

Paperless Multispace Meters Just the Ticket for Campuses

By Patrick Ryan

Just five years ago, most American motorists thought of parking meters as gray, coin-operated devices atop narrow metal poles, planted in rows across their cities. However, in today's difficult economic climate, cities under constant pressure for greater efficiency and revenue are increasingly installing multispace machines -- and in the process are replacing single-space meters in their thousands. Motorists, too, are embracing the change, watching multispace machines free up their city sidewalks and enjoying the wider range of payment options that these meters can offer.

The pay-by-space or multibay meter has long been a fixture on sidewalks around the world and over the last five years has grown in popularity with U.S. cities coast to coast. These days, all of the single-space meter companies manufacture their own version of the multibay meter. While these machines have proven popular and effective on city streets throughout the country, a few savvy campus parking professionals also are taking advantage of the motorist-friendly features of multibay meters. Unlike their larger, more expensive pay-and-display cousins, which are better suited to larger off-street parking lots, it's the simplicity of these meters that makes them ideal for busy campus parking.

The San Diego (CA) Community College District (SDCCD) installed its first multibay meters several years ago, and the machines have been so effective that it has ordered more. Used on a number of campuses for short-term parking, the multibay meters cover between 10 and 20 spaces, and are located close to busy campus areas such as libraries and student unions. Because the multibay meters don't require motorists to walk back to their cars to place a ticket inside the vehicle, students and visitors can quickly pay at the meter and then go about their business. This makes the meters an ideal solution for parking professionals who want maximum compliance in high turnover areas. In fact, these are exactly the qualities that make multibay machines so effective in on-street city environments

At SDCCD, another important factor in the success of its multibay program is the automatic audit



The SDCCD uses multibay meters to control the visitors parking which is mixed in with students.

all of the single-space meter companies manufacture their own version of the multibay meter

function that's available on the meters. Each time cash is collected from the machines, so is the audit. The secret is that each Intelligent Cash Box contains a memory chip that is constantly updated by the meter. When the Intelligent Cash Box is removed, the audit information is perfectly synchronized with the actual cash in the box. There is no need for a separate operation or for a collector to

use a handheld device. SDCCD reports that its audits balance "to the Penny." While this may seem amazing compared to other meter audits, it is fairly typical -- the same Intelligent Cash Box system operates in San Francisco at 99.55% accuracy to coin count.

The University of British Columbia in Vancouver ordered its first multibay meters earlier this year, and it too has already placed an additional order. These latest machines feature solar power, wireless communications and credit card acceptance. They also include an interesting spin on a more old-fashioned function -- the units accept the full set of coins for both Canada and the U.S. simultaneously. With their wireless connectivity, these machines also have the ability to be upgraded to a pay-by-cell phone service such as mPark, where motorists can purchase time either standing at the machine or from any other location.

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Permits: Your Printer Can Help Ensure That They are Secure

One of the problems operators and owners face is the duplication of permits. Hangtags, stickers, and window permits can be duplicated on modern full color printers. This can cause headaches for the parking manager, and a great loss of revenue and available parking space.

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permits with holograms and other types of secure printing techniques that make photocopying difficult, if not impossible. Talk to your supplier about these features virtually all printers can supply.

For more information on this issue, see the article on how the University of Washington solved the problem on page 48.

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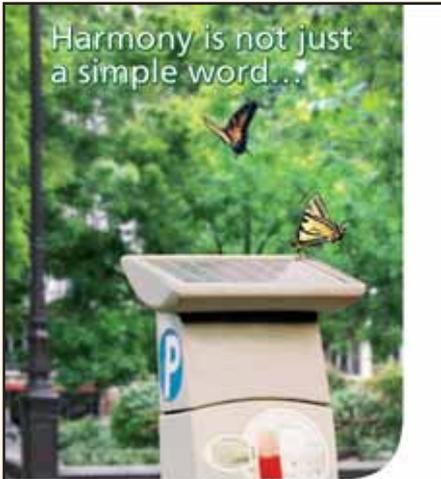
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Application of ALPR in Parking Facilities

from Page <None>

ed ALPR as a means to discourage ticket swapping, lost-ticket fraud, cash leakage and, in general, a way to generate better revenue control and reporting. Airports such as Ben Gurion in Tel Aviv, Israel, Chicago's O'Hare, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Dallas-Fort Worth, Phoenix Sky Harbor, and Detroit Metro are among those employing full-scale or trial systems with ALPR.

