Mar. 2026; Fort Collins (June 2026); "agencies drop Flock in droves" ²⁶³	About 1,400 ICE-related searches of Denver-linked data
California	Santa Cruz (Jan. 2026, 6-1, the first in the state, after state agencies searched its cameras about 4,000 times for federal agencies including ICE), Mountain View, LAPD let its contract expire in July 2026, Oakland rejected a \$2 million contract ²⁶⁴	Illegal sharing with federal agencies; the attorney general sued El Cajon over it
Massachusetts	Cambridge suspended its readers in October 2025 over federal sharing and terminated after finding Flock had installed two cameras without authorization, a "material breach of our trust"; Boston (Sept. 2026); Littleton found five of six cameras switched back on by Flock after the town voted to shut them off; at least 25 communities ²⁶⁵	Vendor conduct
Washington	Redmond, Olympia, Mountlake Terrace, Lynnwood, Seattle (paused), Renton, Sedro-Woolley ²⁶⁶	A court ruled images are public records and one requester has collected more than \$300,000 from 15 governments; a university report found out-of-state immigration searches, and Lynnwood found 100,000-plus outside searches in nine days of inadvertent nationwide sharing ²⁶⁷
Oregon	Eugene, Springfield (Dec. 2025), Bend (unanimous, Jan. 7, 2026, after 279 federal immigration queries in three weeks) ²⁶⁸	Federal immigration queries; new state law

²⁶¹Mir, "Victory! Austin Organizers Cancel City's Flock..." (n. 123); Runnels, "Texas freezes installation of Flock cameras on..." (n. 123)

²⁶²Ingram, "Florida bans Flock cameras and other license..." (n. 123)

²⁶³"Mayor extends Flock camera contract," *Denverite*, October 22, 2025, <https://denverite.com/2025/10/22/mayor-extends-flock-camera-contract-denver/> (headline and page metadata consulted); "Denver removing Flock cameras, new Axon contract," *9News*, February 24, 2026, <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/denver-removing-flock-cameras-new-axon-contract/73-640b5af3-7c87-4fea-8aa1-2510ad3257b8> (headline and page metadata consulted)

²⁶⁴Rachael Myrow, "Santa Cruz the First in California to Terminate Its Contract With Flock Safety," *KQED*, January 14, 2026, <https://www.kqed.org/news/12069705/santa-cruz-the-first-in-california-to-terminate-its-contract-with-flock-safety> Zack Whittaker, "LAPD lets contract with surveillance giant Flock expire, citing 'serious concerns' over civil liberties and privacy," *TechCrunch*, July 13, 2026, <https://techcrunch.com/2026/07/13/lapd-lets-contract-with-surveillance-giant-flock-expire-citing-serious-concerns-over-civil-liberties-and-privacy/>

²⁶⁵Matan H. Josephy and Laurel M. Shugart, "Cambridge Ends Contract With License Plate Reader Amid Concerns Over 'Breach of Trust'," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 10, 2025, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2025/12/10/cambridge-ends-flock-contract/> Yogeve Toby, "Littleton shut down Flock surveillance cameras on public roads. Without telling the town, Flock turned them back on," *The Boston Globe*, August 6, 2026, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2026/08/06/business/flock-littleton-license-plate-camera-disable/>

²⁶⁶Peterson, "Lynnwood becomes one of the 1st in the state to..." (n. 106); Vince Richardson, "Sedro-Woolley ends use of Flock Safety cameras," *The Seattle Times*, September 25, 2026, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/sedro-woolley-ends-use-of-flock-safety-cameras/>

²⁶⁷Lipton, "Washington Court Rules That Data Captured on..." (n. 12); Simonelli, "Man sued local governments in WA over Flock..." (n. 146); Peterson, "Lynnwood becomes one of the 1st in the state to..." (n. 106)

²⁶⁸Kathryn Styer Martínez, "Bend is the latest Oregon city to turn off Flock cameras," *OPB*, January 8, 2026, <https://www.opb.org/article/2026/01/08/bend-flock-cameras-ai-license-plate-camera-law-enforcement/> Madsen, "Federal Immigration Officials Made 279 Queries..." (n. 105)

