




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, CPRP, Acting Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) 

DATE: July 2, 2018

SUBJECT: Council Resolution No. 20170622-036 Card Entry Pilot Program

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a response to Council Resolution No. 20170622-036. Council directed the City Manager to implement a Card Entry Pilot Program (PASS system) at South Austin, Hancock and Oswaldo B. Cantu/Pan American Recreation Centers. Specifically, the resolution instructed staff to: analyze data from the three pilot sites for advantages and limitations; research best practices from other parks and recreation departments and identify what could be implemented to track visitation; work with the Equity Office to ensure patrons are not discouraged to use the City recreation centers; provide an opportunity for community feedback at the pilot sites; and, determine the budget impact if the program is implemented City-wide.

The PASS system is utilized by PAR to register all users of self-instructed programs, drop-in activities and recurring membership programs. All regular customers are asked to provide basic information and a PAR PASS card is created if the customer requests one. The Card is not required as part of the process, but allows a faster check in. The basic information needed to sign up is the citizen's name, address including zip code (which determines residency in Austin), and contact information.

Initial PASS Card setup for a first-time user takes approximately 2 to 4 minutes of staff time. During peak hours, patrons may wait a small amount of time -- often less than one minute -- to get checked in. While some patrons lose PASS cards, the additional cost in materials is minimal. The pilot resulted in:

- drop-in attendance increased at all three locations (Hancock up 550%, Pan American up 216% and South Austin Recreation Center up 300%);
- improved customer service and safety; and,
- better data that allows staff to determine hours of highest usage (demographics can now be utilized for drop-in user groups in recreation centers, not just those registering for classes).

Research within industry standards revealed that membership-based systems are considered "best practice" with the following organizations utilizing the PASS system to manage their members:

- Dallas Parks and Recreation – (fee based)
- Baton Rouge Parks and Recreation – (non-fee based)
- Las Vegas Parks and Recreation – (non-fee based)
- Arlington County Parks and Recreation – (non-fee based)
- U.S. Armed Services – (non-fee based)

Additionally, private gyms such as Lifetime Fitness, Gold's Gym, LA Fitness and Planet Fitness all use membership cards for facility access. The YMCA also uses membership cards for all users both for paid and free drop-in users.

PAR worked with the City's Equity Office with regards to data collection. The Equity Office suggested collecting more demographic data (including race) to further develop programs, identify service gaps and

minimize unintended consequences in service delivery. The suggestion to collect and manage disaggregated data was also a recommendation of the PARD Equity Assessment.

In August and September of 2017, all 6,882 PASS Card holders at the three pilot sites were e-mailed a survey in English and Spanish with questions about their experience with the PASS Card entry process (the survey was sent to customers twice). Paper surveys were also provided at the pilot sites for customers and non-users to complete. Participants were asked for their opinions on the PASS Card signup process about providing basic personal information, and if signing up for a PASS Card would be a deterrent for future facility use. A total of 52 responses were collected. All users confirmed that obtaining the card was an easy process. Three individuals were not comfortable to provide their name, address and contact information to staff. None of the survey participants indicated that they would stop using the center if registration was required for drop-in activities.

PARD also engaged over 500 non-users. Facility and program awareness were found to be the biggest barriers to participation. None of the non-users indicated that providing personal information for PASS Card registration would be a barrier to participation.

Data privacy is ensured in conjunction with the vendor, Vermont Systems. All staff members must pass background checks, access to the database is restricted to employees only and the database is maintained in a secure data center. PARD is also compliant with all HIPAA (personal medical information) and PCI-DSS (credit card) standards. Customer information is not shared with any mailing lists, and only basic personal information is collected. PARD staff do not ask for Social Security Numbers or citizenship status.

The pilot program demonstrated that this program has minimal impact to the operational budget. On average, new PASS Card registrations occur at a rate of 75 cards per month, per location -- an annual direct cost of \$1,440 department wide. While other one-time or repair expenses could increase the total cost, the equipment would be replaced regardless of implementation of this specific procedure. Since a similar number of staff hours is utilized in past check-in and data collection processes, there is no significant difference in staff time.

At this point PARD intends to install an upgrade to the current registration system to allow for enhanced data collection and protection capacities. Following the upgrade, PARD intends to expand and extend the pilot program utilizing the enhanced capabilities of the upgrade. The results of the extended pilot will inform the development of procedures that institutes a membership at all recreational facilities. The membership will continue to be free and allow for voluntary collection of basic patron demographic information. PARD feels that the advantages of this procedure outweigh the possible disadvantages. Already well established in the industry, this procedure will provide PARD with more complete data, which can ultimately be used to improve the quality of programs and services offerings to the public and inform resource allocation decisions. With implementation well underway and a specific process for completion, this work associated with Council Resolution No. 20170622-036 Card Entry Pilot Program is complete.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6722.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Sara Hensley, CPRP, Interim Assistant City Manger