



MEMORANDUM

To: Julie Mercier, Town of Reading

From: Matt Smith

Date: January 29, 2020

Subject: Parking Kiosk Recommendations

The below memorandum outlines several parking payment options and recommendations for use in Reading, starting in the Town's municipal lot(s).

Payment Equipment and Costs

Payment kiosks would provide the best option for on-site payment within Reading's public parking lot(s). Kiosks provide payment options (cash and card payment), require less maintenance than standard or smart meters, and create less visual clutter. Given the number of spaces and layout of the lot(s), two kiosks (in each) would provide sufficient coverage.

Kiosk costs are generally comparable to purchasing standard meters (when installation costs are included), and more cost effective than smart meters. Based on pricing sheets provided through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) Collective Purchasing website, kiosks (solar powered or hard-wired) generally cost in the \$10,000 to \$12,000 range per unit, with some models priced higher. We would recommend units that at a minimum accept coins, bills, and card payments, provide a digital display (easier to see and to provide additional information) and that include internal lighting. Units without internal lighting are difficult to read at night.

Kiosks can be procured through the MAPC's Collective Purchasing program. MAPC has negotiated lower rates as part of a statewide group procurement process, allowing municipalities to purchase units at a discount without going to bid. For example, Parkeon's multi-space meter (i.e. kiosk) – solar or hard-wired – accepting coins, bills, cards and with a small display screen runs \$11,600 per unit under the program. All models from various vendors including ITS, IPS and offer units at similar costs.

For a list of all available units, see <https://www.mapc.org/our-work/services-for-cities-towns/public-works-collective-purchasing-program/#parkingpaymentsystems>

Recommendation: Hard-wired (electric) kiosk from Parkeon or IPS.

Hard-wired kiosks have a slight edge as these units are more reliable in cold weather. However, newer solar units have improved performance, so given the reduction in costs to install (no electricity is needed) and to operate (no electricity is needed), solar is a good, green option. There is no or little difference in unit cost, but ongoing costs are less for solar.

Recommendation: Allocate \$15,000 per kiosk, including installation costs.

Installation costs include labor and materials for a concrete pad where unit is located, electrician costs (if wired), and shelters (optional).

Installation Timeframe

Based on a discussion with a Municipal Parking Manager, kiosks are typically shipped and installed within 6-8 weeks; however, timeframes may shift depending on availability and orders. Kiosk installation costs – of the unit itself – is typically included in the cost. Other costs – concrete pad, electric conduit connection, etc. – is the responsibility of the municipality.

Payment Options

Pay-by-Plate vs. Pay-by-Space

Recommendation: Pay-by-Plate should be used for parking payment sessions.

Kiosks allow pay by space and pay by plate options. Pay by Plate is recommended for several reasons.

- Pay-by-plate is more cost effective. There is no need to number individual spaces – signs or paint, which requires frequent upkeep.
- Pay-by-plate can be used to track user patterns, for example, how often a specific car parks in the lot, and for how long.
- Pay-by-plate can be used for virtual (license plate based) permits and LPR (license plate recognition) enforcement should the Town procure systems in the future.

Free Parking Allocation

Given that paid parking is new to Downtown Reading, allowing a short period of free parking, as well as a grace period at the end of each session, is recommended. Free parking should be directed towards short-term, convenience parking sessions. For example, someone running into a café for coffee pick-up or into the pharmacy quickly.

Recommendation: Provide 15-minutes of free parking for each session. Free parking still requires entering license plate into the kiosk (or parking app – see next section).

Additionally, providing an automatic grace period at the end of each paid session should be considered, so as not to punitively punish those who are unintentionally delayed, and go over the time allotted by a few minutes. Such programs help to reduce enforcement fear.

Recommendation: Institute a 5-minute grace period that automatically extends the paid time by 5-minutes to reduce likelihood of receiving a ticket within minutes of a session ending.

Pricing Strategy

Among the most successful ways to encourage parking turnover is pricing. Given that the two Town owned lots serve a variety of user types, providing the option to park for different periods of time, even all-day should be allowed (if parkers are willing to pay for it).

Recommendation: Implement graduated pricing, where the base hourly rate (\$1.00 per hour) increases for anyone parking more than 4 hours (e.g. \$2 per hour).

Hourly Parking Fee Breakdown

- First 15-minutes: Free
- Up to 4 hours: \$1 per hour
- 4 or more hours: \$2 per hour.

Parking Applications

Parking applications add convenience for parkers. Many communities already incorporate parking applications, which have proven popular with many users. Parking applications not only provide user convenience, they also provide important data about parking patterns and user behavior, but also provide additional services (typically included in the base package) such as Parking Validation options allowing individual businesses and/or organizations to set up individual accounts and pay for their customers' parking. Parking applications can also be used to manage permit systems (by plate).

There are several options available to communities. Among the most used by local municipalities are ParkMobile (Somerville), Passport Labs (Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, Salem, and more) and PayByPhone. Any of these platforms should be considered.

Parking App contract costs may be paid in full by the municipality, the user (parker, with a fee) or a combination.

Recommendation: Contract with a parking application vendor before launching payment.

Parking Benefit District

Parking Benefit Districts (PBDs) provide a mechanism in which to designate all parking revenues within a defined district – in this case, Downtown Reading – to improve the parking system within that district. Parking district improvements include but are not limited to parking equipment and maintenance, staffing (e.g. enforcement), infrastructure improvements (roadway, sidewalk, bicycle projects), public transit; wayfinding and signage, and more. All the above effect the parking system by improving facilities, managing parking demand, and more.

Establishing a PBD before parking fees are established is recommended. The funds to be collected under a new system are net new revenues and do not impact existing budget allocations. Further, by advertising that all parking revenues directly go to fund infrastructure and beautification projects in the downtown district, users will see and experience the results.

The Town of Arlington adopted the first PBD in Massachusetts. Funds from new parking meters are used to pay for improvements to public parking lots near Mass Ave, including lighting to improve visibility and user safety.

Recommendation: Establish a Parking Benefits District as part of the introduction of priced parking.