Arizona	Sedona (Aug. 2025), Flagstaff (Dec. 2025), South Tucson, Pinal County Sheriff ²⁶⁹	Privacy and immigration
Illinois	Evanston (cameras removed Mar. 2026), Berwyn (Sept. 2026)	Out-of-state ICE searches of local data
Wisconsin	See the Wisconsin section: more than 40 agencies	Data sales, misrepresentation, misuse

B7. The written questions to put to Flock

The city attorney should put the following to Flock in writing, citing Sections 4.3, 5.1, and 11.1, and treat the answer as a public record under Wis. Stat. 19.36(3). Racine County obtained a partial answer to a narrower version of these questions and left the program on the strength of it.²⁷⁰

1. Every dataset, model, or product in which any data captured by Wausau’s cameras has been used since January 2023, by name.
2. For each, the exact fields retained (plate, vehicle fingerprint attributes, camera identifier, timestamp, direction, image), the level of aggregation, and whether records exist per sighting or only as counts.
3. The retention period for each, and the date on which Wausau-derived data was last added.
4. Whether Wausau’s sightings are included in Traffic Analytics or any product licensed, sold, or demonstrated to any other government or private customer, and which customers.
5. The “commercially available standards” relied on under Section 1.1, and any re-identification testing performed.
6. Whether Flock will certify, on termination, the deletion of every Wausau-derived record and the exclusion of Wausau data from future model training, as Section 5.1 requires for confidential information.
7. A copy of the deployment plan under Section 10.2 and of Exhibit C, the Customer Implementation Guide, neither of which is in the council packet.

B8. Quick answers to objections

Each objection below has been raised in a Wisconsin council chamber this year. The answers are built to fit a two-minute public comment or a council floor exchange.

“The cameras solve crimes. The captain listed 30 cases.” Thirty closed cases in three years is about ten a year against 20,020 searches and roughly 2.8 million images a year, and the department has never reported how many produced a charge or conviction.²⁷¹ Federally funded randomized studies find readers add recoveries of stolen cars but not arrests or crime reduction.²⁷²

“We are locked in until 2028.” Section 11.16 conditions every payment on appropriated funds and allows termination on 30 days’ written notice “without penalty”.²⁷³ The council controls the budget, and the budget controls the contract.

“We only share within Wisconsin and never with ICE.” That setting was on the other way for three years, can be reversed by a captain, and does not bind the 205 agencies that can search Wausau’s cameras or the county sheriff whose cameras share with 40 states.²⁷⁴ A June 2023 FBI query that reached Wausau’s network listed immigration as its reason.²⁷⁵

“We have never found misuse.” An audit that samples 10 of 10,000 searches cannot find it. Milwaukee’s misuse was found by a victim, and the detective assigned to investigate it was charged with the same thing.²⁷⁶

“It is a force multiplier and we are short-staffed.” Officers ran more than 10,000 searches last year and a captain spends time each month reviewing them, and the controlled evidence shows no arrest gain from that effort.²⁷⁷ The same \$50,000 spent on lighting, investigators, or monitored cameras in problem locations has stronger evidence behind it.²⁷⁸

“Ending it looks soft on crime.” Racine County’s sheriff tore his cameras down, Sheboygan’s chief asked his council to terminate, and Waukesha’s chief told his council that “effectiveness alone is not enough” without public confidence

²⁶⁹ Mason Carroll, “Flagstaff cancels controversial contract for Flock Safety cameras,” *Arizona’s Family*, December 19, 2025, <https://www.azfamily.com/2025/12/20/flagstaff-cancels-controversial-contract-flock-safety-cameras/>

²⁷⁰ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

²⁷¹ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Leischner, “Wausau Police Captain Discusses FLOCK Camera...” (n. 6)

²⁷² CrimeSolutions, “Program Profile: License Plate Recognition...” (n. 5); Koper, “Do license plate readers enhance the initial...” (n. 5)

²⁷³ Siewert, “Will Wausau and Marathon County drop Flock? One...” (n. 17)

²⁷⁴ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

²⁷⁵ Siewert, “Wausau police defend Flock camera program as...” (n. 19)

