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## Your View: 'Do not track' should apply to drivers, too

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Last month, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that individuals have a privacy interest in cellular telephone location histories. In sum, police have to get a warrant to monitor our movements using our cell phone records, five of the justices on the state's highest court held.

Location tracking data can reveal quite a bit of information about a person when it is all pieced together. Just by knowing where and when a person frequents certain places we can know about his/her recreational habits, religious affiliations, professional affiliations, relationship status, personal health and hygiene, social preferences and contacts, and so much more. That is why it is so important to regulate the use of location tracking technology. There are a variety of efforts afoot to rein in government use of such technology — this op-ed is concerned with automated license plate readers.

Right now in Massachusetts, law enforcement agencies at every level are using automated license plate scanners to collect and store information detailing where we drive, and when. Currently, when police scan license plates — up to a thousand per minute, day or night, on cars that are moving or parked — they can keep the information indefinitely, and can search through it without any judicial oversight or limits. All of this surveillance can happen without any requirement that the police suspect a car or its driver is involved in illegal activity.

Police should use cutting-edge tools to keep dangerous drivers off the road, but they shouldn't track the movements of millions of innocent people as a matter of course. That's the basic idea behind the License Plate Privacy Act, heard by the Massachusetts state Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation on March 5. This sensible bill would allow police to use plate readers to identify vehicles associated with outstanding warrants, registration and parking violations, and other legitimate law enforcement purposes while still protecting the long-term privacy of law-abiding drivers. Moreover, S. 1648 places restrictions on the length of time law enforcement may retain the captured plate data and prohibits the government from sharing or using the information for non-specified purposes. The committee, chaired by Rep. William Straus, D-Mattapoisett, and Sen. Tom McGee, D-Lynn, should advance this legislation immediately to protect us from being tracked when we drive, just like when we use our cell phones.

Passing the License Plate Privacy Act is a no-brainer: When our government uses cutting-edge tools to get the job done, they must still respect our fundamental liberties. We can have our technology, and our privacy rights, too.