



Being Ready: Preparing your parking program for a post-COVID world

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As drivers return to the roads and employees begin to return to in-person work, preparing your parking program with user-friendly processes and safe, attractive facilities has never been more important. Even with a sizable increase in the number of people working from home, mobility demand is not expected to be impacted in the long term. In fact, 32 percent of car-buying consumers said they would travel more frequently by private car post-pandemic, while only 13 percent said they would travel less by car.¹ These statistics suggest a substantial increase expected in road travel, resulting in a greater reliance on parking facilities in cities and municipalities. Reevaluating parking facility features like lighting, technology, security and more can help ensure your program stays efficient, safe, and reliable in a post-COVID world.

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One example of a city bracing for a change in parking trends is Scranton, Pa. An innovative public-private partnership formed between the nonprofit National Development Council (NDC) and the Scranton Parking Authority involved the restructuring of the city's parking assets, including six downtown parking structures and all on-street parking meters. The partnership allowed Scranton the opportunity to modernize its parking assets while maintaining their control and ownership. Read on to see how the City of Scranton, in partnership with the NDC and ABM, is engaging in these parking best practices and improving the functionality of their garages with upgrades in lighting, energy efficiency, technology, and more.

Energy Efficiency

With younger generations on the road comes shifting needs and desires among drivers. An increased focus on sustainability and eco-conscious options is becoming one of the largest generational trends. In order to reach more eco-conscious parking tenants, the City of Scranton made the decision to install EV charging stations in their parking decks.

Today, there are well over 1 million electric vehicles in use on U.S. roads, a number that is expected to grow to 1.8 million by 2030.² Keeping up with driver trends will be essential in the long-term success of your parking program. A global COVID-19 auto and mobility consumer survey found that 49 percent of respondents are in favor of greener mobility infrastructure, indicating that current green initiatives should be amplified and accelerated.³ Adjusting your city or municipality electrical offerings to match consumer sustainability trends will play a key role in meeting driver needs moving forward.

Lighting

When it comes to lighting, customization is the key to achieving safe, attractive spaces. From stairwells to ramps, different areas of your parking facility demand different types of light fixtures. For example, stairwells and pathways need a brighter, more concentrated light spread that can be produced by track lights and spotlights. For general parking areas, multiple light fixtures that produce a wide beam angle are needed, like flood lights.⁴ An overhaul of Scranton Parking Authority's lighting



system involved the replacement of all bulbs with LED lights, a switch that would prove to be both an economical advantage and an eco-friendly enhancement.

Advantages like low-heat output, high-lumen output, and long lifespan make LED lights a practical replacement for outdated fixtures like linear fluorescent, metal halide, and high-pressure sodium lights.⁴ In addition to enhancing the safety and aesthetics of your parking facility, a lighting upgrade can result in substantial energy cost savings. Lighting retrofits can result in a reduced lighting load of up to 50 percent, a number that can be enhanced by applying advanced control strategies to reduce energy consumption.⁵

Lot Maintenance

An inconsistent maintenance routine can quickly lead to repairs and restorations that are disruptive to tenants and create unexpected costs and safety concerns. Scranton's parking program revamp involved capital repairs, fresh paint jobs, and lighting upgrades to improve the overall user experience and property lifespan. A goal of implementing proactive asset care and regular maintenance adds to the city's vision for future parking program enhancements.

For asphalt upkeep, the process of sealcoating can help protect pavement against water penetration, oxidation, and oil leaks. Parking lots that are sealcoated every three to five years and have cracks filled annually can last 30 years without replacement, compared to a 15-year lifespan for a lot without regular maintenance.⁶ Issues like cracked concrete beams and columns, expansion joint failure, and delaminated pavement coating can all become major liabilities if left unattended.⁷ Implementing a regular maintenance routine can result in a multitude of benefits, like doubled pavement lifespan, assured compliance with ADA regulations, increased safety, and improved curb appeal.

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Technology

When it comes to providing a seamless, user-friendly parking experience, keeping your program up to date with the latest forward-facing technologies can make a big impact. In the City of Scranton, outdated revenue systems and ticketing equipment hindered the parking experience, resulting in customer communication and usage issues. A technology upgrade from a cashier system to automation was implemented to enhance the functionality of the garages.

Utilizing technology to support hassle-free parking experiences is becoming the rule, not the exception, for drivers. Contactless payment features like scanning a QR code with your smartphone are becoming the preferred solution, not only for transient parking transactions but also for customers worried about pathogen transmission in a post-COVID world. In 2020, 92.3 million U.S. consumers used contactless payment methods at least once during a 6-month period, a number that is expected to grow to 125 million by 2025.⁸

Security

If not properly protected, parking lots and decks can become magnets for criminal activity. According to a report conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 10 percent of all crime occurs in parking lots and parking garages.⁹ For the City of Scranton, an overall upgrade in parking technology included a focus on security. An upgraded camera system, in addition to contracted security patrol on weekends, enforced a safer environment for parking customers.

Ensuring your customers and their vehicles are safe and secure in your facility is key to a successful parking program. Investing in closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras that can monitor and record drivers' faces and license plate numbers can be a good place to start when it comes to enhancing your parking facility's security. Placing clear call boxes or intercom systems can also help to provide customer peace-of-mind, as well as deter criminal activity. Additional security measures can include a contracted security team for optimal safety.

As your city or municipality adjusts to post-COVID parking trends, working with an experienced parking solutions provider can ensure your program receives a customized plan tailored to fit every need. Whether your parking program calls for integrated or stand-alone solutions, prioritizing the safety and efficiency of your facilities will ensure the success of your program in the long-term.



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