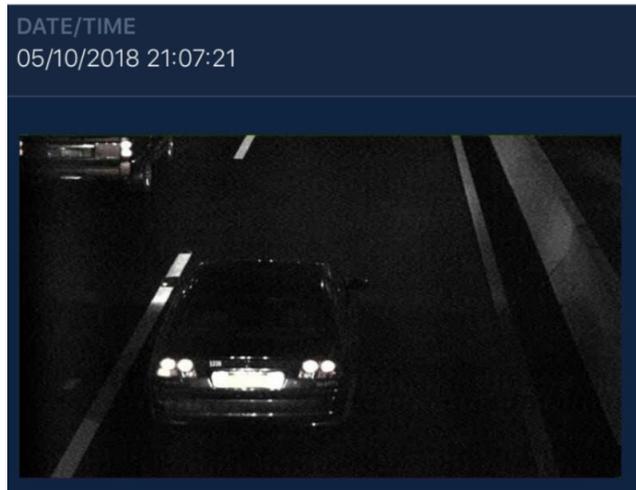


NYPD Nabs Fleet Car Thief

By: Keith Kerman

Stealing a vehicle in New York State is grand larceny and a felony. Stealing an official City vehicle is particularly brazen and raises increased risks due to the expanded potential for serious misuse and misrepresentation.

Nonetheless, this is what recently happened with a 2005 Honda Civic issued to the Health Department. The vehicle was slated for salvage, but while parked and being readied for auction, the unit went missing. DCAS Auction Analyst Christopher Towns played a critical role in identifying the disappearance.



After extensive, but unsuccessful searching by Health Fleet and Police, DCAS and Health reached out to NYPD Deputy Commissioner Robert Martinez for assistance in finding the unit. On May 11, 2018, DC Martinez tasked Lieutenant John Pizzano of NYPD Support Services with finding the car.

Lt. Pizzano utilized license plate reader (LPR) camera technology to track the vehicle's movements in order to potentially identify a pattern and locate the vehicle. The initial results showed that the vehicle was being used on a daily basis, at sporadic times of the day and night. There were toll crossings throughout the city, most frequently to the Rockaways. Over the next few weeks, Lieutenant Pizzano continued to monitor the movements of this vehicle every day.

At 5:30 PM on Saturday, June 9, while he was leaving home on his off day for a concert at Nassau Coliseum, his persistence paid off. Lt. Pizzano once again, as he had done every day, made a remote inquiry regarding this vehicle. The inquiry showed that the vehicle was observed by a mobile LPR just minutes earlier, parked in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

Lt. Pizzano immediately called the 70th Precinct and coordinated with Police Officers Romanelli, Beccerra, Neamtu, and Pollastro. Within minutes, the vehicle was located but it was unoccupied. Under Lt Pizzano's direction, the officers parked strategically and covertly to observe. A short time later, an individual was observed leaving a nearby residence getting in the vehicle and attempting to drive away. The officers swooped in, made the arrest, and were

not deterred by the suspect's attempts to impersonate a City employee. The individual was subsequently charged with Grand Larceny Auto and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, and the vehicle is back in the City's custody.

Many thanks to DC Robert Martinez, Lieutenant Pizzano, and the arresting officers for their focus and persistence, and to everyone at Health, DCAS, and DOI who assisted with this matter. The City fleet performs a critical public service mission and abuse of the fleet in this manner cannot, and in this case, did not, stand thanks to NYPD.



NYPD Lt. John Pizzano (left) helped find the stolen fleet vehicle and track down the alleged thief.

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