

# Marketing During COVID-19



*The winners of this year's IPMI Marketing Awards show off creative thinking and more during a challenging time.*

By Melanie Padgett Powers

**L**IKE SO MANY PLANS IN 2020, marketing and communications strategies were upended, but the best parking and mobility organizations quickly switched it up and focused on how to help their communities during the pandemic. These winners of the IPMI Marketing Awards recognize outstanding marketing, public relations, and communications programs.



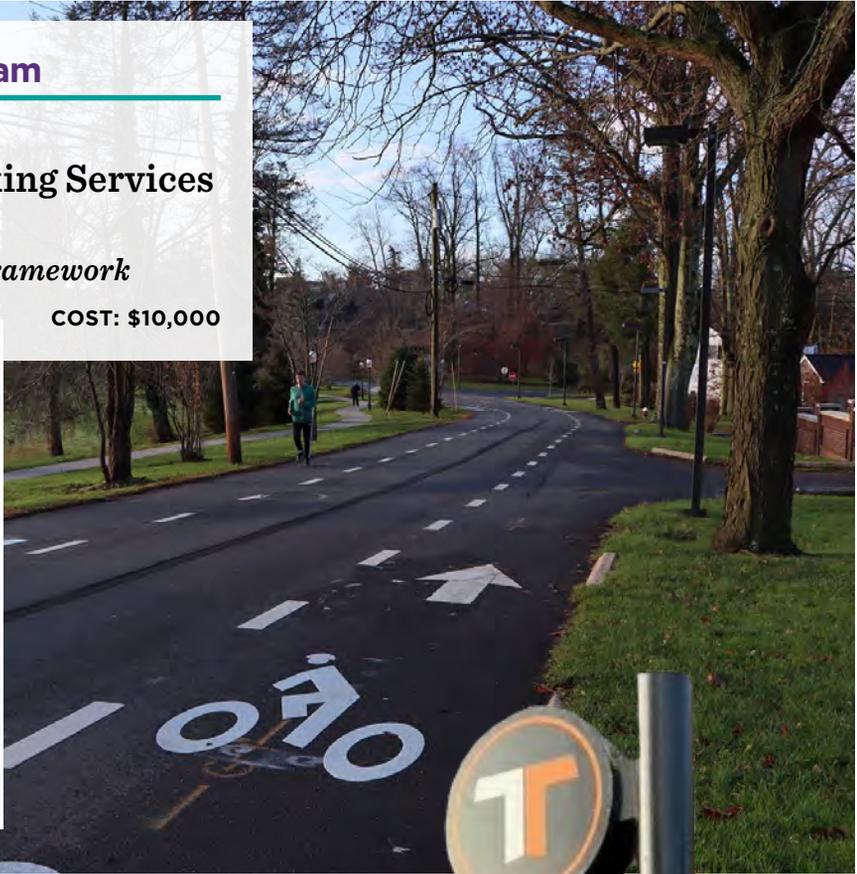
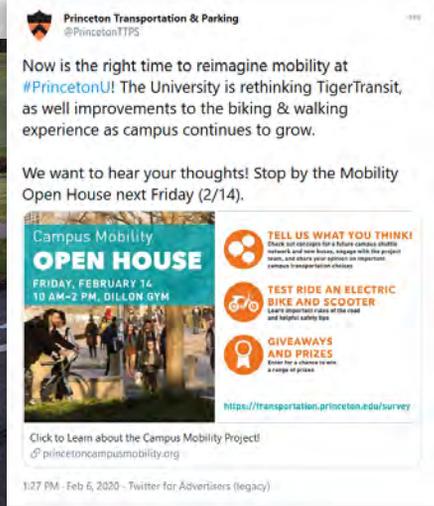
## Mobility Marketing Program

### Princeton University's Transportation and Parking Services

Princeton, N.J.

