

Upcoming regional events:

Oct. 5-7

Annual Conference - Michigan Parking Association

Oct. 11-14

Southwest Parking Association - Annual Conference

Oct. 20-22

Midwest Campus Parking Association

Oct. 23-25

MAPA/PAV 2005 Conference and Trade Show

Oct. 26-28

Florida Parking Association Annual Conference and Expo

Oct. 26-28

New York State Parking Association Annual Conference

Nov. 2-4

Parking Association of Georgia and the Carolinas Parking Association Joint Conference

Nov. 15-18

New Jersey Parking Institute Annual Conference

Nov. 30-Dec. 2

California Public Parking Association Conference and Trade Show

For full contact information, log on to www.parkingtoday.com and click on Calendar.

2005 workshop was held in April in Lansing. The fall conference will be Oct. 5-7 in Detroit, Michigan.

Klein, the NYSPA Reach Out To Other Nearby Associations

Michael Klein, President of the New York State Parking Association and Executive Director for the Albany Parking Authority, has begun to reach out to other associations in the area to perhaps form a "super-regional" organization that can hold periodic meetings together.

"It just seems reasonable to me that if we can combine our efforts, we will be able to bring more to our members," Klein said.

He also held a roundtable discussion at the PIE conference in late September for all local and regional board members to discuss common problems. "We all have them -- membership, motivation, funding, programs -- why not share our ideas and perhaps we can build stronger groups." (A report of this roundtable discussion will be in next month's PT.)

Klein noted that the association meetings are extremely popular and provide parking information to those who simply can't afford the time or money to attend the larger national events. "Let's face it: Parking is a local business. The large association meetings provide great information, but the local groups provide access."

The NYSPA is meeting Oct. 26-29 at the Turning Stone Resort in Verona, NY.

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From the Michigan Parking Association 1982 Newsletter ...

Everyone in the parking business has seen the gag parking tickets available in novelty stores that can be purchased by the public and used in situations when you just can't find a parking enforcement officer. They have catchy phrases such as "In the space you've taken to park this car -- two elephants could have mated!"

Recently, the Parking Violations Bureau in Lansing received such a ticket in the daily mail with the proper payment! This "ticket" had no fee schedule, no mailing address, no issuing agency, no vehicle information, and the issuing officer was "I. Benhad." If only all parking violators were so conscientious, they would have never invented the Denver Boot.

PCA Delivers Cement Forecast

Experts expect cement consumption this year to increase 5% over 2004 levels, making this the third straight year of record volume. Additionally, according to the Portland Cement Association (PCA) Forecast Report, an increase of 3.3% is predicted for 2006.

The first rise in nonresidential construction in three years, coupled with little slowdown in the residential sector, are seen as the main factors driving up demand. The PCA expects 2005 single-family starts to exceed 2004 records. New assessments of mortgage rates have caused the PCA to strengthen its original projections through 2009.

An increase in public works construction is also expected as state finances improve and the Transportation Equity Act program is initiated. Additionally, cement intensities continue to rise and are projected to do so through 2009.

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The Case of the Mysterious Credit Card Double Billing

By DC McGuire

DC McGuire, world-famous sleuth and parking auditor, continues his case book. This time, it's an airport fraud; however, you can certainly apply this issue to any garage that accepts credit cards. -- Editor

Today I want to tell you about a new form of fraud that is done with credit cards. The Director of Metropolis International Airport, who had heard of my reputation at solving parking lot fraud, called me: "Come out to the airport for lunch some day next week. We have a case for you."

During the lunch, the Airport Director gives me the facts. A young lady had parked at the airport and gone on a trip. When she returned, she paid her \$35 parking fee with her credit card. Next month, when she got her credit

card statement, she noticed two \$35 airport parking charges on it.

"One was on June 13, when she returned from her trip. The other was on June 27," the Director says. "She told us she was out to the airport only once that month. She was very adamant about it, and she was very believable. She doesn't travel often. She had gone to visit her aged mother who had just had an operation."

I ask the Airport Director to get me copies of the credit card invoices for both transactions. I tell him I will try

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to determine how this could have happened.

