

University of Arizona

Driving up vaccination POD efficiency with traffic data



Industry

Higher Education / Healthcare

Location

Tucson, Arizona, United States

Products

Security Center,
AutoVu Managed Services,
AutoVu Sharp-as-a-Service,
Travel Time Module

Partners

Route1 Inc.

How the University of Arizona speeds up COVID-19 vaccine roll-out at its drive-through POD using Genetec AutoVu ALPR subscription service and Travel Time Module

Established in 1885, the University of Arizona (UArizona) is a public land-grant university in Tucson, Arizona, United States. Today, the university enrolls about 46,900 students and employs 15,500 staff and faculty in 20 different colleges and schools. Most of these are located across its 380-acre campus bordering downtown Tucson. Better known as the Wildcats, University of Arizona students from all over the world choose this urban university to study hard, pursue big dreams and enjoy a vibrant campus life.

Setting up the COVID-19 vaccination POD at the University of Arizona

When the first COVID-19 vaccines arrived in the State of Arizona, plans were underway to distribute them as efficiently as possible. State officials worked with local county authorities to set up various points of distribution (PODs). In early 2021, the University of Arizona had been chosen as one of the main PODs in Tucson.

Aiming to get the university vaccination POD up and running quickly, Facilities Management, Housing & Residential Life, Parking & Transportation Services (PTS), and other key departments joined forces and set up an incident command team. While still handling their regular duties, team members worked around the clock to implement and support a multi-lane

drive-through vaccination POD. Soon enough, residents were booking appointments online and lining up their vehicles at the University of Arizona Mall, the university's main entrance, for their scheduled vaccination.

According to Jim Sayre, Executive Director of Parking & Transportation Services at the University of Arizona, "People will queue in their vehicles at the main entrance. Then, we'll have someone confirm their appointment and ensure they sign a consent form. When cleared, they'll make their way to the vaccination POD which is essentially a tunnel of tents in which the vaccinations are administered. After they get their vaccine, they're directed to park in the observation area, where they need to wait 15-30 minutes before leaving."

Facing the challenges of manual data collection

While the vaccine roll-out was underway, questions came up about how long it took for people to get through the POD and what the maximum capacity could be with their multi-lane setup.

To gather data, volunteers began asking drivers to send text messages as soon as they entered and exited the vaccine POD. While some people agreed, this method only tracked a small percentage of all vehicles and not everyone would remember to send the text messages.

The incident command team also considered hiring personnel to monitor traffic and jot down vehicle entry and exit times. Not only would this be costly, but the team wondered if they could fully trust the data. After all, long and mundane manual tasks are often prone to human error.

That's when a more tech-savvy idea came to mind. "We were discussing the progress of going gateless in one of our parking garages using the AutoVu™ automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) system from Genetec and wondered if there could be another use for the technology. We had already heard about how ALPR could be used for tolls and monitoring traffic flow, and we were eager to see if the ALPR cameras could help us automatically track vehicles entering and exiting our POD. Plus, we already had an established relationship with Genetec, so we took the opportunity to reach out," said Sayre.

Teaming up to support the community and optimize budgets

From the time the conversations started, everyone was on board to help. Genetec began working alongside Route1, a leading data-centric systems integrator, to find the right solution for the vaccination POD.

Since Route1 already established a great working relationship with PTS on some recent parking enforcement applications, the integrator brought more than expertise to the table. Route1 knew the customer well and dug deeper to understand what the team wanted to achieve and how they could best help them meet their goals.

"We're a service-oriented organization, so this was more than just offering them a solution. Together with Genetec, we wanted to go above and beyond to help our community and support the University of Arizona in getting the vaccines out to as many people as possible. We all came together to build a solution that would not only offer valuable insights about their POD operations but would also be affordable and easy to set up," said Tony Busseri, President & CEO of Route1.

With the vaccine POD already up and running, the university was eager to implement the new Genetec AutoVu ALPR subscription service, which includes both the AutoVu Managed Services (AMS) and Sharp-as-a-Service solutions. This was paired up with Genetec Travel Time module within Genetec™ Security Center for added insight and functionality. A total of four AutoVu SharpV cameras were installed throughout the POD.

Not only is the entire Genetec solution hosted in the cloud, but the university was able to acquire the AutoVu ALPR equipment and software as a fully-packaged subscription service for a short-term monthly commitment. This meant they didn't need to purchase expensive servers, and they could keep the Genetec solution for as long as the POD remained open without draining budgets.

