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Summer 2011
Directed Study
Criminal Justice

Downtown Parking in the City of Marquette:
A Study Combining Business with Criminal Justice

INFORMATION

Marquette, Michigan has a very active downtown district. The downtown area is home to many stores including dress shops, restaurants, banks, clothing stores, a movie theatre, bars, night clubs, the federal courthouse and post office, fitness centers, and other general shopping stores. Because of the diverse businesses that make up the downtown area, the streets are filled with parked cars for a majority of the day and early night for seven days a week.

There are several parking lots throughout the downtown area. Most of which are reserved for permit parking. There is a parking ramp that has two levels; the upper level is all permit parking only, and the lower level is comprised of permit, free, and metered parking. The sides of the streets have dozens of parking spaces throughout the downtown area. Street parking as well as many lots allow for free two-hour parking. There are some ten-hour-maximum metered spaces. Near the post-office there are some one-hour-maximum metered spaces. One hour of parking costs twenty-five cents (\$.25).

The City of Marquette enacted legislation that created the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The DDA is responsible for promoting urban growth in the downtown area and preventing any dilapidation. The business owners and employees of downtown businesses have the option of purchasing a parking permit from the DDA to park in the permit parking only lots. Permits cost \$20 per month for full-time employees and \$10 per month for part-time employees.

The Marquette Police Department (MPD) is responsible for the enforcement of the two-hour free parking, as well as the permit-only parking. The MPD currently employs one full-time parking enforcement officer that enforces parking regulations from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Currently, the MPD uses chalk to mark tires of vehicles parked in free-parking spots. (Tires marked after two-hours are ticketed.) MPD officers also issue parking tickets. There is no overnight parking on city streets in the downtown area or in any of the lots. This is the result of the need to plow snow in the winter months.

Current contracts between the City of Marquette and the DDA allow all revenue generated from metered parking to be received by the DDA. Revenue generated from parking enforcement tickets are received by the Marquette Police Department. The predicted revenues for the future year are as follows: rental parking permits generated \$90,056; parking meter revenue totaled \$33,594.88; and parking violation fines resulted in \$187,210 in revenue. These revenues total \$310,860.88. Expected expenses for the next fiscal year total \$338,130.55. This results in a net loss of \$27,269.67.

PROBLEMS

The current system of parking in Marquette, Michigan has many problems.

- (1) *Cost Inefficiency.* Due to the free parking situation, the revenues brought in by the few existing meters and the fines from parking tickets are less than the costs needed for routine maintenance for the parking spots and parking enforcement.
- (2) *Outdated Equipment, Fines, and Meter Charges.* The meters the city of Marquette uses for parking are antiquated and do not have the most current technologies incorporated into them; the only way to pay for a meter is with coins. The cost to park in Marquette is between 17% and 25% of what most cities are currently charging. Lastly, the fines for

parking violations are lower than what is fined in nearly all other cities and municipalities.

(3) *Difficult and Ineffective Enforcement.* The Marquette Police Department is the only agency responsible for all parking enforcement, and the department only employs one parking enforcement officer. Parking is not enforced in the evenings, nights, and weekends, which can bring in many people to the downtown area. Also, the current enforcement method of using chalk to mark tires for free parking causes many difficulties, such as carrying extra chalk and citizens erasing chalk marks on their vehicles. Lastly, with so much parking, efficient enforcement of all spots is nearly impossible with only one parking enforcement officer.

(4) *Ineffective teamwork/communication.* Responsibility and care for parking in downtown Marquette involves three entities that all have their own goals and objectives: the City of Marquette, the Marquette Downtown Development Authority, and the Marquette Police Department. Each works individually to achieve their own goals, but is unaware of the goals of the other agencies and the overall processes of the other agencies.

(5) *Lack of Overnight Parking.* There is no overnight parking in the downtown area of Marquette. This is mainly due to the fact that the city receives hundreds of inches of snow each year that needs to be plowed, usually at night. This leaves no parking spaces for bar patrons who wish to leave their vehicles downtown.

(6) *Abuse of Free Parking.* The free parking in downtown Marquette is a great benefit to customers who wish to park for a short period of time while they shop in the various stores. Unfortunately, many business owners and employees are parking in the free parking spots, which are located very close to the businesses. (Every two hours,

employees and owners will move their cars to avoid being ticketed.) This leaves very few parking spaces near the businesses for the customers, for whom the spaces are intended.