Before lunch is over, the airport's Parking Manager has delivered photocopies of the two credit card transaction invoices to us. I examine the first transaction's invoice and find everything appears to be in order. After checking the second credit card invoice, I tell the Airport Director that I think I see what was done here, and that I want to talk to the cashier.

What do you think DC McGuire spotted that alerted him to what had happened?

As soon as I get the second credit card invoice in my hands, with my sharp eyes -- they were sharp in those days -- I see some printing on it: "Card Not Swiped."

I calculate that during the first transaction, the cashier, after using the proper procedure, had recorded the credit card number for future fraudulent use. Two weeks later, when a patron with a legitimate \$35 parking fee paid the amount in cash, she immediately -- and fraudulently -- turned it into a credit card transaction using the young lady's purloined number.

The cashier manually entered the previously written down credit card number and rang up the cash payment as a credit card transaction. The fee computer produced a \$35 receipt, which was given to the cash-paying patron, and the cashier pocketed the \$35.

Laddie, the lesson to be learned here is that routine procedures can't be used when processing manually entered credit card numbers.

There are two ways to prevent this type of fraud: If

your facility is large enough to warrant having a supervisor on duty for all cashier shifts, make it mandatory that the supervisor handles the transaction. If the facility's size doesn't warrant a supervisor at all times, require the cashier to obtain the phone number of the parking patron along with the patron's signature. (Some credit card transactions don't require a signature for transactions up to as high as \$150.) With the telephone number, a follow-up call can be made to confirm the validity of the manual credit card transaction.

Once I uncovered this fraud, the cashier was confronted with the facts and admitted to having done it often in the past. All of that cashier's manually processed credit card invoices for the previous three months were obtained and analyzed.

It was determined that there were more than \$4,500 in fraudulent charges. However, there had been no other complaints of such double billing in that 90-day period. When queried, the cashier said she had tried to select business executives who were on expense accounts and whose airport parking charges most likely wouldn't be questioned.

Her downfall was the young lady who was visiting her sick mother and had to pay the parking charges out of her own pocket.

DC McGuire is the alter ego of Consultant Larry Donoghue. He can be reached at 847-297-1180.

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A Transportation Success Story

In September 2002, Grand Valley State University (GVSU) provided about 40,000 rides per month to its students. In September 2004, that number jumped to 120,000. This staggering increase in ridership required months of work between GVSU and the Grand Rapids, MI, public transportation system and a complete communication campaign geared at students and the community.

The success shows in the high number of students taking the bus and the rider satisfaction surveys conducted by the university: 90 percent rate the service as good or excellent.

"We knew increasing transportation options for our students was critical," said Lisa Haynes, director of operations for the university's Pew Campus and its Regional Center. "We have a residential campus 14 miles from our growing downtown campus. They are very connected and dependent on each other, and many students take classes on both campuses.

"Offering free and frequent transportation options for our students makes our institution stronger," Haynes said. "Transit provides many other benefits, both economically and environmentally, which we have worked to communi-

cate to our students."

Financially, it also made sense for the university to expand bus service each year to help limit its investment in new parking structures.

GVSU Growing Pains and Solutions

Similar to the dramatic growth in bus ridership, GVSU as an institution has known phenomenal growth since it was established in 1960. Each decade, enrollment jumped dramatically, and it currently serves nearly 23,000 students.

The main campus in Allendale, MI, is nestled in a small community 14 miles west of Grand Rapids. Bus service between Allendale and Grand Rapids had been offered on a limited basis since the late 1980s. The expansion of several university departments into Grand Rapids, the state's second largest city, eventually led to a complete downtown campus in fall 2000. (The Pew Campus now includes four academic buildings and two student housing facilities.)

Although more than 2,000 parking spaces, including a new parking structure, were added, the need for broader transportation services became more apparent as the university expanded into the already crowded and thriving Grand Rapids



city limits.

With the opening of the Pew Campus, the university doubled bus service by contracting with "The Rapid," the buses of the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP).

The Rapid now serves GVSU's Campus Connector and runs between the Pew Campus and Allendale every 15 minutes from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Sunday service runs from noon until 8 p.m.

