



City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 22, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

FROM: YON LAMBERT, AICP, DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES 

SUBJECT: RESIDENTIAL PAY BY PHONE PARKING

This memorandum is in response to questions by members of City Council on the Pay by Phone Parking Program.

BACKGROUND: The concept for the residential pay by phone program emerged from the 2015 Old Town Area Parking Study (OTAPS) Work Group. This 19-member Work Group included a mix of Old Town residents and business representatives and was charged with developing recommendations for improving parking management in Old Town. The recommendations provided to City Council were intended to support the following parking management goals that were identified by OTAPS:

1. Encourage long term visitors to use transit and park in off-street garages and surface lots
2. Encourage short term visitors to park in metered areas rather than residential blocks
3. Preserve parking on residential blocks for residents and guests
4. Encourage compliance at meters and in residential parking districts

The Work Group included a recommendation for a residential pay by phone pilot program with the understanding that it would be resident-initiated, rather than staff-initiated. In November 2016, staff proposed the current pilot program structure that allowed residents in the pilot program area to submit a petition requesting the restrictions, using a process similar to adding or changing traditional residential parking restrictions. The goal of this pilot program, which is consistent with the overall OTAPS goals, is:

To provide adequate on-street parking for residents by encouraging non-residential parkers to park in metered spaces or garages by eliminating "free" two-hour parking on residential blocks.

The following questions have been submitted by members of City Council:

Q: Can you still buy self-validating guest permits at our libraries? Could we partner with businesses issue guest permits?

A: City Hall is the only place where the self-validating, non-date specific guest permits are currently available. The self-validating permits were previously available at libraries and police departments, but the demand at these locations was very low. Residential guest parking permits can be printed at the library for those who don't have access to a computer or printer at home.

Partnering with businesses to provide more options for obtaining permits could potentially be an option, but we would need to set some criteria for how to track and administer this. Another option that would probably be easier for us administratively would be to identify other City buildings with different operating hours that might be able to sell these, such as rec centers or the Visitor's Center.

Q: What is the potential timeline for the virtual guest permits?

A: This is something that is actively being discussed with IT and with Gtechna, our vendor that provides parking enforcement technology. The exact timeline is not determined, but within the next few months we should know if our existing online system can be modified to allow for the virtual permit option. If that does not work, we can also explore vendors who specialize in virtual permits, but that would be a longer procurement process.

Q: What are the limits on numbers of visitor and guest permits that a household can get?

A: There is a limit of two visitor permits (allows parking for 1- 30 days) per household at a time and 25 guest permits (allows 24 hours of parking) per household per month.

Q: The ordinance proposes code language to clarify that eligible block petitions must be signed by an occupant of more than 50 percent of the residential properties. Does this mean that each residence gets one vote no matter the number of occupants? Does each apartment unit count as a residence?

A: Yes, that is correct. This is how staff have been consistently administered the eligibility of petitions. This proposed update to the language is meant to clarify that process. Yes, each apartment unit counts as a residence.

Q: Provide a copy of the mailer that was sent to households to notify residents of the residential pay by phone feedback form? Which households was it sent to?

A: The mailing (Attachment 1) was targeted to the residents within the pilot program area that had the restrictions or were eligible to request restrictions (i.e. adjacent to a metered block or adjacent to a block with the residential pay by phone restrictions). It was sent to a total of 343 residences – 111 on blocks with and 232 on blocks without residential pay by phone.

Q: When was the last block added to the program? When did petitions for blocks stop being accepted? Are there blocks that have submitted petitions since or others that have expressed interest?

A: The last block added was 300 Prince Street in July 2018. Staff stopped processing petitions when it began the pilot program evaluation in October 2018. Staff has received two petitions (300 block of Wolfe Street and 100 block of S. Lee Street) since then which are on hold until the determination is made if the program will continue.

Q: What is the eligibility/process by which a street becomes metered?

A: The process for creating new metered blocks is outlined in Section 5-8-92 of the City Code, which requires staff to take proposals for new metered blocks to the Traffic and Parking Board for a public hearing and recommendation. One important point about this is if a block is already signed with residential parking restrictions, staff would not be able to remove those restrictions and propose it be a metered block. Under the current residential permit parking program, only the residents of a block can request changes to the residential parking restrictions.

Q: Is there a map of the metered streets and parking garages in Alexandria?

A: Yes, a copy of the map is provided (Attachment 2). In addition, you can find this information on the City's Parking Viewer, which is an interactive map with parking information, including meter locations and residential parking districts. Additionally, here's a link to a map of parking garages in Old Town which show the public parking options in Old Town.

