

**International Parking Institute (IPI)**  
**Award of Excellence in Innovation Nomination**  
**Updated – with data through August 2007**

**Introduction**

With more than \$23M owed in delinquent parking fines, the City, led by their Finance Director and with support from the City Administration, embarked on a journey which would eventually lead them to implement new technology and business processes that would forever change and definitively enhance their customer service, on-street vehicle immobilization, and on-street collections activity.

Seeking additional information on the intricacies of on-street collections, the City quickly formed a Parking Sub-Committee which was comprised of personnel from Public Safety, Parking Enforcement, Legal, Finance, and the City's contracted ticket processing provider: ACS State and Local Solutions. The goal of the committee was to find the most efficient way to collect outstanding parking ticket debt from their most delinquent offenders.

Like many cities before them, the City employed conventional collection techniques such as mailing notices and reporting their top violators to national credit agencies. The names of the Top 100 violators were released to the media with the hope that this would prompt immediate payment. While these methods added a small boost to revenue, they did not provide sustainable results. Not willing to accept that level of response, the committee sought additional collection alternatives. Unbeknownst to the committee, their decision to look for alternatives would enhance their customer service, on-street collections and enforcement in ways they could not have imagined.

The group sought presentations from several companies offering alternative solutions and it became abundantly clear that on-street collections and enforcement remained the most efficient way to collect this outstanding debt. The committee's focus quickly shifted toward identifying and understanding their existing booting (vehicle immobilization) procedures. They discovered that with limited resources, the City's two boot crews were using paper lists to locate and immobilize boot eligible vehicles. These same crews were also responsible for manually releasing paid boots and responding to "scofflaw hits" called in from Parking Regulation Enforcement Officers (PREOs) whose handheld ticket issuing devices contained a list of boot eligible vehicles. While this is common practice for booting programs, the City found new tools to improve performance.

After all, there were still more than 50,000 vehicles on the City's boot eligibility list, and the list was growing. It was apparent that individuals receiving parking tickets felt that there were no significant repercussions for ignoring the suite of notices the City has mailed to violators. The committee concluded that if the public loses faith in their ability to effectively enforce parking regulations, then the public would take advantage of the City's leniency and park illegally with little or no thought of the repercussions. This needed to change and it would.

### **The Solution**

The committee and ACS concluded that by utilizing Mobile License Plate Recognition (MLPR) technology, they would be able to locate and immobilize a substantially larger number of vehicles on a daily basis. But simply increasing the number of scofflaws found and booted would not solve the problem; in fact it would create a whole new set of problems which could cripple their infrastructure if not handled properly.

On average, the time between vehicle immobilization to release and reclamation was 3 hours; and could only be facilitated during normal business hours. The committee, with support and guidance from ACS, decided that utilizing a new booting technology offered by PayLock IPT LLC would enable violators to release their own boots so that City boot crews could spend more time searching and applying boots and spend less time responding to assisted release requests. Additionally, the MLPR system receives real-time confirmations from ACS' parking ticket database ensuring the vehicle's parking ticket debt is still valid and meets the threshold for boot eligibility.

Consequently, the City was also able to add another layer of customer service. Using a web-service interface, ACS was able to provide parking ticket data to PayLock's 24/7 customer service Help Center. PayLock staffs the call center and maintains a toll free number. Any motorist encountering a boot on their vehicle can call and make payment using a credit card, debit card, or check. Once the payment is cleared, the motorist is given an unlock code to enter into the boot. Now, instead of the violator finding transportation to a walk-in cashiering facility and then waiting for a release crew to meet them at the vehicle after payment, they simply remove the boot themselves and return the boot the next day to a convenient return location... all on their schedule.

The inclusion of booting to a parking program has long been touted as the "last resort" for enforcement. Many cities shun the idea because running an effective booting program can be difficult to manage. There could also be significant political backlash if not implemented properly, such as complaints about poor release response time or misapplying boots to vehicles that are not eligible. These are all risks that elected officials may not want to take. However, by using new technology and partnering with industry leading companies to manage some of these services, the City found a way to gracefully implement an effective program that has been is portrayed in a positive light.