²⁷⁶ Holmes, “Milwaukee officer accused of misusing Flock...” (n. 91); Holmes, “Flock Safety spent \$102,000 lobbying last year...” (n. 86)

²⁷⁷ Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); Koper, “Do license plate readers enhance the initial...” (n. 5)

²⁷⁸ Chalfin, “Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design...” (n. 68); Google Scholar query page, “Can homicide detectives improve homicide...” (n. 70)

and accountability.²⁷⁹ More than 40 Wisconsin agencies, led by police and sheriffs, have left; staying is now the unusual position.²⁸⁰

“Add safeguards instead of cancelling.” Stevens Point had the strictest settings in the region and left anyway.²⁸¹ Milwaukee’s seven demanded safeguards all depend on Flock’s software, and Oshkosh renewed and rescinded within a day when the vendor’s answers proved false.²⁸²

“Flock has reformed: 7-day retention and mandatory audits.” Wausau still keeps data 30 days, the reforms are company policies rather than contract terms, and the audit tool can be defeated by typing gibberish.²⁸³ The company’s chief executive said it knew of the stalking risk “nine years ago”.²⁸⁴

“It is a public road; there is no privacy in a license plate.” One photo of a plate is public; a searchable record of every trip every resident makes past 20 chokepoints, searchable by 205 agencies, is what the Supreme Court in *Carpenter* called a record that is “ever alert” with a “memory nearly infallible”.²⁸⁵ A Virginia judge held in 2024 that querying a 172-camera Flock network is a search, and the question is now before a Wisconsin court.²⁸⁶

“What about missing children and Amber Alerts?” Missing-person searches were 4 of 781 Marathon County searches this year, about half of one percent.²⁸⁷ Amber Alert and NCIC hotlists run on every other agency’s cameras in the region whether or not Wausau owns any, and Wausau can ask any partner agency to search.²⁸⁸

“We have already paid \$197,000.” That money is spent either way; the question is whether to spend \$100,000 more.²⁸⁹

“The sheriff is keeping his cameras, so ending ours changes nothing.” It changes who is responsible for Wausau’s cameras, and the council can ask the county board and sheriff to match; the county can leave for \$4,000.²⁹⁰

²⁷⁹Sirkin, “Waukesha Common Council votes to discontinue...” (n. 84)

²⁸⁰Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4); White, “Rep. Callahan calls for ban on use of license...” (n. 14)

²⁸¹Pfanz, “Stevens Point to suspend Flock camera use in...” (n. 9)

²⁸²Best, “Oshkosh council rescinds Flock camera contract...” (n. 78)

²⁸³Watford, “Flock Safety tightens safeguards as states...” (n. 67); Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

²⁸⁴Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20)

²⁸⁵Wikipedia, “Carpenter v. United States” (n. 129)

²⁸⁶Wikipedia, “Flock Safety” (n. 20); Siewert, “Is Flock selling your data? What the contracts...” (n. 4)

²⁸⁷Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

²⁸⁸Maass, “How Cops Are Using Flock Safety’s ALPR Network...” (n. 108); Dobbe, “Wausau police highlight use of FLOCK cameras...” (n. 24)

²⁸⁹Siewert, “Wisconsin agencies pull Flock cameras as...” (n. 2)

²⁹⁰Siewert, “Marathon County sheriff will keep Flock cameras...” (n. 47)

APPENDIX C — SOURCES

Numbers match the bracketed citations in the text. Entries follow the bibliography form of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (17th ed.); statutes, bills, and court decisions follow *The Bluebook*. Each entry gives the date the source was consulted. Where a cited work could not be consulted directly, the entry says so and names the source from which the quotation or figure was taken; where an article relays a document, statement, ruling, or study, the entry also cites that underlying source.

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Method note. Research was conducted on September 27, 2026 by web search and reading of the cited pages, supplemented by five parallel research runs on Wausau, Wisconsin, national developments, effectiveness evidence, and law. On September 28, 2026 every cited page was opened again, its bibliographic details were recorded, each quotation in

the text was checked against it, and the underlying document, ruling, statement, or study behind each relayed claim was located where one exists. Flock’s transparency portals and the final signed agreement were not obtained, so the signed text of Section 11.16, and the portal’s hotlist settings remain unverified.