#### *Princeton Campus Mobility Framework*

**COST: \$10,000**



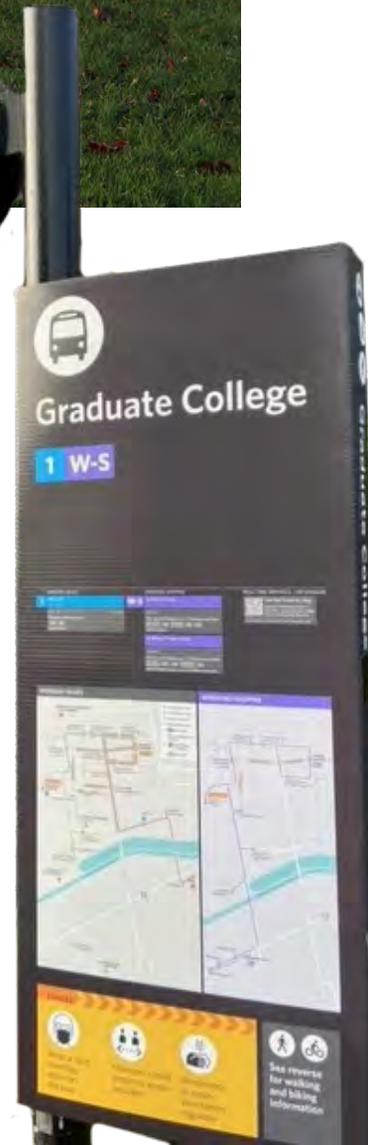
In the fall of 2019, Princeton University's Transportation and Parking Services (TPS) initiated a review of the campus transportation policies, services, and infrastructure to support a major campus expansion and planning effort. At the same time, existing buses were near the end of their life, providing an opportune time to design the next generation of the campus bus service, TigerTransit, while also improving biking and walking experiences.

Mobility consultants from Nunes-Ueno Consulting and Jared Walker Associates were brought in to help, and a Transportation Advisory Council (TAC) of students, staff and faculty was created. A series of meetings provided a slate of choices to present to the Princeton community through a new website, [princetoncampusmobility.org](http://princetoncampusmobility.org). More than 20 campus presentations, an open house, and an online survey followed. In all of the engagements, people were asked how they prefer to move around campus and how they would choose between various mobility alternatives.

At the open house — with more than 200 people—attendees used stickers to indicate responses to questions

on large visual displays. Project team members were available to talk about each concept. Attendees were also able to test-ride electric bikes and scooters along a set course and board electric buses being considered for the TigerTransit fleet. A robust social media plan supported these efforts.

Thanks to this heavy engagement, almost 2,300 students, employees, and community members responded to the survey. Respondents consistently envisioned more human-powered and an electrified set of mobility services (with fewer greenhouse gas emissions) and a campus where people of all abilities would be free to travel. Recommendations were finalized in fall 2020, with a report available on the project website. TPS has deployed some of the recommendations, including a more efficient and easier-to-use TigerTransit network, a new system map for wayfinding, and bike and pedestrian advisory lanes along two popular routes to campus from university housing.



## Parking Marketing Program

### ParkMobile

#### *ParkMobile for Good*

**COST: NO ADDITIONAL COSTS**

When COVID-19 hit the U.S. in 2020, ParkMobile's transaction volume immediately dropped by 95 percent. As cities shut down, people didn't need to pay for parking. One of ParkMobile's core values is "Support our People. Support Our Community." The company quickly realized it could reach out to its large base of app users (who already had credit cards on file) and leverage the app's ability to process financial transactions. So, ParkMobile converted its parking payment app into a fundraising tool to help communities. In March and April 2020, the company asked users to donate \$5 to \$50 to one of several local charities in the cities it serves. Users who didn't live in one of those cities could donate to Feeding America, an organization that supports local food banks. The local charities were Food Bank NYC in New York; Giving Kitchen in Atlanta; Hook Hall Helps in Washington, D.C.; Colorado Family Meal in Denver; and Louisiana Hospitality Foundation in New Orleans. ParkMobile also committed to match a portion of the funds raised.

The ParkMobile marketing team leveraged all its digital marketing tools to engage users and encourage donations. This



included emails, in-app messages, push notifications, and social media posts across Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. All social media outreach was organic with approximately 20 posts, which led to approximately 10,000 impressions and 500 engagements. A dedicated page on the ParkMobile website provided more information about the charities and instructions on how to donate. During the four-week campaign, the program raised more than \$35,000, including a matching donation from ParkMobile.

## Rebranding Campaign

### City of Fort Wayne, Ind.

#### *Meters with a Mission*

**COST: NO ADDITIONAL COSTS**

Rather than hauling the city's retired parking meters to the dump, the City of Fort Wayne, Indiana, turned them into "Meters with a Mission." The 27 antiquated meters now collect donations from the public for 27 local nonprofits. The idea was initiated by Fort Wayne City Clerk Lana Keesling, who enlisted the local chamber of commerce to find businesses to adopt a meter and choose a nonprofit recipient. Some companies also offered to match the donated funds up to a designated amount. The chamber's website has a map of the meters, along with their corresponding nonprofit and corporate sponsor. The sponsors decorated their meters and send out donation calls to their customers and employees.