Q: Is metered parking free on Sundays?

A: Yes, and federal holidays.

Q: What outreach occurred within and beyond the pilot area?

A: The 2015 Old Town Area Parking Study (OTAPS) from which this project stemmed included significant community outreach and opportunities for public input. The pilot program was approved in the fall of 2016 after public hearings before the Traffic and Parking Board and City Council, with notification to Old Town Civic Association. In 2017 a flyer was mailed to eligible blocks within the pilot program area informing residents of the program. Each block that requested the restrictions was reviewed by the Traffic and Parking Board at a public hearing.

In Fall 2018, staff began evaluation of the program. Details about the evaluation and staff recommendations were heard at public hearing at the Traffic and Parking Board. The Old Town Civic Association, West Old Town Citizens Association, and Upper King Street Neighborhood Association were informed of the program recommendations and related meetings via email. These three associations cover the area with RPP parking adjacent to metered blocks, which are eligible for the Residential Pay by Phone Program. ENews notifications were also sent out with the program recommendations and information on upcoming related meetings.

Q: What alternative means of payment are being explored to accommodate senior citizens or others who have difficulty paying with the available payment options (ParkMobile's app/web, ParkMobile's toll-free number, or at a nearby pay station)?

A: Options we are exploring include vouchers that can be purchased in advance at the same rate as meters for people planning to park in pay by phone areas and senior parking permits that would allow customers above a certain age to purchase a permit that would allow them to park on-street within the posted time limit without paying hourly fees. The City Attorney's Office indicated that there were no initial red flags with these options but that additional research would be needed before implementing. These options are available in other cities, although they are not Virginia specific examples, so additional work with the City Attorney's Office would be done to ensure there are no Virginia laws precluding these options.

Q: Is there a fee for paying for parking by calling the ParkMobile number?

A: There is a \$5 fee to speak to a live agent to register a ParkMobile account via telephone call. T&ES staff believe this fee could be passed on to the City at a small annual cost (approximately \$200 annually), as the vendor (ParkMobile) reports that the number of transactions made by phone call is less than half of one percent (<0.5%). Once a customer sets up an account, there is no additional fee for paying for parking via phone call. If a customer chooses not to set up an account to pay (does not want to register a credit card on file), then they will continue to pay \$5 to speak to a live agent each time they choose pay for parking over the phone.

Q: If the program is continued, could the text on the sign indicating the location of the nearest kiosk needs to be made larger?

A: Yes, we could work with our signage designers and printers in Traffic Operations on a layout that makes the location of the nearest kiosk more prominent.

Q: Is the goal of the program to remove all free 2-hour parking?

A: No. This program was initially proposed in the 2015 OTAPS program which had, as one of its major goals, recommendations to "preserve parking on residential blocks for residents and guests." The intent of this program is to provide the residents with another option to help achieve the OTAPS goals.

Q: Where are the eligible locations for this program?

A: Blocks are eligible for the program if:

- 1. They have RPP parking restrictions,*
- 2. The parking conditions show that 75% of the spaces are occupied, and*
- 3. They meet the location criteria of being either adjacent to (1) a metered block or (2) another block with residential pay by phone restrictions.*

A map of the pilot program area with the eligible and implemented blocks, metered blocks, and RPP district boundaries is included (Attachment 2). This ordinance

recommends removing the program boundary but retaining the location criteria, which allows these restrictions to be requested in other areas that meet these conditions.

Q: Do residents have a role in saying if a meter can be installed on their block?

A: The general feedback staff has heard from residents is that they feel that meters will be a detriment to the historical character of many of the blocks and make them feel more commercialized. Based on this feedback, staff are not including a recommendation to add meters on residential blocks in the program in the proposed ordinance. As discussed above, other payment alternatives are being explored by staff to make it easier for those who do not want to pay via one of the existing options.

Q: What language(s) will instructional signage be in?

A: Parking signage is currently provided in English and is anticipated to continue to be provided in English. Other language options could be explored, but the number and size of signs on each block and the general clarity should be considered.

Q: What is the impact to businesses? Does this program divert from business use?

A: One of the goals from OTAPS was to encourage short term parking for businesses on metered blocks or in off-street parking garages. Primarily commercial blocks already had metered on-street parking and customers parking in these 2- or 3-hour spaces pay the same rate (\$1.75/hour) as on the residential blocks. Prior to implementing the residential pay by phone program and still on blocks outside of the pilot program area, residential blocks adjacent to metered blocks were often more occupied than the metered blocks because they were free. The goal of the residential pay by phone program is to encourage more non-residents to choose to park on metered blocks or in garages closer to commercial destinations to encourage turnover and to make parking more available to residents, many of whom do not have off-street parking available on their properties.

