

A license plate camera wrongly tagged car as stolen. Sisters sue Greenville police for arrest

BY DAVID FERRARA DFERRARA@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

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Across the state, automated license plate reader systems have received a mixed reception. In April, the town of Irmo approved five license plate cameras after contentious debate on how to fight crime. Last year, North Charleston approved 34 license plate readers on major thoroughfares following a streak of gun violence.

FILE

GREENVILLE — The license plate cameras atop traffic lights across the state can be useful for finding stolen cars — as long as a thief is sitting behind the wheel.

In a recent lawsuit, two sisters say they were handcuffed by police after they drove past a license plate camera in a rental car that was reported stolen.

The sisters, McKenzie and Kennedy Bryan, were stopped by Greenville Police on Feb. 15, 2022, in a car they rented from Greenville-based Best Rent A Car a day earlier, according to the lawsuit.

Three officers stopped the Bryans, drawing their guns and handcuffing the sisters before placing them in the back of a police car, the suit says.

Kennedy Bryan, the driver, explained to police that the car was a rental and shared the rental agreement with one of the officers.

An officer then called Best Rent A Car to confirm whether the car was stolen. An employee at the rental car company confirmed it was reported stolen on Jan. 27, but that they called police the next day to let them know the car was returned, according to the lawsuit.



GREENVILLE

License plate readers draw ire of government watchdog in lawsuit against state police

BY DAVID FERRARA DFERRARA@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

A representative with Best Rent A Car couldn't be reached by The Post and Courier.

Police released the sisters from custody and made sure to contact dispatch to remove the car from the stolen vehicle database, the suit says.

The lawsuit claims either the police failed to remove the car from the database after being called or that the rental car company forgot to call.

Trained dispatchers, not individual officers, specifically add and remove items from the stolen vehicle database, Greenville Police Sgt. Diana Muñoz told The Post and Courier. The database updates with the license plate cameras every six hours, Muñoz said.

Either way, the Bryans' attorney, Sam Tooker, said in the lawsuit there was no justification for police to draw their guns. He argues in the lawsuit a stop for an unreturned rental car was not "high risk" because there was no reason to believe the Bryans were armed or dangerous.

The Bryans' suit comes as a South Carolina government watchdog is making the case that the Palmetto State's database of license plate reads is illegal.



GREENVILLE NEWS

Greenville adding more cameras to read license plates, raising questions of oversight, privacy

BY ERIC CONNOR ECONNOR@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

The South Carolina Public Interest Foundation's 2023 lawsuit against the State Law Enforcement Division and its chief, Mark Keel, remains in extensive litigation.

The watchdog claims that the same kind of cameras that nabbed the Bryans are logging millions of license plates into a statewide database despite zero indication of a single infraction.

SLED has logged some 422 million license plate reads from 2019-22, court filings show.

The Greenville Police Department began using license plate cameras in 2020. The \$22,000 pilot program became permanent later that year.



NEWS

SC lawmaker wants restrictions on police using automatic license plate readers

BY MICHAEL MAJCHROWICZ MMAJCHROWICZ@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

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