

## WHERE IT'S OK TO TALK BACK

By Mark Santos, PE

In the parking consulting arena, we work in different environments and provide a wide range of services to assist our clients:

- We work with everyone from well-established parking departments to those just starting at the ground level.
- We work with all sorts of budgets, from those with surpluses that result in planning efforts to those that aren't quite as robust and strive to just meet operational costs.
- We work on situations ranging from implementing payment for parking (for the first time in some cases) to considering variable parking pricing in more established parking payment situations.
- We range from exploring the construction of a client's first parking structure to expanding existing garages and lots.

### Finding Experts

What this means is we are all at different stages in our parking lives, so a one-size-fits-all recommendation is likely not going to work in most cases. That means we in parking and transportation turn to the experts.

At the 2015 IPI Conference & Expo in Las Vegas, the Consultants Committee led a moderated panel titled "Talk Back: Consultants Share Their Perspectives on Planning, Design, Operations, and Where the Industry Is Headed." I had the pleasure of moderating the panel, comprised of four parking industry experts with diverse project and client experiences:

- Joe Sculli, CAPP, Chance Management Advisors/planning and studies.
- Michelle Wendler, AIA, Watry Design/sustainability and innovation.
- Jeremy Rocha, PE, Walter P Moore/design and construction.
- John Porter, PE, Simpson Gumpertz Heger/restoration and maintenance.


The panel provided specific insight on an industry hot topic—strategic parking plans. Municipalities and universities are taking charge of where their operations, supply, and management of parking are headed, not just for the next year or two but forecasting budgets and plans for five- and 10-year horizons. Municipalities and universities strive to balance their focus on today's urgent needs with the future outlook of their

parking programs and what will change or be needed down the road.

Other highlights of the educational session included:

- Automated parking, especially regarding installed locations in mostly larger cities and typically associated with residential uses. Conversation about the major variable with automated parking—car retrieval time—was a prominent feature of this discussion, focusing on the need to lessen this technology's average retrieval time.
- The positive effects of the use of social media to engage the public by allowing drivers and our customers to easily obtain information on parking availability while providing an additional communication channel for public input.
- The use of shared parking and its wide spectrum of acceptance in different municipalities, ranging from situations in which shared parking isn't even permitted to those that specify occupancy percentages for each parking use. Shared parking analysis helps determine right-size parking amount and minimizes overbuild by considering the hourly parking occupancy of different uses.
- The effects of maintaining multi-million dollar capital investments—parking structures—from the perspectives of durability, safety, and security. Ultimately, the options are quite simple. Choose proactivity and maintain parking structures regularly, resulting in more manageable costs and operational impacts. Or, based on other circumstances, look to maintain parking structures at less-frequent intervals, likely resulting in increased costs and operational effects.

### See You in Nashville

The panel enjoyed the audience engagement as well as their targeted questions on these topics, and the Consultants Committee looks forward to your attendance for the next round of discussion on hot parking topics at the 2016 IPI Conference & Expo, May 17–20 in Nashville, Tenn., (IPIConference.parking.org). My fellow committee members and I look forward to seeing you and addressing more of your questions and concerns there. 



**MARK SANTOS, PE**, is a parking practice builder with Kimley-Horn and a member of IPI's Consultants Committee. He can be reached at [mark.santos@kimley-horn.com](mailto:mark.santos@kimley-horn.com) or 305.535.7705.