Q: What is the impact of reducing free parking options and parkers not being able to extend parking times beyond 2- or 3-hour limit?

A: With or without the residential pay by phone program, the RPP program limits the amount of time a vehicle without the appropriate RPP District decal or guest/visitor permit can park on a block to 2 or 3 hours. A goal from OTAPS was to encourage longer term parkers to utilize garages and allow higher turnover on the generally more desirable on-street spaces and to preserve parking for residential parkers as discussed above.

Q: Where could meters be provided to facilitate payment without cellphones?

A: Based on strong residential feedback opposing meters on residential blocks, staff are not recommending requiring meters on program blocks. However, City Council could consider recommending a change to the ordinance proposed by staff to:

- 1. Provide limits on how far from an existing meter the program can expand (e.g. restrictions cannot be added on blocks more than 3 blocks from a metered block), or*
- 2. Require that additional meters need to be added as the program expands a certain distance from existing metered blocks, or*

3. *Require meters to be installed near institutional or commercial uses on RPP streets approved for pay by phone restrictions.*

Q: Is staff aware of the decision from the Commission on Aging on the program?

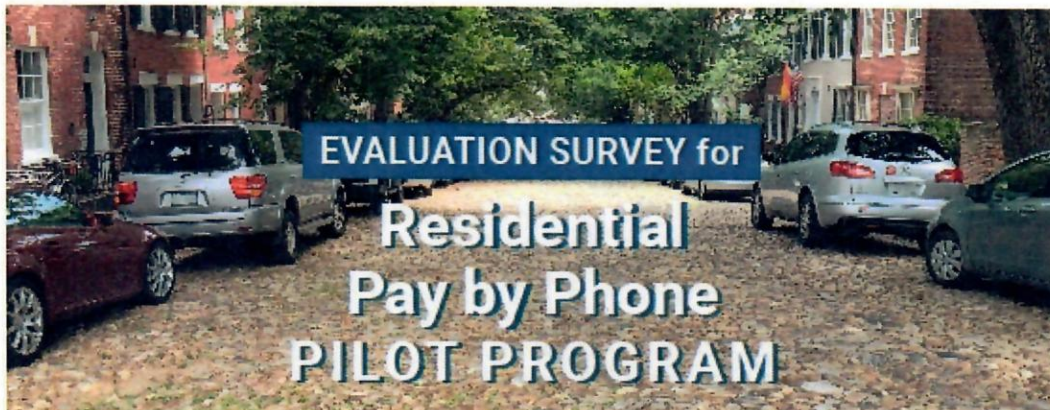
A: Yes, staff is aware that the Commission on Aging approved a motion to ask Council to let the pilot lapse. T&ES staff was not present for the discussion and was not asked to provide any information or attend a meeting to discuss it. Additionally, staff was previously unaware of any Commission concerns about the program and was not afforded an opportunity to communicate with the Commission before it voted.

Attachment 1- Residential Pay by Phone Feedback Form Notification Flyer

Attachment 2- Residential Pay by Phone – Parking Overview Map

cc: Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Katie North, Division Chief/Mobility Services, T&ES
Megan Oleynik, Urban Planner III, T&ES

Attachment 1: Residential Pay by Phone Feedback Form Notification Flyer



To take a survey to evaluate the
Residential Pay by Phone Pilot Program please go to
alexandriava.gov/Parking
until November 2, 2018

In November 2016, Alexandria City Council approved a temporary pilot that tests a program to allow residents on eligible blocks to request residential pay by phone signage. This means that non-residents who normally park for free for a limited time in residential permit zones are still allowed to park under that time limit, but they pay hourly fees. Hourly fees do not apply for residents and guests who display valid permits in their cars.

City Council approved this pilot program until March 2019, when they will evaluate and decide if it should be continued, modified, or discontinued. A survey is being conducted as part of an effort by staff to collect data and feedback in order to evaluate the program when the term of the pilot program expires.

City staff will evaluate results of this survey in conjunction with parking occupancy and enforcement information from before and after the implementation of the pilot program to inform a recommendation regarding the future of the residential pay by phone program. Staff recommendations will then be brought to a public hearing before the Traffic and Parking Board (tentatively scheduled for December 17, 2018) and City Council (tentatively scheduled for February 2019).



FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Megan Oleynik,
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Attachment 2: Residential Pay by Phone – Parking Overview Map