On the day of installation, Route1 and UArizona teams rolled up their sleeves and got to work. Mounting poles and power for the cameras had been set up in advance, so they gathered before the POD opening hours to get the AutoVu ALPR cameras up and running.



According to Elton Crawford, Assistant Director of Operations – Parking & Transportation Services at the University of Arizona, "We had our first camera up within 20 minutes. Then we worked through the remaining three cameras. There was a bit of back and forth with a Genetec technician to verify the license plate capture field, but the whole system was set up in under 2 hours. And though we planned to finish by 10 am before the first vaccination appointments, everything was done 10 minutes before cars began lining up at 9 am. We were fully operational from day one."

As part of the AutoVu ALPR subscription service, customers can call into a dedicated deployment assistance center where Genetec technicians are on hand to offer remote support. Usually, the main goal is to optimize the license plate reading capabilities and make sure everything is running smoothly.

Getting better insights to boost POD efficiency

Today, when someone drives through the main entrance of the POD, an AutoVu ALPR camera will capture a timestamp of the vehicle. Two more cameras will capture the vehicle entering and exiting the vaccination tunnel, and then a final camera will track the vehicle leaving the site. This allows for four unique time stamps on every vehicle that comes through the vaccination POD. All ALPR data is sent back to Security Center, where the Travel Time module automatically analyses data and delivers insights the university team can act on.

"The most valuable data has been all about throughput. Using AutoVu, we can see exactly how long it's taking vehicles to get through the POD and for people to get vaccinated, and then identify what can we do to get them through faster. More importantly, we can examine the trends. So, we can compare what's happening right now to yesterday, or the current and previous week. And everything will be displayed on a visual graph within Security Center. This helps us immediately identify if there are random delays or potential issues that we need to investigate further," explained Sayre.

One insight the operations team discovered early on was that various team leaders had different processes for appointment check-ins. When those processes were standardized, they could

consistently get vehicles through the POD faster and maximize the number of vaccinations.

On another occasion, the team noticed that on certain days of the week cars were taking longer to get through certain points in the POD. After an initial inquiry, they realized those days often had mostly new volunteers who were still learning the ropes. The team was then able to adapt the volunteer schedule to ensure experienced personnel was always onsite to assist newbies and keep the throughput of vehicles high.

When out in the field, the UArizona team is taking advantage of the Security Center Mobile app to check data. They can retrieve and email reports, see when a camera falls offline, or verify peak hours. With data at hand, the team is also maximizing their own time to stay on top of all their tasks.

“We’re overseeing the operations of the POD alongside our regular duties. Using the trends dashboard, I can identify our busy periods and know exactly when I’m most needed at the POD in person—whether that’s to lend an extra hand, check the staffing levels, make sure folks are following our standard operating procedures, or ensure everything is running safely. This system has allowed me to walk away, handle my other responsibility on campus, and come back at the right time,” said Crawford.

As a healthcare-related operation, the University of Arizona made sure the Genetec solution would comply with all Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements. According to Sayre, “The cameras do not know who the driver is, or the people in the vehicle. And we’ve made it clear that we’re not running this against a motor vehicle database or anything like that, so we’re ensuring privacy.”

Expanding AutoVu ALPR technology across the campus

As more people get their COVID-19 vaccines, POD operations will eventually subside. But the university’s plan to keep expanding the AutoVu ALPR solution across campus won’t.

With over 17,000 parking spaces and 100 lots, the PTS team is moving to virtual parking permits. Working closely with Route1, they’ve already installed two AutoVu mobile ALPR systems to enforce parking regulations and identify scofflaws more efficiently. They have also deployed AutoVu Free-Flow, a gateless parking enforcement solution, at one garage and planning for two more very soon.



“Since transitioning to license-plate-enabled parking enforcement, we’ve seen tremendous cost and time savings in the ways we work and do business. And with AutoVu Free-Flow, we’re able to offer a frictionless parking experience. Overall, our team has gained more confidence, we’re operating more efficiently, and we’re delivering better customer service,” said Crawford.

Right now, Sayre, Crawford, and the entire incident command team are focused on getting people vaccinated as quickly and seamlessly as possible. The partnership they’ve built with Genetec and Route1 has been instrumental in making that happen.

“This AutoVu subscription service combined with the Security Center Travel Time module offered by Genetec and Route1 has helped us make the vaccination process more efficient. We’ve been able to increase the number of vehicles through the POD in the same amount of time, and consequently, we’ve given out more vaccinations. And that’s what this is all about— helping our community get vaccinated against COVID-19,” concluded Sayre.

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