Surveillance Impact Report

BART PD Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Pilot Project

BART Police Department
BPD-UAS-SIR-01
30 Day Public Notice – November 03, 2026
21 Day BART Board Notice – November 12, 2026
BART Board Meeting – December 03, 2026



Introduction

This Surveillance Impact Report is submitted to the BART Board of Directors for approval of a proposed Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Pilot Project. The BART PD pilot project will allow BART PD to evaluate Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) for limited, authorized public safety, security, and other operational purposes. No costs are being incurred by the BART District or BART PD as a result of the proposed pilot project at this stage.

The BART Police Department is requesting approval from the District Board of Directors to include Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) in the BART PD inventory of specialized or military equipment. In accordance with California Government Code §7070 and BART PD Policy 711, BART PD must obtain Board approval before acquiring, borrowing, or leasing UAS equipment for temporary or permanent use within District jurisdiction.

This pilot project seeks to evaluate how drones can optimize public safety and improve BART on time performance and emergency response for above ground facilities and parking lots. Drones deliver a vital aerial perspective while providing situational awareness and improving officer safety. This pilot project will help BART PD safely assess active incidents and critical transit infrastructure while minimizing system delays.

The pilot evaluation is expected to be a duration of up to 180 days and shall be conducted in coordination with qualified internal UAS FAA, part 107 licensed drone pilot(s), vendors and/or technology partners through demonstrations, evaluations, vendor-provided equipment, or other no-cost evaluation arrangements and training, subject to BART procurement, legal, privacy, information-security, and other applicable requirements.

The UAS pilot project will be in strict compliance with the Board of Directors approved UAS Use Policy which is the governing rule set.

Vendor participation does not constitute a commitment by BART to purchase equipment, software, services, or support.

A. Information describing the proposed surveillance technology and how it generally works.

An Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) is an unmanned aircraft of any type that is capable of sustaining directed flight, whether pre-programmed or remotely controlled and all of the supporting or attached components designed for gathering information through imaging, recording, or any other means. Generally, a UAS consists of:

- A UAS which consists of the chassis with several propellers for flight, radio frequency and antenna equipment to communicate with a remote-control unit, control propellers and other flight stabilization technology (e.g. accelerometer, a gyroscope), a computer chip for technology control, camera for recording, and digital image/video storage system for recording onto a secure digital card (SD card) and/or secured servers;
- A remote-control unit that communicates with the UAS via cell signal or radio frequency;
- A self-deployed drone base that utilizes a weatherproof, automated ground station that houses, launches, lands, and recharges a UAS;
- A battery charging equipment for the aircraft and remote control.

UAS are controlled from a desktop or remote-control unit (similar to a tablet computer). Wireless connectivity lets pilots view the UAS and its surroundings from a bird's-eye perspective.

UAS has cameras to allow the UAS pilot who can view the aerial perspective. UAS record video, audio, and image data onto secure digital (SD) memory cards or directly to local and/or cloud-based servers. SD cards shall be removed from UAS after flights to input into a computer for storage consistent with District UAS Use Policy.

Through this pilot project, BART PD is exploring ways UAS can enhance the District's ability to protect life, preserve property, improve officer safety and system on time performance, efficiently respond to emergencies, search and rescue, critical infrastructure protection, and other legitimate District operations. There are various types of UAS that may be deployed for District use which will be mission dependent.

B. Information on the proposed purpose(s) for the surveillance technology.

The use of UAS technology has proven effective in transit system within the United States and Internationally. UAS technology improves safety, reduces maintenance costs, and minimizes passenger delays by automating difficult inspections and

security monitoring. Instead of shutting down tracks and sending BART employees into high-risk areas, BART PD will deploy UAS to gather real-time data in a safe and efficient manner to quickly reopen affected tracks. UAS technology increases the confidence of the community in public transportation and improves the protection of patrons, employees, railcars, and critical infrastructure. The UAS system captures and records video images and audio. It serves the following key purposes:

- Reduces the fear of crime and reassures the public and employees;
- Prevents, deters, and detects crime, damage to infrastructure and vehicles, public disorder, unlawful behavior and inappropriate conduct;
- Prevents and/or mitigates service delays by quickly identifying trespassers, animals, fallen trees, debris and other similar rail incidents;
- Used to monitor, identify, apprehend and prosecute offenders for criminal offences, criminal damage, public disorder, roadway accidents, and harassment;
- Used for maintenance and safety inspections;
- Used for emergency management of incidents;
- Used for detecting overheating components of the third rail and associated components before issues arise;
- Used for real-time views of high-priority incidents.

C. If applicable, the general location(s), it may be deployed.

During this pilot project, UAS technology will be deployed at both Bay Fair and Hayward stations to conduct patrols along the trackway between those stations to monitor critical infrastructure in an area that has experienced theft and vandalism of District assets.

D. Crime statistics for any location(s), if the equipment is used to deter or detect crime.

UAS are intended to assist BART Police Department for the purpose of mitigation, prevention, deterrence and detections. UAS will improve officer safety and assist with quickly identifying crime in the BART system which will have a positive impact on a safe, clean, on-time patron experience. BART PD statistical data and metrics from the various Bureaus and Divisions within the Police Department is posted online at https://www.bart.gov/about/police/reports.