SOLUTION CRITERIA

The solution for the problems in Marquette should be made up of several separate solutions that should work together to eliminate the problems. It is possible that some solutions will solve more than one of the problems. Each solution should meet certain criteria depending on the problem attempting to be solved, but all solutions should meet the following criteria:

- (1) *Cost effective.* The solutions need to be capable of generating enough future revenue to pay off any costs of implementing the solution.
- (2) *Safety.* The solutions need to maintain strict safety regulations as well as eliminate potential safety hazards (such as allowing overnight parking to prevent drunk driving).
- (3) *User-friendly.* The solutions need to be accessible and easy to use for the citizens who will be the users of the new system.
- (4) *Legal.* The solutions must be within current limitations that are mandated by local and state laws.
- (5) *Overall Goal.* The goal of the new system is to create an efficient parking system for customers, owners/employees, enforcers, and administrators, without creating negative views that will turn the general public away from the downtown area (such as letter-of-the-law enforcement, and extremely high fines and meter charges).

When looking at criteria for individual problems, the following criteria are problem specific.

- (1) *Cost Inefficiency.* The solution to cost inefficiency must be able to generate revenue greater than or equal to the cost of enforcement, maintenance, utilities, and supplies that are needed each year.
- (2) *Outdated Equipment, Fines, and Meter Charges.* The solution to these needs to use equipment that has current technologies, especially the use of credit/debit cards. The fines for violations and the charges for meter use need to be comparable to other cities.
- (3) *Difficult/Inefficient Enforcement.* Enforcement needs to use better and less equipment. There should also be an increase in enforcement.
- (4) *Ineffective teamwork/communication.* The solution to this needs to ensure that all parking issues are handled efficiently by all agencies that are involved with parking, and all agencies need to see the whole picture by understanding the processes of the other agencies involved.
- (5) *Lack of Overnight Parking.* There needs to be a system of overnight parking that will not hinder plowing efforts during the winter months.
- (6) *Abuse of Free Parking.* The new system should eliminate abuse of the free parking by making abuse difficult, expensive, and illegal.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Due to the numerous problems with the parking system, there needs to be numerous changes and solutions. Each problem has its own possible solutions. Also, some solutions may address more than just one problem. The following list gives detailed solutions to each numbered problem, and will also address any of the other problems that are solved if the solution solves multiple problems.

(1) Cost Inefficiency/Outdated Meter Charges/Outdated Parking Fines/Ineffective

Enforcement.

- a. To increase the revenues and cover the costs that are accrued from parking, there should be an increase in the number of metered parking spaces in the downtown area. The two options for this would be to make all parking spaces, on streets and in lots, metered spaces; or make all parking spaces on Washington Street between Fourth Street and Front Street and all parking spaces on Front Street from Spring Street to Bluff Street metered spaces.
- b. Meters could also be added to the lots restricted to permits to allow unused spaces to be metered. A current Downtown Development Authority study is underway that would yield utilization rates and allow for the correct number of spaces to be metered and still leave enough spaces for employees and owners to park.
- c. Another part of the solution should be to increase the current cost of metered parking spaces from \$.25 per hour to between \$1.00 and \$1.50. The current cost to park is outdated and needs to be kept up with current prices around the state and country. One option is to use more than one price, and make parking spaces that are close to businesses be charged at a higher rate than spaces that are farther away.
- d. Increasing the fines for parking violations would increase revenues as well. Areas around Marquette and throughout the state fine \$25 for violations that the City of Marquette fines only \$10. Different violations should be fined different amounts depending on the severity of the violation, but need to stay within current statutes.

- e. Ineffective enforcement and cost efficiency can be eliminated with the help of more enforcement. Hiring more enforcement officers would allow weekends, evening, and maybe nights to be monitored for parking enforcement. To avoid high costs of police personnel, the Marquette Police Department could create internship or another student position that would give local university students the opportunity to work in law enforcement. (The Marquette Police Department currently uses Northern Michigan University students during the summer to patrol local parks.)
- f. Due to the large number of tourists that visit Marquette, Michigan, many citizens from out of town receive parking violations but do not pay their tickets. Overdue fines could be sold to a collection agency, which would allow a portion of the fine to be received instead of none.

(2) Difficult Enforcement/Outdated Equipment

- a. The City of Marquette needs to update the equipment it uses in all aspects of parking and its enforcement. New technology allows a single meter “box” to meter an entire lot or street; drivers would enter their space number into the “box” and pay for time, or pay for time and receive a receipt to be placed on their dashboard. These devices would allow enforcement officers to easily detect violations, while allowing customers the use of credit/debit cards, paper currency, coins, and even a pay-by-phone option. New single meter options are available too, which allow the same payment options for customers, and allow enforcers to easily recognize violations.

