

# Data-Driven Better Communities

By Jeff Petry

**O**UR ROLE AS PARKING PROFESSIONALS ALLOWS US TO MEET, work, and make a difference with community members, neighborhoods, and businesses every day. We leverage these relationships to enhance economic development and strengthen neighborhood livability. In delivering parking and transportation services, we combine modern and classic technology to meet our customers' needs.

Most programs now use, or are on their way to using, credit card payment machines, mobile phone payment applications, parking sensors and counters, and license plate readers for enforcement and permits, in addition to maintaining active social media accounts. We have modernized the business of parking, making it fast and convenient to meet the needs of today's consumer.

Parking and transportation professionals will continue to excel at the business side of our jobs to meet the needs of our organizations and communities. We have been doing this since the introduction of the park-o-meter in 1935. As we continue to manage the business side of our programs, we must also start thinking about how we can leave a lasting positive impression on our communities. We need to think about how parking and transportation influences our communities' current social fabric and helps shape future growth.

## Data

One of our industry's strengths is the number of informational data points our systems collect every minute of every hour of every day. Our systems collect data by parking space, parking lot, and individual vehicles across multiple technologies. It can be overwhelming to analyze all this information, which is why IPI's Alliance for Parking Data

Standards ([parking.org/apds](http://parking.org/apds)) is working to develop uniform parking data standards to streamline worldwide information sharing.

Standardizing data management practices in the parking industry allows us to think about the ways data can be used to inform housing, climate, and business data on a local, regional, and national level. For example, a municipality might create a data warehouse across departments to unify parking enforcement data, building permits, building code enforcement, rental housing code, economic development programs, affordable housing, and land use actions. The database would have scripts running to look for common connections between complaints, such as addresses or quarter-mile heat maps. Eventually, an alert would go out to program managers to say that a parking officer is working a recurring abandoned vehicle complaint, building code enforcement is working a hoarding case, and animal control is working an animal complaint—all at the same address. The municipality could then take an off-ramp and assign a livability manager or similar to coordinate a solution for that address.

## Sharing Data

Warehousing and sharing data can also be used to identify the business and land use impacts of parking. Meter and permit revenue, citations, and occu-

pancy counts can connect to business sales, property tax values, and economic development incentives to better understand the ways communities develop.

Building permit data has the total number of parking spaces associated with each new construction and redevelopment building permit. If this information is in a shareable database that is connected to public on- and off-street parking spaces, the parking supply blueprint of your community is now available. A really rich data layer would include adding transactional data from parking and transportation systems to show system use, including pick-ups and drop-off line segments from bike shares and transportation network companies and occupancy parking sensors. The end result creates the parking and transportation pulse of how our community moves to inform mobility services strategy for the future.

A major challenge is the data needed to create the vision of connecting our community through parking technology lives in data silos in standalone software systems across various work units and departments. Our private-sector partners can help piece the data points together to make smart and innovative decisions. It is our responsibility to start looking to tackle issues through data-driven leadership, combining data and technology to make a difference every day for the communities where we live, work, and play. 



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*Think about the traditional experience of entering a parking garage: You stop at a gate, press a button, grab a ticket or scan a pass, and then the gate opens and allows your vehicle to pass through, with a similar process to exit.*

tracking system that leaves little room for error, and less manpower needed to monitor abuse.

According to UBC, implementing an LPR system has saved the university more than \$600,000 in annual operational costs while boosting enforcement productivity by 40 percent. The technology works to streamline the existing methods of monitoring, regulating, and enforcing into one singular system. It creates a whole new level of sustainability.

By removing gates and ticket booths, we can expedite garage (or lot) entry and exit times—therefore eliminating clogged traffic patterns and reducing car-

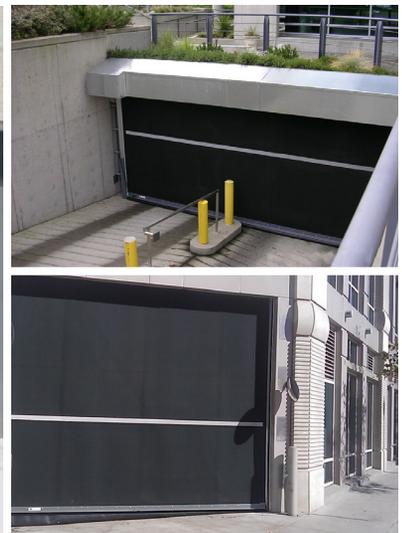
bon emissions. With the introduction of virtual recognition methods, physical tickets and official passes become obsolete, removing the need for excessive quantities of paper and plastic. And by embracing LPR, we take another step toward going green. **P**



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