As donations come in, the city's Parking Enforcement Department collects and forwards the proceeds to the appropriate nonprofits. The program has a wait list of companies and nonprofits that want to take part, and second round with new sponsors and organizations will start in 2021.



## Social Media Campaign

### Lexington & Fayette County Parking Authority

Lexington, Ky.

#### Community Support

**COST: \$5,160**



The Lexington Parking Authority (LEXPARK) is guided by a mission of providing customer-focused public parking that is high quality, affordable, and convenient. When COVID-19 arrived in early 2020, LEXPARK knew it couldn't stick with its regular marketing campaigns when the community was hurting and events were no longer taking place. Instead, in May 2020, LEXPARK and local marketing agency Zipie, LLC shifted their marketing efforts to support local businesses owners and the community. The new strategy consisted of two separate social media campaigns aimed at bringing awareness to small businesses.

The first phase focused on LEXPARK's designated curbside pick-up spots and free two-hour on-street meter parking, which allowed customers to easily support their favorite businesses without worrying about parking availability or time limits. In the second phase, LEXPARK teamed up with eight local coffee shops and restaurants to host two social media giveaways. Local businesses donated items such as branded hats, coffee mugs, shirts, and stickers. LEXPARK provided gift cards.

After three months of consistent social media marketing efforts, LEXPARK saw a 4,000 percent increase in organic audience growth. In addition, organic engagements rose by 654 engagements with impressions at 359,711 total in four weeks. Aside from strengthening the community, LEXPARK has seen an increase in brand loyalty and trust among both businesses and customers.

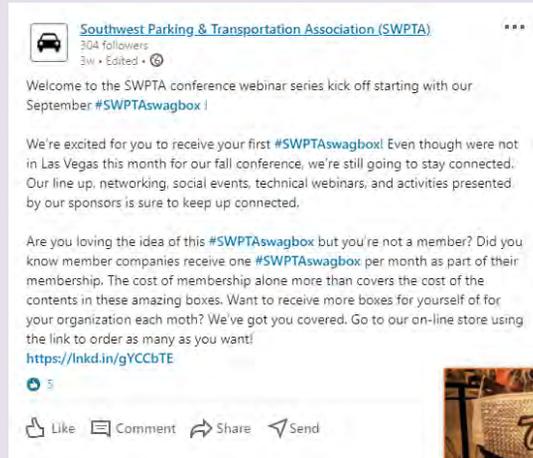
## Social Media Campaign

### Southwest Parking and Transportation Association

Lone Tree, Colo.