The contract between the ITP and the university also allows its stu-

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dents to ride any city bus free of charge. GVSU also contracted with the ITP to provide an off-campus apartment shuttle service to surrounding apartment complexes populated with students.

"Each time we conduct satisfaction surveys, students are asked how GVSU can expand the bus service to better serve them," said Haynes. "We knew part of creating a growing transit culture would require listening carefully to our students."

Communicating the Bus Benefits

Surveys were just one part of an entire campaign conducted by GVSU. The administration felt confident that if it implemented an effective communication campaign, everyone would see the benefits of taking the bus. Initiated in 2000, the campaign included fliers, a poster series, news releases to the student and Grand Rapids-area press, and forums on parking problems and solutions.

In promotional pieces and information meetings, GVSU staff gave several reasons for students to consider traveling by bus: The service is free, it saves students money on gas, and it helps the environment. The shuttle also means no traffic stress to and from Grand Rapids (about a 30-minute drive from Allendale). Due to the limited parking in many places, the walking distance from the bus stop to the classroom or other student destination is often shorter than if students parked their cars and walked.

Working with Public Transportation

GVSU is the 19th university in the United States to develop a relationship with a public transit authority. University officials view the situation as more than a business relationship; they consider it a partnership. ITP has called the arrangement "fabulous."

The university contracts annually with ITP and is billed monthly at about \$49 per bus per hour. The cost is billed to the university's transportation budget.

Tim Schad, GVSU vice president for finance and administra-

tion, is impressed by the economic and environmental impact the transit program has had on the university community.

"In the 2004-2005 school year, we saved the students almost \$2.4 million in car operating costs and more than 230,000 gallons of gas - the same amount as in 19 of the large gas tankers you see driving on the highway."

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Contact: Samuel Shanes, Executive VP of Sales at 773-539-1100 or visit www.talkaphone.com

Cramer vs. the Airport: Cramer, 1; Airport, Zip

Stan Cramer of Cramer Airport Parking, reports that the state of Pennsylvania is suing the owner of Harrisburg International Airport (HIA) to prevent it from taking his business by eminent domain.

Here's the gist of the story, from a news release from the state attorney general's office:

Atty. Gen. Tom Corbett filed an antitrust lawsuit in federal court to stop the Susquehanna Area Regional Airport Authority (SARAA) from acquiring, through eminent domain, nearby property that is owned by Cramer Airport Parking, HIA's only customer-parking competitor. The lawsuit seeks to preserve competitive pricing and services for parking at central Pennsylvania's largest airport facility.

The complaint states that the authority's action in acquiring a competing business would create a monopoly and likely force customers to pay higher prices and receive fewer services by eliminating customer choice.

The Cramer land does not abut the authority's property; instead, it is surrounded by property owned by Amtrak and Norfolk Southern, plus other commercial and residential lots.

According to the complaint, Cramer Airport Parking offers 1,000 spaces less than one mile from HIA and can expand to 2,000 spaces. The current rates are \$5 per day, \$28 per week, and a reduced fee if the customer uses avail-

able discount coupons. HIA offers 2,474 parking spaces in its parking garage at the airport. The rates are \$1 per hour for the first two hours and \$2 for each additional hour up to a daily maximum of \$14. Garage parking is next to the HIA terminal. In addition, SARAA offers 3,100 parking spaces at its economy long-term parking lot, known as SmartPark, less than a mile from the terminal by shuttle. Customers using that facility pay \$5 per day and \$30 per week.

SARAA has the potential to expand its facility by 9,000 parking spaces using space in its daily lots, the "SmartPark" and property in front of Penn State's Middletown Campus. The attorney general's complaint states that HIA parking lots operate well below capacity. "In reality, the authority has no actual plans for the site," Corbett said. "However, the airport, in taking over its parking competitor, is acting outside its authority under Pennsylvania law and therefore has no immunity."

Here's what Parking Blog wrote a couple of months ago: I first met Stan Cramer a couple of years ago when PT did an article on his off-airport parking operation in Harrisburg, PA. He's a colorful and innovative guy. A great representative of our industry.

He is now in a fight for his business life with the adjacent airport. His facility is on property he owns that the airport wants. They have made him an offer, and he has refused to sell at that price.

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