- b. Eliminating limited free parking will eliminate the need to mark tires and current methods of enforcing limited free-parking limit. Putting meters in the most convenient parking spaces (Washington Street and Front Street), while making parking lots or other areas unlimited daily free parking will eliminate the need to use the outdated chalk methods that make enforcement difficult.
- c. Enforcement is inefficient and the duties of enforcement officers can be difficult due to the amount of equipment that must be carried. Current officers carry a printer, ticket writer, pouch of envelopes and papers, pouch of extra chalk and printer paper, chalk marker, and a police radio. New technologies allow officers to carry only a ticket writer with an attached printer. The only additional equipment needed would be a single pouch of printer paper and envelopes (as well as the police radio) if there is unlimited free parking.
- d. New software that is connected to the handheld ticket writers, as well as to police in-car laptops will make processing tickets and handling violations and fines more efficient. The current software used is noted as being “not user-friendly” and is inefficient if tickets are not written using a handheld ticket writer, tickets are voided, or other unique events occur.

(3) Ineffective Teamwork/Communication.

- a. There is a Traffic/Parking Advisory Committee for the City of Marquette, Michigan. To improve the cooperation that is necessary for the parking system to be successful, there needs to be more communication and involvement from all interested parties. The City of Marquette’s Treasurer’s Office, Marquette Police Department, and the Downtown Development Authority all need to be

represented. This will allow each to give their concerns and praise so that all parties will fully understand the problems, processes/methods, and goals of others.

- i.* Compromise from each group may be required to achieve success. The Police Department's Police Officers may need to write tickets electronically; the Downtown Development Authority may need to change some of its current parking practices; and the Treasurer's Office may need to adapt to software that allows for new features required for a successful solution.

(4) Lack of Overnight Parking.

- a.* The biggest problem facing the implementation of overnight parking is the need for snow plowing/removal during the night hours. The parking ramp located north of Washington Street is both near the bars and clubs (whose patrons are the most inclined to park overnight) and covered by the upper level parking. A gated system would be used that would allow vehicles to enter a gate after receiving a ticket and only leave the ramp after paying their charges, which would be calculated by another gate system that scans the ticket to determine how long the vehicle was parked. (Extra concrete barriers would be needed to prevent vehicles from exiting at locations other than the gate.)
- b.* Some parking lots that have only two entrances and exits, but are not covered, such as the parking lot off of Lakeshore Boulevard would be another ideal location for an overnight lot. The same gated system could be used. Due to the lot not be covered, snow removal would still be an issue; parking schedules that

would only allow parking in alternating rows or sections each night would allow snow plowing and removal on alternating nights of the rows or sections not allowing parking.

(5) Abuse of Free Parking.

- a. The City Commission would require all businesses in the downtown area to keep an updated list of their employees and owners. Each employee and owner, regardless of full-time/part-time status, would have to submit their license plate information to the Downtown Development Authority who would be able to relay that information to the Marquette Police Department or Treasurer's Office so that the information can be updated to the parking software. This would make sure that those with permits are not parking anywhere but in the permitted lots.
- b. The Downtown Development Authority would have to eliminate part-time parking permits and also utilize sticker permits that are attached to the windshield instead of hanging placards that are easily removed from the rearview mirror. Also, the Downtown Development Authority should use annual or semi-annual permits instead of monthly permits.
- c. Adding meters to parking spaces close to the businesses would also deter employees/owners from parking in those spaces.

BEST SOLUTION

The best solution to the parking problems is going to be a combination of many different solutions. Adding meters to the parking spaces on the Washington Street and Front, as discussed above, would increase revenues brought in. To park in these spaces should cost at least \$1.00 per hour, and have a two-hour limit. Vehicles with permits from the Downtown Development

Authority would be ticketed for parking here, even if the meters are paid; this would stop the abuse of employees and owners using the best parking spaces that should be used by their customers.

The City Commission should require updated lists of employees and their license plate information, which would be entered into the software; enforcement officers would then be able to determine if a vehicle has a permit and is not using it. Not using a permit in a vehicle that is registered to have a permit would be a parking violation and ticketed. The Downtown Development Authority should use windshield sticker permits, so that the permits are not easily removed. These permits should be annual permits, which would not require lists of active permits every month.