E. An assessment identifying any potential impact on privacy rights and discussing any plans to safeguard the rights of the public.

Drones collect aerial images, video, geospatial information, and sensor data. The District establishes strict safeguards to protect privacy and civil liberties. Operations will strictly comply with federal law, California law, and FAA requirements. Key program safeguards include:

- Data Minimization: Collecting only the data required for the specific mission;
- Purpose Limitation: Using data strictly for its intended, authorized purpose;
- Controlled Access: Restricting data viewing to authorized personnel only;
- Defined Retention: Storing data only for specific, predefined periods;
- Cybersecurity Protections: Securing data against unauthorized access or breaches;
- Supervisory Authorization: BART PD UAS shall be operated under the supervision of the BART PD.

Analytics technology shall not be used to capture personally identifying information capable of identifying a specific individual. For example, BART shall not use facial recognition, gait analysis, or any other analytics capable of identifying an individual using biometric information. Analytics such as thermal imaging or object detection may be used to identify, monitor, or track vehicles and individuals for real-time onboard analysis in a manner consistent with the authorized uses in Section 3 of the corresponding Use Policy, applicable laws, and the BART Surveillance Technology Ordinance.

Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) platforms are beyond the intended scope of this UAS Use Policy. Therefore, UAS shall not incorporate ALPR technology. Staff will adhere to the District's Safe Transit Policy.

F. The fiscal costs for the surveillance technology, including initial purchase, personnel and other ongoing costs, and any current or potential sources of funding.

Pilot Project Costs:

The pilot project is intended to allow BART to assess the operational capabilities and overall value of UAS technology before making any decision regarding permanent deployment or procurement. No permanent UAS deployment, vendor contract, or expenditure is authorized solely by this Surveillance Impact Report.

Current Cost Impact: $0

Any future expansion of the program would be evaluated through the appropriate BART governance and surveillance-technology review processes and would include consideration of privacy and civil-liberties protections, authorized uses, data collection and retention, public transparency, accountability, and community engagement.

G. Whether use or maintenance of the technology will require data gathered by the technology to be handled or stored by a third-party vendor on an ongoing basis

Third party BART PD vendor support requires the use of their platform for storage of evidence collected during operation of UAS and troubleshooting by viewing log files and image data to be collected for analysis of errors and system malfunctions.

H. A summary of alternative methods (whether involving the use of a new technology or not) considered before deciding to use the proposed surveillance technology, including the costs and benefits associated with each alternative and an explanation of the reasons why each alternative is inadequate or undesirable.

BART PD is reliant on aerial support (helicopters/drones) from regional mutual aid partners (such as the Oakland or San Francisco Police Departments).

- Costs: Prohibitively expensive operational and fuel costs, alongside high capital investments in hardware, maintenance, and flight-crew staffing;
- Benefits: Unrestricted long-range aerial visibility, high-altitude tracking, and advanced communication links;
- Disadvantage: Outside agency aircraft suffer from unpredictable response times, restricted availability during concurrent local emergencies, and a total inability to perform interior or low-altitude tactical clearing (e.g., inside multi-level parking structures or transit stations).

I. A summary of the experience, if any is known, other law enforcement entities have had with the proposed technology, including information about the effectiveness, any known adverse information about the technology such as unanticipated costs, failures, civil rights or civil liberties issues.

BART currently does not have a Board approved UAS policy. However, below is a summary of Known Law Enforcement Experience with Drone Technology.

Effectiveness:

- Situational awareness: Agencies widely report that drones significantly improve visibility during critical incidents, including searches for missing persons, crime scene mapping, hazardous materials assessment, and SWAT operations;
- Cost efficiency: UAS are far less expensive to deploy than helicopters and can be mobilized much faster;
- Documentation and investigations: High-resolution aerial imagery supports collision reconstruction, evidence documentation, and post-incident review.

Known Challenges and Adverse Information:

- Unanticipated costs: While initially inexpensive, agencies consistently report hidden or growing costs for pilot training, FAA compliance, maintenance, batteries, sensors, software licenses, and cybersecurity requirements. Firmware updates and data storage needs can expand budgets over time;
- Operational failures: Incidents include crashes, signal loss, GPS interference, weather-related grounding, and battery issues. Reliability varies by manufacturer and environment;
- Personnel and training demands: Safe operation requires continuous training, flight-time, documentation, and compliance with Part 107 regulations, which many agencies underestimate;

Best Practices Observed Elsewhere:

- Strong, publicly available policy frameworks;
- Limits on retention of non-evidentiary video;
- Clear separation between emergency response use versus routine patrol surveillance;
- Regular public reporting on deployment statistics;
- Independent oversight (privacy commissions, civilian review entities);
- Robust cybersecurity practices.

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties:

Access to the UAS data is highly controlled, and BART has in place a detailed process for fielding requests for UAS videos from both internal and external entities. Copies of UAS video are provided only in strict accordance with the UAS Use Policy. BART has a long-standing connection to the communities that we serve and work closely with community advocates to ensure technologies do not negatively impact communities.