



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Robert Spillar, P.E., Director
Austin Transportation Department

DATE: August 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Updated Parking Management Strategy

This memorandum is to communicate to you that the Austin Transportation Department (ATD) will be implementing an updated parking management strategy starting Sept. 1, 2020.

The goal of the pay-to-park system is to provide our community with curb space access to services and businesses for short periods of time. Optimal curb space management can ensure our community members find and use available spaces for short-term visits, which can cut down on traffic congestion from searching for a parking space. Our work to provide curb access remains important especially as we address the impacts of COVID-19 on our community, as it allows customers to access local businesses located street-side.

We are adopting a more flexible street parking system with modified regulations and new technology, using the authority already granted to the City Traffic Engineer by Council in the most recent parking management updates and established fee schedules for FY 2019-2020.

Under our current system, paid parking sessions are managed by narrow time limits determined by the nature of the area and observed need for space turnover. However, these time limits do not accommodate human error or other circumstances that may affect a parking session. Currently, it is illegal to purchase additional time beyond the maximum posted time limits. Exceeding these time limits can and often does result in issuance of a parking citation as high as \$40 and accumulation of court cost.

Unpaid parking citations can lead to consequences that exacerbate inequities in our community, ranging from affected credit scores to eventual loss of property. We also understand that citations can have social and economic costs, especially for many who are facing uncertainty.

In order to reduce parking citations as we manage curb access, we are lifting time limits and implementing a tiered payment system that gradually increases rates after two hours. For a consistent user experience, the first two hours will remain unchanged at the City's \$2 hourly base rate. Additional hours after that first two-hour experience will increase in cost to encourage turn over and good customer use of the scarce, on-street parking capacity.

The following example conveys the benefit to our community from this system change.

Example Parking Session(s)	Hour 1	Hour 2	Hour 3	Fine	Total
Current Fee Structure with Fine	\$2	\$2	\$2	\$40	\$46
Proposed Fee Structure without Fine	\$2	\$2	\$3	\$0	\$7

The escalating rate charged for parking will allow our customers to add time to their parking session as needed to conduct their business. We believe that many customers violate the current system because they require only another “few minutes” to complete their business and that many have received tickets for simply overstaying their parking session because they could not get back to their car in time to beat the meter. Parking tickets are a civil violation but are an entry point into the court system that could be simply avoided if the customer could add a bit more time to their parking session.

The increasing variable rate also discourages people seeking to use on-street parking spaces as their commuter parking space. The increasing variable rate will encourage commuters to park off-street in a public or private garage, increasing the viability of private garage management businesses in downtown. Currently, a commuter can rent daily parking at one of the Convention Center garages for just \$5 per day. ATD is working with area garages to provide affordable early bird and all-day parking throughout the downtown.

On the technology side, ATD is adopting a “pay-by-plate” system in which users paying at the kiosk simply enter their license plate number, so users will no longer need to display a sticker for their parking session. This system will allow ATD to monitor parking sessions and discourage users from moving their vehicle to initiate another parking session at a lower rate.

A pay-by-plate system bears lower operating costs and can better direct enforcement activities when parking zones are at or beyond capacity. Additional benefits of a pay-by-plate system include:

- Convenience: Customers need not return to their vehicle to affix a sticker.
- Cost Savings: Reduces paper use and creates operational savings.
- Enforcement: Reduces fraudulent practice of faking pay station receipts.
- Data capture: Enhanced curb-level data to understand occupancy in real time.

Price-managed parking systems have been implemented successfully in other cities, such as in Sacramento, New York City, Chicago O’Hare Airport, and Roanoke. ATD has been testing pay-by-plate technology since June 1, 2019, along Toomey Road across 14 single space meters, 22 pay stations covering 179 managed parking spaces. To date, no citizen complaints concerning the pay-by-plate system or its operation have been received. As we expand the system city-wide, there may be some reaction to the change in management approach, but ATD staff are prepared to respond.

All metered area signage will be adjusted for a maximum stay time of 10 hours in all zones, which will provide further operational efficiencies with standard signage across the city. The new 10-hour parking rate structure is shown in the following table.

New Parking Rate Structure

Hour(s)	Rate Per Hour	Parking Session Cost
1 st	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.00
2 nd	\$ 2.00	\$ 4.00
3 rd	\$ 3.00	\$ 7.00
4 th	\$ 3.50	\$ 10.50
5 th	\$ 4.00	\$ 14.50
6 th	\$ 4.50	\$ 19.00
7 th	\$ 5.00	\$ 24.00
8 th	\$ 5.00	\$ 29.00
9 th	\$ 5.00	\$ 34.00
10 th	\$ 5.00	\$ 39.00

Additionally, the parking system will begin passing on merchant processing fees for credit card purchases made at a pay station. Starting Sept. 1, an additional \$0.25 will be added for every pay station transaction paid by credit card.

ATD continues to offer different affordable parking opportunities to our community through the Park ATX mobile payment app and Affordable Parking Program. As stated in our June 3, 2020 memorandum, Park ATX users can use the codes **FREE15ATX1** and **FREE15ATX2** for two free 15-minute parking sessions, valid every 24 hours. Downtown employees who are looking for low-cost, long-term parking solutions can apply for affordable daily and monthly rates through the Affordable Parking Program at AustinTexas.gov/AffordableParking.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jason T. Redfern, ATD Parking Enterprise Manager, at Jason.Redfern@AustinTexas.gov or by phone at (512) 974-7020.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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