#### #SWPTAswagbox

**COST: NO COST, SOME STAFF TIME.**

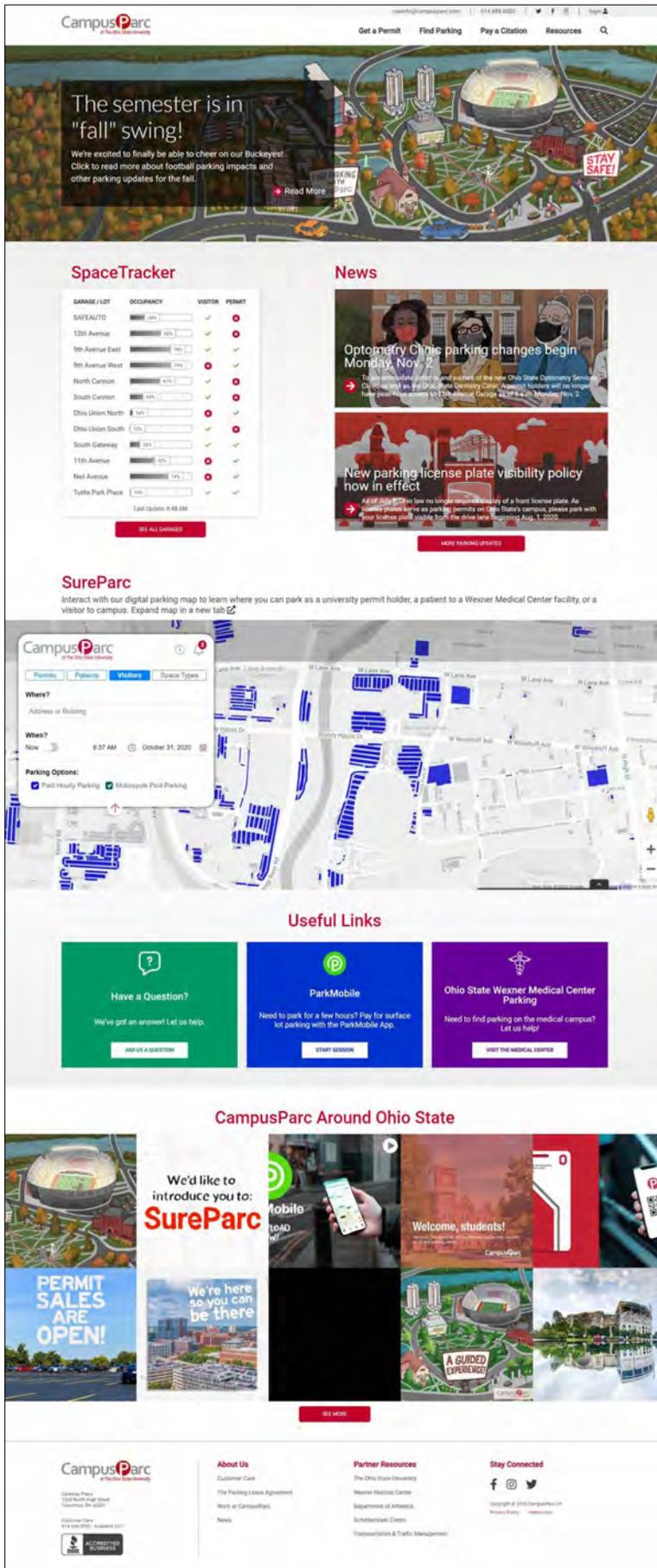


Southwest Parking and Transportation Association (SWPTA) in Colorado serves members in several states, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Like other parking professional organizations during the pandemic, SWPTA faced a challenging year for engagement and growth. After canceling both its in-person conferences in 2020, the organization wanted to do more than pivot to a virtual event and instead engage in new and innovative ways. The #SWPTAswagbox was born.

The new program was designed to enhance the visibility of sponsors, increase membership through engagement, provide relevant parking and transportation-related content, and offer lighthearted social engagement. Each month, member organizations receive a box filled with swag, fun activities, informative brochures, and details on upcoming webinars and social engagements. Sponsors showcase their swag and solution offerings. Every month, SWPTA ships more than 100 boxes across the U.S. and Canada, and the involvement of member companies continues to grow.

Sponsors have the opportunity to provide a five-minute power pitch at each month's webinar and can choose to host social engagements as well. One month a sponsor hosted a mask decorating competition. In October, another hosted a costume and pumpkin carving contest. Other planned events included a cooking show, gingerbread parking garage decorating contest, and an awards gala.





## Website or App Launch or Redesign

### CampusParc, The Ohio State University

Columbus, Ohio

#### Website Launch

**COST: \$200,000-\$300,000**

CampusParc, the organization responsible for the oversight of The Ohio State University's parking assets, launched a new website, [osu.campusparc.com](http://osu.campusparc.com), on June 1, 2020. The site offers a simplified digital experience that provides navigation and content based on the individual consumer.

Before development of the website began, CampusParc conducted several focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to gain a better understanding of their current challenges and desired functionality. In response, the site decreased the number of top-level menu items from nine to four. A simplified menu uses action-based language and focuses on the primary actions customers seek to accomplish on the site. Once logged in, customers see a personalized profile page that leverages API integrations with Passport's NuPark product. Customers can now also retrieve a digital QR code for their permit.

CampusParc also partnered with SPOT Parking to create SureParc, a digital representation of the parking inventory and rules at Ohio State. Another new feature called the Permit Comparison Tool allows customers to view permit details, options, and benefits in a side-by-side, easy-to-read format. Once a customer has logged in, the Permit Comparison tool will filter just those permits the customer is eligible to purchase. CampusParc also created an Orientation Week Guide and Permit Recommendation Tool for new employees to The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

The June 2020 website launch was timely in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the decrease in face-to-face visits. During the permit sales season in June and July, website sessions increased by 40 percent and pageviews by 68 percent. The bounce rate decreased by 25 percent. CampusParc sent out multiple customer surveys about the website, leading to new ideas for the 2021 development roadmap. ♦



**MELANIE PADGETT POWERS** is a freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at [melanie@meledits.com](mailto:melanie@meledits.com).