One or two specified parking lots should remain free parking and have an unlimited time frame (except during the night if not in approved overnight lots). The movie theatre often brings in customers that park for longer than two hours and customers would be unwilling to pay to park before watching a movie. These lots would be for customers only, and no permit-holding vehicles would be allowed to park. Enforcement officers would not have to chalk vehicles' tires because there would be no time limit; simply checking for permits would be all that is needed.

After completion of the Downtown Development Authority's study, lots reserved for permit parking should have some spaces opened for metered parking. These spaces should cost less than what is charged on Washington and Front Streets, as these spaces are not as close as the spaces on these streets.

Vehicles that violate the parking regulations should see more expensive fines for violating. Illegally parked vehicles should be ticketed for fines of at least \$25 for illegally

parking, which is what Northern Michigan University currently fines, as well as other cities in Michigan.

In order to increase revenue, the Marquette Police Department should create Northern Michigan University student parking enforcement positions. These students would work part-time in the evenings and on weekends to ensure that parking regulations are abided by. By creating these internship-like positions, the city would be able to create non-union part-time positions that would allow criminal justice students to learn hands-on, as well as provide enforcement.

New meters, either the “box” type or single space” need to be installed, which will make enforcement much easier. These meters must accept credit/debit cards, paper currency, and coins because fewer people carry currency but rather credit/debit cards. Enforcement officers would easily see violations of unpaid meters and would not require chalk in this scenario either. The enforcement officers should use new ticket writers that are capable of writing the ticket, printing the ticket, and sending the information back to the Treasurer’s Office and/or Marquette Police Department with only the one piece of equipment. The software used by the city should be changed to one that is more user-friendly and can easily be used with the ticket writers and the new electronic meters. Combining the ticket writers, meters, and software will make enforcement and parking more efficient.

The parking ramp should be outfitted with gates at the entrance and exit to only allow vehicles in after receiving a ticket and only exit after paying the calculated charge. The parking ramp should be used only for customer parking, and the reserved parking should be moved elsewhere (possibly to the upper level). The parking ramp would then allow for overnight parking.

Traffic/Parking Advisory Committee meetings should be attended by a representative from the Downtown Development Authority, the Marquette Police Department, and the City's Treasurer's Office. This will allow everyone to know the problems that each are experiencing, possible solutions, and an overall more efficient approach from everyone working together on the parking in the City of Marquette.

POST-SOLUTION ACTIONS

After the solution has been implemented, constant monitoring is necessary to ensure that the solution actually solved the problems. Quarterly and yearly revenue and cost reports must be watched to ensure that revenues do exceed costs. It is possible that revenues may increase, but still not cover costs due to increased costs associated with new equipment.

The parking spots will need to be monitored to see if new metered parking turns customers away from the downtown area, as well as to see the utilization of all parking spaces. The new system should have increased utilization. The ramp should also be watched closely to ensure that its users are actually parking there for overnight purposes.

Enforcement officers should be interviewed to find out if their jobs are becoming easier and more efficient, but also to find out information about the parking. They are the people that will know first-hand of any problems that arise.

FUTURE WORK

Due to time constraints, the best meter system is unknown. The purchase costs as well as the installation, maintenance, and supplies costs are all unknown. The "box" meters that allow customers to pay-by-space or receive a receipt are extremely efficient and only require one unit for several spaces. Unfortunately, these units would have to be placed on each side of the street and on every street block. They would be more ideal for parking lots. The single or double

meters that meter one or two spaces would require many more units and much more installation. Discovering where each would be best utilized and the best company to purchase from still needs to be done.

As Marquette alters its parking system, it can learn from the parking system of similar cities in terms of geography, size, and climate. Duluth, Minnesota; Petoskey, Michigan; and Buffalo, New York are all relatively large cities in the northern part of the United States that receives large amounts of snowfall each year. Still to be done is talking with these cities to see what types of parking they allow; how they deal with snow removal; whether or not they have overnight parking; and what methods of metered and free parking they use.

The last unfinished item is to discover the different types of software available to municipalities to use for their parking. Different companies offer different software that have the specific capabilities that are needed. The best software will need to be user-friendly and be capable of the many tasks that are needed, yet be cost efficient.

Once these tasks are completed, specific parking plans, meter systems, and software systems can be recommended. With an updated parking system, parking software, parking equipment, and by using up-to-date fines and fees, the parking in Marquette, Michigan will be more efficient for those involved.

