

NO DECAL, NO HANG TAG, NO PROBLEM

By Vicky Gagliano, LEED AP

I remember those days during college when I waited in line for more than an hour at the parking office/trailer to pay for and pick up a parking decal. They gave me a plastic card with suction cups that I could use to display the decal without permanently affixing it to my windshield. Of course, within two weeks of Florida heat, it must have fallen off a dozen times until I found that perfect spot where the dashboard would hold it in place even if the suction cups failed.

My destiny to end up in the parking industry still unknown at that time, parking enforcement officers provided my first lessons in parking. I learned that a ticket cost \$15 if I parked outside my zone regardless if the lot was 50 feet or a mile from my classroom. Of course, why pay a ticket and walk a mile when I could just walk 50 feet? I also knew where they stored towed vehicles and how the appeals process worked. No, they didn't waive the citation because I was at the infirmary and my roommate parked my car for me. I paid my ticket(s) and graduated. While getting my master's degree at another university, I learned more tricks that furthered my education in parking.

I physically stood in line to drop/add college courses, my daily activities were not documented on Facebook from my smartphone (thank goodness), and I couldn't buy a digital parking permit from the comfort of my living room at 11 p.m. the night before classes started.

Digital Permitting Emerges

Today, universities are realizing the benefits of digital permitting (electronic or paperless permitting). While a digital permit system can be applied in multiple types of paid parking operations, the demographics of most university users typically make for an easy transition and implementation. Students quickly accept the use of digital permits.

Even better, from a financial standpoint, a digital permitting operation will often provide a short payback period and yield a positive return on investment within one to three years, depending on the size of the system. The financial advantages are primarily thanks to the fact that office staff can be allocated to other tasks when permit issuance is completely conducted online and physical decals and hang tags are not mailed or handed out at a central location. Likewise, enforcement staff can more quickly scan and verify valid permits via a license plate recognition (LPR) camera mounted on their vehicles, leading to higher compliance due to a greater probability of citation issuance for violators.



In addition, officers are now able to print the citations while inside their vehicles or golf carts, which reduces the number of face-to-face conflicts.

Digital permits close many of the loopholes that existed with decals and hang tags—the same ones I once used. In addition, legitimate issues with multiple vehicles or a new car can be quickly managed online at any time, day or night, and most students are comfortable with the system.

Faculty and staff, while slightly less savvy, also enjoy the benefits of driving any household vehicle without needing to move a hang tag or stop by the parking office to obtain a temporary permit. In fact, issuance of almost all temporary permits is eliminated.

For employees who retire, find other employment, or are terminated, permits can be easily marked as no longer valid, and payroll deductions can be turned off without the need for the employee to make an additional trip to the parking office.

The same system is capable of fully automating the collection and payment of visitor and vendor permits by identifying paid vehicles using the license plate number.

I'm a proud member of Generation X who knows how to use a rotary phone but also embraces technology and how it can allow for more a more efficient parking operation. P



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