

Finding People Without Watching Everyone

Rethinking how communities search for the people they're looking for

An ELERTS Perspective

At its core, the promise of automated license plate readers (ALPR) and acoustic gunshot detection systems (AGSD) is a simple one: **help police find the people they're looking for, faster**. A vehicle tied to a BOLO (Be On the Look Out) alert. A missing person with dementia. Persons at the scene of a shooting. A camera that's always on and a microphone that never sleeps can **close the gap between when something happens and when officers arrive** — and in a meaningful number of cases, that promise has held up. Stolen cars have been recovered within hours. Missing people have been found.

Balancing Privacy with Surveillance

The technical design of automated license plate readers is what makes them effective — and what makes them controversial. To catch the one car connected to a crime, the system has to photograph, log, and time-stamp every car that passes, whether its driver has ever done anything wrong or not.

That is the part residents increasingly say they feel in their daily lives: not the rare moment when the system catches a wanted vehicle, but the constant, ambient sense of being logged. A camera at the end of the street that photographs the same car every single day builds something closer to a diary of someone's life than a tool aimed at solving one crime. Acoustic gunshot sensors raise a related version of the same discomfort — always-on microphones positioned throughout a neighborhood, listening for the sound they're built to catch.

None of this means the technology doesn't work. It means the way it works — passive, continuous, indiscriminate — is itself the source of the unease. The tool doesn't turn on when there's a reason to look. It's already on, all the time.

The Search for a Middle Path

Residents are not asking their police departments to stop looking for missing children or wanted suspects. They're asking for a way to help with that search that doesn't require recording every resident's daily movements.

A different model — one where the community is an active participant to help police find wanted or missing persons, is ELERTS PROTECT.

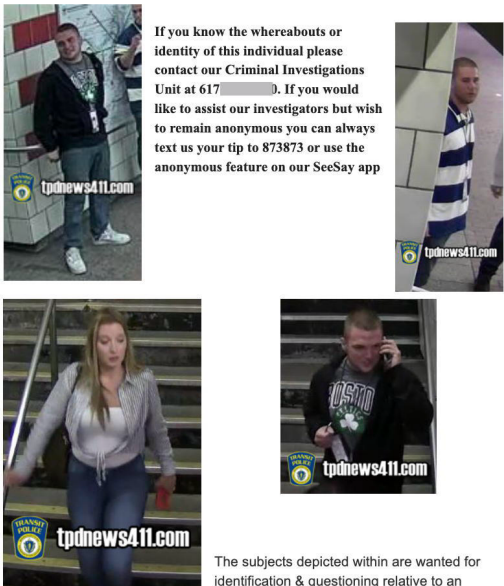
How ELERTS PROTECT Works

When police need to find a specific person — a suspect with an active BOLO, a missing child, an at-risk adult who's wandered from home — the ELERTS console can broadcast that person's photo and description directly to the phones of residents in the surrounding area.

BOLO sent to See Say app users

Help us ID these persons of interest RE: Assault Investigation w/Serious bodily injury.

If you know the whereabouts or identity of this individual please contact our Criminal Investigations Unit at 617-888-0000. If you would like to assist our investigators but wish to remain anonymous you can always text us your tip to 873873 or use the anonymous feature on our SeeSay app



The subjects depicted within are wanted for identification & questioning relative to an Aggravated Assault & Battery onboard a Red Line train between Broadway Station and Andrew Square Station on Monday, May 28, 2018, at approximately 12:05 AM, resulting in serious bodily injury.

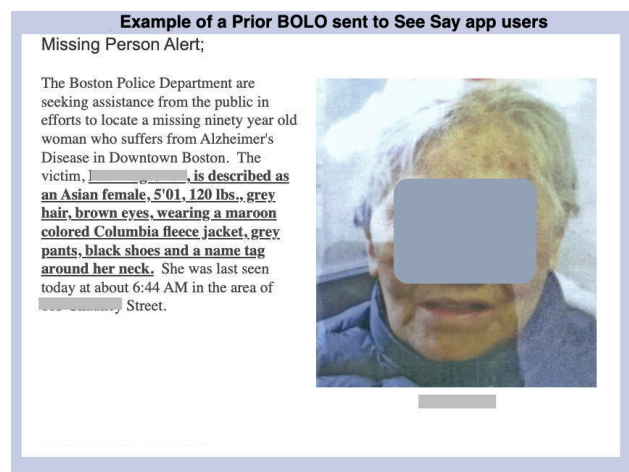
the events listed above are allegations; All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt

A resident who receives the alert simply looks around. If they recognize the person, or have information that could help, they can respond in seconds: confirm a sighting, share a location, or send a message directly to police with whatever detail they observed.

Two Tools, One Goal — With Room for Both

None of this is an argument that fixed sensor technology has no place in public safety. Departments that have used ALPR and acoustic detection point to real recoveries and real cases closed. The debate playing out in city council chambers across the country isn't really about whether communities want to be safer — they do. It's about whether safety has to come bundled with constant, indiscriminate monitoring of the entire community.

ELERTS PROTECT doesn't ask a city to choose between the two. It offers a way to pursue the same goal — finding a specific person of interest, quickly — through a mechanism that only activates around an actual search, and only asks something of residents who are willing to give it. The ELERTS BOLO adds a complementary layer of eyes and ears across areas no camera reaches.



THE CORE DIFFERENCE

The difference is not just technical, it's philosophical. License plate cameras or gunshot sensors are always collecting data. An ELERTS BOLO alert is the reverse: nothing is collected until there's an actual reason to look, and only the people who choose to look — and choose to respond — and can do so anonymously.

The people who go missing, and the suspects police need to locate, are the reason these debates matter in the first place. The question worth asking isn't whether a community should try to find them — it's whether finding them requires watching everyone else along the way.