PARKING DIRECTED STUDY

Introduction

After speaking with parking personnel from Buffalo, New York; Petoskey, Michigan; and Duluth, Minnesota, I was able to determine how each utilizes parking in their cities and especially their downtown districts. The following paragraphs summarize each overall system, followed by a system that would work best for Marquette, Michigan, based on the information from these cities.

Buffalo, New York

Buffalo, New York utilizes mostly “pay-n-display” meters in their downtown district. Some of their meters are original coin operated, single space meters, but they primarily use “pay-n-display” meters. These meters accept coins, paper currency, and credit cards. Citizens pay one of many kiosks, which are located throughout the downtown district, and receive a receipt that display the time of expired parking. The citizen is then required to display the receipt on their dashboard for parking enforcement officers to see. During the winter months, parking enforcement officers brush snow from the windshields of parked cars, if needed, to find the displayed receipt. Because the system is a new technology and most people are unfamiliar with them at first, the city allows a one-time courtesy for those who can prove they had a valid, unexpired parking receipt at the time a ticket was issued. This is used for those people who receive tickets and did not know they were supposed to display the receipt. Meters cost between \$.75 and \$1.50 per hour depending on the area being parked in. The parking spaces in the downtown district are at the higher end of this range.

Other relevant information includes Buffalo, New York has no free on-street parking in their downtown district, but they do have designated lots and ramps for free parking throughout the city, including the downtown area. There is no overnight parking except in designated lots and ramps. Parking enforcement officers enforce parking laws from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. All other times are free parking as long there are no parking bans due to plowing or overnight parking bans.

Petoskey, Michigan

Petoskey, Michigan uses Duncan meters that are coin operated, but the meters also allow citizens to use their cell phones to pay for their meters. The meters are not mechanical, but electronic and connected to a network. Parking costs between \$.25 and \$.50 per hour, but all parking in the downtown district is \$.50 per hour. There are less-desired parking spaces for employees working in the downtown district that charges \$.10 per hour using coin operated meters.

There is no overnight parking in the downtown district, except in designated lots. These lots allow for overnight parking, but certain rows or sections are governed by temporary signs that are displayed in advance of scheduled snow removal. There is also no free parking in the city.

The parking software utilized by Petoskey allows them to automatically process tickets and fines. They use Duncan handheld ticket writers, which are connected to their software system.

Duluth, Minnesota

Duluth, Minnesota uses Duncan meters, which are all coin operated. They also have four kiosks that allow citizens to pay by coin, paper currency, or credit card. These four kiosks cover 44 parking spaces. The cost to park varies throughout the city, but most spaces, especially in downtown spaces, are \$.75 per hour.

The parking enforcement officers work from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. One officer starts at 6:00 a.m. and primarily works in the downtown districts at intersections to assure that they are clear for rush-hour traffic.

There is no overnight parking in downtown Duluth. Parking bans are in effect from 2:00 a.m. until 6:00 a.m., except in some areas close to bars where parking is banned from 3:00 a.m. until 6:00 a.m. Duluth uses New Compwest Data Innovations for their parking software. They have used this system for three years and have had few glitches. Prior to this software, Duluth utilized Duncan Parking Solution's software.

Best Solution for Marquette, Michigan

By combining many of these aspects from these cities, I believe Marquette should utilize the following:

- Eliminate free parking in the downtown areas, and meter all spaces.
 - o Meters should accept coins, paper currency, or credit card.
 - o Parking should cost \$.75 per hour.
 - o Utilization of "pay-n-display" kiosks will allow many spaces to be covered by one unit.
 - Parking enforcement officers will have to brush away snow, if needed, to view the displayed receipt.
 - Citizens unfamiliar with a "pay-n-display" system that receive a ticket, and have a valid, unexpired parking receipt at the time of the issued ticket should be allowed a one-time courtesy by negating the fine.
- Parking enforcement should occur from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday.
 - o This may require another parking enforcement officer in either a part-time or full-time capacity.

- In order to pay for this additional position, the city may need to revise a new contract with the Downtown Development Authority at the expiration of the current contract to receive some meter revenue, which should increase with the increased meters and costs of parking.
 - I think the City of Marquette should continue to receive all parking fines, and then any additional meter revenue that would cover the salaries of parking enforcement officers.
- Utilize designated lots and the parking ramp for overnight parking.
 - Scheduling snow removal and plowing ahead of time will allow parking in uncovered lots by posting the schedule of snow removal for certain rows or sections and banning parking in these spaces.
- Utilize a parking software that is connected to the handheld receivers and automatically processes the tickets.

My next step is to contact the various parking hardware and software companies and find out the best of each to use.