While toll roads, red-light violation and speed violation systems require a very high accuracy level for systems designed to automatically send citations to those who violate, parking is a different game entirely. The real test for effectiveness using ALPR in a parking application requires the plate to be accurately read on at least two different occasions: entering and exiting. (If you use equipment that allows you to automatically carry out the nightly License Plate Inventory, you may even have another accuracy read requirement.)

Given the requirement for multiple license plate reads, this may seem a more difficult task. But there are some things to consider that suggest it may, in fact, make the task of accurate plate recognition somewhat easier. Once the



The license plate is read at the entry and the license plate number, along with the ticket/transaction number is sent to a central database.

vehicle license plate has been read at the entrance gate, it becomes a captive number and one of a maximum fixed quantity. Let's say we are dealing with a parking facility with 3,000 spaces. If a vehicle enters with a license plate number ABC123, it now has a potential of being mismatched with only those 2,999 other

vehicles that may be in the parking facility. This could, of course, be more or less, depending on how many vehicles actually entered and exited during the duration, and assuming the lot was full for the whole time.

In practice, along with the license plate number, transaction number, date/time, and any other information stored each time the plate is read (such as the confidence level of each read performed), an image of the plate itself is kept on file. In this way, any disputes over the plate entering and the plate exiting can be resolved via some software that shows both plates on screen at the same time. This is referred to as "exception handling" -- the only time the two images need to be seen is when there is an exception such as a mismatch at exit. This screen can be in the booth with

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DEATH BY PARKING

By JVH

Chapter 8 - The Laundry in Full Swing

L.A. gumshoe Paul Manning has somehow gotten involved in the parking business. While investigating a murder in a parking facility in Hollywood, he has stumbled into a shootout, been kidnapped by the Mob, and has ended up in the hospital after a high-speed crash on Mulholland Drive.

He spent the day on his back thinking about his only clue, a notebook kept by his client, Betty Beeson. He has brought in parking expert “DC” McGuire and been told that the parking facility was a laundry for dirty money. Confused as to why the Mob would launder money in a facility it doesn’t yet own, he needs more information. He has set up a meeting with DC and Betty for the next afternoon. His guardian angel, Nurse Mary, was going off-shift and dropped in to chat. She sat on the bed and was holding his hand and saying all the nice things nurses know how to say when Manning’s girlfriend, Shirley, walked through the door with a vase of flowers. Now she and Manning don’t have a fully committed relationship; however, Shirley is definitely more committed than he. Her smile went to stone in an instant, and with a voice that could have frozen water said, “Well, glad to see you are feeling better.” She flung the flowers on the bed and stalked out.

Damn, Shirley and I have a long history, and it’s a good one. I guess I might as well sit back and enjoy the present company. It was pretty obvious I wasn’t going to have any from Shirley until she cooled off.

The main problem was that the water from the vase was soaking through the blanket and my feet were getting wet. Nurse Mary moved quickly and grabbed the vase before it was completely dry and sat it on the table next to the bed.

“Sorry,” she said, “I guess you are taken,” and walked out.

Boy, things do go to hell quickly. Nothing to do now but sleep off the remainder of the pain from my accident, then prepare for the meeting with Betty and “DC.”

The next morning, I was feeling almost back to normal. I called my lawyer, the insurance company and then rented a car. I would be looking for a new car, but in the meantime, the clunker from “Rent a Wreck” was going to have to do.

I figured that my next move should be to contact my buddy at the LAPD, Sgt. Bill Vose, and get an update as to the status of my client,

Betty. I thought that this should be better done in person, since the last time I was to see Bill, I stood him up, or rather my being kidnapped by the Mob prevented a meeting. After dropping by my house to get some clean clothes, I headed toward downtown L.A.

His office was in the newly opened Police Administration Building. Vose was at his desk, muttering under his breath. “What’s the problem?” I asked. “Oh, it’s about time you showed up. You are only 36 hours late for our little meeting in Bel-Air. I understand you have been a bit busy. How’s the head?”

I told Vose that I was fine and asked about my client.

"She will be released later today. That Philadelphia lawyer you hired for her really knows her stuff. Plus, Betty's landlady is known by the D.A.'s office as a straight shooter, and she vouched for her."

I knew that Marlene Crowley, the curmudgeon who runs the Orange Blossom Arms, would somehow reappear in this story. She nearly decked me when I tried to get to Betty's room after I had found Gilberto Quintana, Betty's boss, in a pool of blood in her office at the parking garage. However, my silver tongue -- and the truth -- got us moving, and we found Betty out cold on the floor of her bathroom. The police arrived and arrested Betty, but as I left, Marlene had Bill Vose in a verbal hammerlock, and I knew he was going to roll over.

