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COUNCILMEMBER ENGLANDER INITIATES FIELD STUDY OF LAPD ON OFFICER CAMERAS

LOS ANGELES— Los Angeles City Councilmember Mitchell Englander, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, submitted a motion to the Los Angeles City Council today directing the Los Angeles Police Department work with Taser International, Inc. to immediately begin a proof of concept study to field test police-worn camera technology, identify the styles of body camera to be worn, and take custody of at least 25 units to be tested.

Additionally, the motion asks that the LAPD report back to the Police Commission and the Public Safety Committee in 90 days with its findings from the field test, recommendations both on the style of body camera to be used, and policy recommendations on how a department-wide body camera program can be implemented, including how the department will use video for investigative purposes, internal disciplinary actions, what video is discoverable, and retention period.

“As a Police Reserve officer and Chair of the Public Safety Committee, I have seen first hand the increasingly transformative effect technology is having on policing,” said Councilmember Englander. “New camera technologies in particular are playing an expanding role in the day to day activities of police officers and proving to be a valuable tool in increasing their effectiveness, ensuring their safety, and resolving potentially controversial encounters.”

While LAPD’s Digital In-Car Video (DICV) program has been and will continue to be an asset to the police department, not every member of the department patrols in a black and white and not all officer activity happens within the DICV field of view. LAPD units such as Metro, SWAT, and K-9 could also benefit from having camera technology as a tool. Englander’s motion asks that the LAPD identify volunteers to field test this technology from units that do not work a patrol car (i.e. SWAT, K-9, Metro, etc.).

Early this year, a University of Cambridge study found that when police officers in Rialto, California were equipped with and required to wear body cameras, complaints against officers fell by 88 percent and the use of force dropped by almost 60 percent.

The Los Angeles Police Department has also seen the benefits of camera use in its implementation of Digital In-Car video. A June 14, 2013 LAPD Interdepartmental Report stated that for years 2011 and 2012 collectively, there were 226 personnel complaints impacted by DICV and of those approximately 92% (207) were exonerated or unfounded. The remaining 8% (19) were sustained and of the 19 sustained complaints, 10 were sustained for failing to activate the DICV. Police Commission President Steve Soboroff was quick to share enthusiasm for the project and making on officer camera technology another initiative for the Department.

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