



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE
Mayor

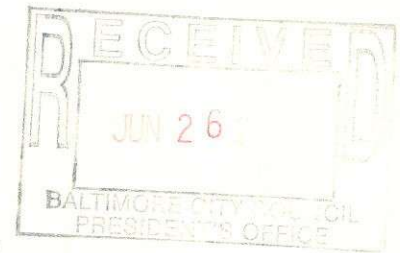
ANTHONY W. BATTS
Police Commissioner

June 25, 2013

TO: The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall
Attn. Karen Randle

FROM: James H. Green, ^{JAG} Director Government Affairs
Baltimore Police Department

RE: City Council Bill No. 13-0237-Automated Purchasing Machines



The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed 13-0237-Automated Purchasing Machines (APMs) and supports its passage. The proposed legislation would prohibit the use of APMs, provide certain exceptions, and impose penalties for violation of the provisions.

Currently, there are no APMs operating in Baltimore City; however, there are a number these machines operating in the Baltimore region. In 2012, ecoAtm placed an APM at the Mondawmin Mall which offered cash for mobile telecommunications devices and other electronics. It is unclear why this machine was removed later in the year. The BPD reports however, that there have been a substantial number of cell phone robberies and cell phones thefts over the last year. Nationally and throughout the Baltimore region, there is a similar increase in these crime categories. In Baltimore, there is no hard data to suggest that the ecoATM machines are necessarily the cause of this increase however they have become another outlet for criminals who can utilize these machines for instant cash payment. Surrounding jurisdictions, including Washington D.C., report that a large number of stolen phones can be directly tracked to these machines and law enforcement nationally indicate that these types of outlets only encourage the theft of cell phones.

EcoAtm has addressed some law enforcement concerns surrounding the crime issues and has installed several safeguards in the technology to include taking photos, requiring a driver's license, and a thumbprint of the seller. The cell phones are also held for a period of 30 days and returned to the lawful owner if reported stolen. A review of the data provided to law enforcement shows that there are instances where serial numbers which can be used to match a stolen phone if the serial number is reported and photos taken by these machines, are duplicated. There are also several technical changes needed that would aid law enforcement in its ability to search the data provided.

F/Comments

Advances in technology do not replace the safeguards that Baltimore currently has in connection with current second-hand sales market. As discussed in the Law Department report, Baltimore City Code, Article 2 § 12-1 regulates the sale of second-hand items. An APM would fall within this section and would therefore be required to be licensed and report transactions to the BPD. Similarly, pawnshops are regulated in State law and also in the City Code. The Code's licensing and reporting requirements currently prohibit APMs from operating in Baltimore.

The BPD understands that amendments are currently being proposed that attempt to place APM's within Baltimore's second-hand law. There are a number of concerns which would involve many stakeholders to address this type of amendment if offered. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation and the BPD looks forward to discussing this matter with the Committee.

cc: Angela Gibson, Mayor's Legislative Liaison