

FINDING PARKING SOLUTIONS

Last year's competition winner on his ideas and big win.

PI's 2017 Parking Solutions Competition asked tomorrow's innovators to introduce the next big idea in parking. Competition was stiff, and in the end, Access MIT won with their idea for a commuting benefits program that provides free transit and reformed parking prices for staff and faculty at their university.



The team was headed up by student Adam Rosenfield, who recently shared his thoughts on the experience with us.

The Parking Professional: Tell us a bit about yourself. What brought you toward the parking industry?

Adam Rosenfield: Before I attended the IPI Conference, I had no idea of the sheer size and scope of the parking industry and never imagined that I would become so interested in it. But through two transportation-related internships and my undergraduate research at the University of Toronto, I realized that parking is one of those unglamorous yet crucial components of people's travel behavior and among the most important levers we have in changing travel patterns.

I'm now a third-year graduate student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), pursuing dual master's degrees in transportation and city planning, and my thesis research centers on how we can use workplace-based commuting benefits and incentives to better manage parking demand while promoting the use of sustainable travel modes. When I learned about IPI's Parking Solutions Competition, I found my research fit closely with the objectives of the competition.

TPP: Tell us about your winning pitch in the IPI Parking Solutions Competition.

AR: My pitch is about taking the lessons learned from behavioral economics—the idea that we humans are not always fully rational, utility-maximizing agents—and using them to better inform transportation policy design. MIT has

long faced downward pressure on its parking supply and this past year launched a series of employee transportation benefits aimed at reducing parking demand while offering improved alternatives. The flagship element was a zero-cost transit pass provided to all employees. But with respect to parking, the most important policy was a shift from annual permits to daily, pay-as-you-park pricing. The idea here is that if we invert the mental cost equation (parking costs are perceived to be incurred as often as transit costs), more drivers might consider taking transit, even if occasionally.

I evaluated the attitudinal and behavioral effects of these changes and found that while many commuters were receptive to the new benefits (who doesn't like free transit?), many more might be swayed by small nudges. So during the last few months, I designed and conducted a randomized controlled experiment in which I gave different nudges to subsets of drivers and measured their change in attitudes and behavior. One subset received weekly "Commuter Digest" emails containing tips and tricks on how to make the most of MIT's benefits, with appeals to social norms and peer behavior. Another subset received weekly cash rewards proportional to how much they reduced their drive-alone commuting. A third subset received both informational digests and the small cash incentives.

I discovered that, in the six-week period, those receiving the combined incentives had the biggest drop in parking, and my exit survey showed that a lot of parkers really enjoyed participating in the campaign. My