"You can probably take Betty with you when you leave," Vose added.

"Great! Now what's been happening with the shootout in Bel-Air and my little sojourn with the Mob?"

"Oh, right, you haven't heard. Well, the fellow you winged running

out of Art Ball's house in Bel-Air turned up in Vegas with a bullet through his ear; yours was in his shoulder. That's how we ID'd him. Your previous activities had given us a record of the ballistics off your piece. No question it was an execution. Definitely Mob-related.

"As for the kidnappers, the car chasing you on Mulholland and its occupants weren't so lucky," Vose said. "When they rounded the curve and saw you slide into the road grader, they went into a spin and were wrapped around an oak tree. No survivors. We compared the plate with the one we got from Capt. Hankins over at the Bel Air Patrol and it was the same plate, stolen from a '53 Ford pickup. I have to say that you do have a tendency to leave a string of bodies in your wake."

"Just talented, I guess," I said. "Thanks for the info. Where can I meet Betty?"

Vose called down and had Betty brought up. She look good, real good. In fact, since the incident with Shirley at the hospital, she looked as good as can be.

"Oh, Paul, I am so glad to see you.

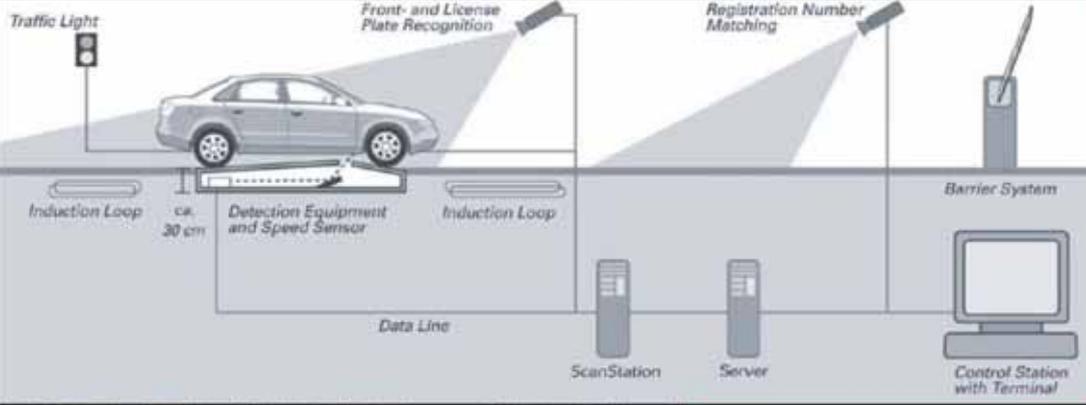
They made me stay in jail for two nights until your lawyer and Marlene convinced them I wasn't a murderer. Or at least convinced them that I wasn't leaving town."

I didn't tell Betty that the real reason was that my mouthpiece had put up bail in the amount of \$5,000, the interest for which was going on my bill. We said goodbye to Vose and headed out. I told Betty that we had a meeting with DC McGuire, parking expert, in a couple of hours. We could drive out to Rancho Park golf course, have lunch, and meet up with him when he finished his round.

DC came of the 18th green and walked straight to the bar where we were waiting. I introduced him to Betty and DC immediately started talking about her notebook. I took out my copy, and Betty was peppered with questions.

It was as DC had thought. The numbers were tickets with entry and exit times. The notations showed how much should have been deposited, and how much really was. It was confirmed. Although the garage collected

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Death by Parking

from Page 33

an average of \$250 a day, the day manager deposited between \$700 and \$1,000 each working day. The money laundry was in full swing.

I told DC that it made no sense. The Mob was trying to buy Art Ball's parking operation. Why would it launder money through a garage that it didn't own?

"I never said the money came

from the Mob," DC said. At that moment, the confusion that had haunted me since the beginning of this case began to lift.

DC complimented Betty on her notebook and told her that she was doing a terrific job as a garage manager. She blushed and said that as night manager, she had a lot of time on her hands. DC was mumbling something about wanting to get back into the parking business and looking for the right person to handle the operations, when the bartender, who was holding

a phone, asked if there was a Paul Manning in the room.

I walked over to the bar, said, "Guilty as charged," and he handed me the instrument. I said, "Manning."

The voice at the other end was very familiar. It was reminiscent of moonlight on the Spanish Steps in Rome, but now it had an edge, much like a she-wolf on a hillside in Sicily.

