



Topic: Parking

Submission date: 2006

Name of measure/service etc:

Park By Phone

Location: Cork City Council, Ireland

Initiator and partners:

Cork City Council

Short description of the activity:

Cork City Council operated a Parking Disc system for on-street parking in the city centre; the challenge was to find a system to complement the disc parking system rather than displace it and provide a solution that would still be attractive to users.

Cork City Council introduced a means of paying for parking on-street whereby drivers can pay the parking fee using a mobile phone.

Background and objectives:

Cork City Centre is built on a central island of the River Lee with access via a series of river bridges. Whilst alternatives to the private car are now being provided by Cork City Council in the form of Park & Ride facilities, traditionally public transport being outside the remit of the local authority is limited and there is a high reliance on the private car.

Parking facilities in the city centre consist of a number of multi-storey car parks (7,500 spaces) and approximately 2,500 on-street spaces. There is also a lack of turnover of spaces, which has an impact on the level of access. There are eight off-street public car parks in the city at present, two of which are operated by Cork City Council. Commercial prosperity, viability and economic growth of city centre businesses is very dependant on the level of access to the city centre, especially with competition from out-of-town shopping centres where free parking is provided.

Local authorities had little or no input into public transport provision or policy. Public transport provision is poor and under such circumstances the reliance on the private car has grown. However, Cork City Council has recently broken the mould by obtaining a bus passenger licence and providing the first bus based permanent Park & Ride facility in Ireland at the Black Ash site just south of the city.

Traffic control and parking demand management allows for control and management of road space in a balanced way, maintains traffic flow especially during peak hour movements, continuous turnover of all parking spaces, especially on-street, enhanced public safety especially for the visually impaired, and allows for improved control of freight deliveries to/from commercial and retail areas of the city. On-street parking was traditionally controlled via a disk parking (scratch card) system in Parking Control Zones, but changing operating environments and the need for more flexibility have necessitated the introduction of a new innovative Park by Phone system, which aims to:

- Reduce the inner city traffic congestion caused by motorists driving around searching for an available parking space.



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- Implement a parking system that is capable of discriminating in favour of more environmentally friendly vehicles by offering reduced parking charges.
 - Launch a system for registering to use the Park by Phone system in addition to initiatives to enable on line or phone based payment of parking fines and residence parking permits. To utilize the new procedures to enforce greater compliance with parking by-laws, better turnover of spaces and incentives to reduce traffic congestion.

Implementation:

Cork City Council operated a Parking Disc system for on-street parking in the city centre; the challenge was to find a system to complement the disc parking system rather than displace it and provide a solution that would still be attractive to users.

Cork City Council introduced a means of paying for parking on-street whereby drivers can pay the parking fee using a mobile phone. Using a mobile phone eliminates the need to 'feed the meter' or search for parking discs and provides our customers with a more effective and user friendly cashless parking payment option. During 2005 the Park by Phone scheme was launched by our service provider to allow drivers become registered users who could then later initiate a parking transaction for the period as sign posted on-street.

Once registered, motorists receive a unique barcode sticker to attach to the inside of the vehicle windscreen. To use the system the motorist parks in an available parking space and then dials the dedicated Park by Phone number displayed on the nearest on-street parking information sign. The system recognises the motorist using the caller ID. The motorist then inputs the parking zone code for the area as displayed on street signage. Park by Phone checks the motorist's registration details and provides details of the relevant parking charges. Finally, when prompted, the motorist simply presses a button to confirm payment. After authentication, the system confirms payment; a receipt text message (SMS) is automatically sent to the motorist, confirming all the booking and payment details. Parking time may also be extended using the mobile phone, provided that local parking bye-laws are adhered to. Optional services allow users to be reminded when there is 10 minutes remaining on the active parking payment.

The Traffic Division was involved directly with the consortium of Park by Phone Ireland Ltd. undertaking the system integration and in the development of the Park by Phone functional specification. The two guiding principles adopted by the project team from the outset comprised:

- The need to provide a reliable mobile e-payments scheme that was attractive for our customers,
- The intention to exploit the best available options on an integrated system using a number of emerging technologies, as against just replicating the manual disc parking scheme.

The Park by Phone project has delivered three integrated service elements:

- A cashless parking payment and alert system for motorists
- An enforcement system for Traffic Wardens
- An administration and reporting system for the local authority



There is a high level satisfaction with the Park by Phone scheme as expressed by existing users and a commitment by Cork City Council to promote further uptake of the scheme for the future.

The successful implementation of the scheme has delivered significant reductions in overheads and an improvement in the level of service provided to customers by Cork City Council.

Conclusions:

With park by phone, new advantages for the motorists and for the Local Authority have been raised:

Advantages for the Motorist:

- Much easier mechanism to pay for parking
 - Pay from the safety and comfort of the office or car
 - No need to have coins for Pay & Display, or to purchase Parking Discs
 - No need to display a Pay & Display or Parking Disc in vehicle
- Very convenient top-up mechanism
 - Friendly SMS text alert when parking time is nearly up
 - Top up from phone without having to leave meeting, pause shopping or interrupt lunch with friends
- Transparent payment
 - Easier to monitor monthly spend on parking
 - Monthly transaction statement of all parking activities

Advantages for the Local Authority:

- Environmentally friendly – no paper for each parking transaction
- In-depth real-time reporting of parking patterns and usage
- EPA (European Parking Association) states that mobile parking is the most cost-effective form of on-street pay parking
- Works in conjunction with parking disks and Pay & Display investments, reduces cash collection, distribution networks and handling issues
- Compatible with residential parking permits and disabled permits, with the capacity for additional permits
- Support variable tariffs – both spatially and duration
- Payment of charges in off- street car parks and Park & Ride sites

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