"You were warned, Mr. Manning. I guess you don't understand. Therefore, we will have to show you just how we operate. If you remember, I gave you three names of people whose health would be in jeopardy if you didn't stop your little intrusion into our affairs. I have one of those people as my guest. I now have to figure out what to do with her. By the way, I saw you at the bar at the Bel Air Hotel. I assume you now know my identity. That makes the problem even more difficult." The line went dead.

Let's see, she had named three people: Betty, Shirley and me. Well, I was looking at Betty. Oh, my god! They have Shirley! Suddenly our little tiff at the hospital meant nothing. Nurse Mary and beautiful Betty disappeared from my mind. I ran out of the bar and jumped into my car. It was only when I put my key in the ignition that I realized I had absolutely no idea what to do next.

(To be continued.)

Eighth in a series -- with apologies to Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker.

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Application of ALPR in Parking Facilities

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an operator, or it can be at a central site, monitored by a supervisor as might be the case with unmanned exit booths where credit or debit cards are taken as payment.

An additional benefit of license plate information capture is one of security. If there is a particular license plate of interest to local law enforcement personnel, the parking facility's data base can be queried to see if the plate is, or has been, on the premises. If there is a match, even down to just three or four consecutive characters, an image of the plate will be called up to allow the operator to verify that it is indeed the plate of interest right down to the state of issue, which can be determined from the image itself.

There now appears to be a good deal of interest in some less-than-traditional parking systems such as central-pay and pay-on-foot, and which may be under consideration for some larger parking facilities in North America. The advantages for using license plate capture technology becomes even more apparent in such applications. Parking fees in this type of system are paid by a person standing in front of a pay-station machine into which they feed their ticket plus some form of payment. There is no opportunity to read the license plate of the vehicle, which is parked at some distance from the pay-station. There has to be a mechanism to check the now validated ticket against the vehicle that is attempting to exit with that validated ticket. That ticket must be associated with the vehicle's license plate against which it was issued upon entry. Ideally, it

would be prevented from leaving -- although the ticket presented has already been paid -- at the exit gate if there is an exception such as a mismatch on the license plates. If it could not be prevented from exiting, perhaps it could indeed be treated as a "violation," much as it would be in open-road tolling, and a citation could be sent.

Current indications would suggest that even checking license plates at exit against those taken from the manual License Plate Inventory (LPI), usually done in the airport operation off-hours, has great benefits in battling lost-ticket fraud. In many cases, the license plates are also manually put into the system at the vehicle entry point.

In addition to the lost revenue that is now recoverable because there is a license plate number in the system, imagine the additional savings in time and data accuracy that an automated system would provide. It would seem the wait-and-see period is over for this technology and ALPR is now an accepted part of the revenue management stream at larger parking facilities.

(Next month, we will discuss the issues of mismatching license plates.)

Jim Kennedy is President of INEX Technologies. Contact him through the company's Web site (www.inextek.com).

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She was cute – but not

I learned a hard lesson a couple of months ago. I had been sniffing around garages all over the country, finding problems and offering

solutions. The problem was, I had neglected my home turf.

Yes, I have a customer who has me on retainer and for whom I had con-

ducted many audits. However, even though I made monthly visits, I simply got distracted (was it that cute little poodle at the pet store?) and didn't continue my regular surveys of the operation.

Then, one day, the police reported to the owner that they had noticed, early one morning, that someone was moving a car in and out by the entrance dispenser, and it looked to them like something weird was going on.

I got the call and immediately panicked. Someone was pulling tickets, and I didn't think it was the matinee crowd for the theater.

Oh my goodness, it was the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

The monthly reports had shown no lost tickets, zero, nada. Now for a place running more than 100,000 tickets a month, no lost tickets was virtually impossible. However, the reports showed none. That little fact alone should have triggered the audit. But no, I had my nose where it didn't belong. She may have been cute, but she had cost my customer a bundle.

My buddies at Edison Parking had always told me that the only way to be sure that a ticket issued was valid was to use a treadle/loop combination. Well, they were right. The loops alone didn't work. These guys were issuing hundreds of tickets to be swapped with earlier tickets. (The treadles are being installed as we speak.)

And then there was the way the ATM was handled. The folks at the ATM got free parking but had to turn in their receipt, and it was to be attached to the ticket. Well, ever walk around an ATM? There are hundreds of receipts lying on the ground. The smart guys were simply picking them up, attaching them to paid tickets and pocketing the difference.

Oh yes, there was the manager who was cutting side deals with the parkers who were supposed to park in the bowels of the structure at a substantially reduced rate, but were being allowed to park in the most expensive



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