

Mayor Miro Weinberger Announces Downtown Parking Changes to Improve Visitor Experience and Ensure Sustainable Parking System

Burlington, VT – Mayor Miro Weinberger today announced that the City of Burlington will implement several changes to the downtown parking system to both improve the customer experience and to ensure the City has a sustainable plan for maintaining the parking system and infrastructure in the downtown. For the past year, a public/private partnership comprised of the [Department of Public Works \(DPW\)](#), the [Burlington Business Association \(BBA\)](#), and the [Community and Economic Development Office \(CEDO\)](#) has worked to address longstanding concerns of residents, merchants, and visitors about downtown parking. The partnership engaged community groups like the Parking Advisory Committee, a group of citizens from various sectors of the community, and national parking experts as part of the process to develop comprehensive policy changes for our downtown parking system. Last night, the City Council approved the purchase of over 300 digital smart meters that accept credit cards and track parking data on a space-by-space basis. And tomorrow, the DPW Commission will vote on a number of complementary changes and rate adjustments.

“I am pleased that the City is moving toward making our downtown parking system more convenient, safer, and financially viable over the long-term,” said Mayor Weinberger. “I urge the DPW Commission to approve the rate changes and adjustments necessary for making these prudent, overdue investments in the City’s infrastructure.”

Tom Brassard, Board Chair of the BBA, supported the Mayor’s comments: “The parking experience can mean the difference between happy customers who come back to our downtown or not. The BBA recognizes the importance of, and need for, delivering the best parking experience in downtown Burlington. Our current parking system is functional but outdated. We are in the process of improving the system to allow it to be self-supporting and provide a better customer experience. This current initiative is an important first step.”

Chapin Spencer, DPW Director, added, “These changes will greatly improve the City’s ability to be flexible and responsive to customer needs, while also bringing much-needed revenue to the Traffic Fund. The data collection possibilities available through the new technology involved in our pilot projects will help the City better understand how customers park in our downtown. At the same time, the rate adjustments will improve availability of prime spaces while allowing for necessary investment to maintain the parking system safely. We believe we’ll see a great increase in customer satisfaction.”

WHY MAKE THESE CHANGES NOW?

There is a real cost associated with parking, and the current rate changes will bring much-needed revenue to keep the Traffic Fund solvent and enable the City to maintain its parking garage infrastructure safely, as well as make investments in technology to improve the overall system and make the capital investments called for in a recently completed garage assessment. The last rate changes for downtown parking occurred in 2008 and 2009.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS:

The proposed rate changes are estimated to generate an additional \$493,000 in FY15, used to support the following benefits:

- Purchase of about 300 smart meters for the downtown core that accept credit cards and are compatible with future pay-by-phone services
- Make approximately \$100,000 of immediate capital repairs on the garages
- Close the current \$250,000 FY15 budget deficit in the Traffic Fund and restore a positive fund balance for anticipated future investments in aging garage facilities and unforeseen emergencies
- Enhance operational investments in security and janitorial services in the City's parking garages
- Pricing structure changes will increase turnover and parking availability in high demand on-street locations – even while removing time limits, a current source of customer frustration
- Installation of a comprehensive downtown wayfinding system to make it easier to find available parking downtown
- Enable the Traffic Fund to invest in new technology – including the smart meters to facilitate data collection so the City can better assess effectiveness of changes and customer utilization – and an automated lane in the Marketplace garage that will offer quicker and more convenient exiting
- A 90-day pilot installation of five multi-space meter kiosks downtown will offer the opportunity to compare new single-space and multi-space meters side by side

RATE CHANGES:

- Increase rates at the new smart meters in a portion of the downtown core to \$1.50/hour with no time limit (15 minute meters will remain the same)
- Extend enforcement times at the new smart meters to 10:00 pm to ensure turnover and availability of prime spaces (Note: Daytime rates will remain the same, and parking after 6:00 pm will still be free outside the designated downtown core.)
- Increase hourly rate at Marketplace garage by \$2/hour up to a new maximum of \$10/day
- Increase the hourly rate at Lakeview and College garages by \$1/hour, while maintaining the current \$8/day limit
 - 2 hours free parking policy remains at all three City-owned garages
- Increase monthly lease rates by \$5-6/month
- Increase meter hood fees to \$15 for 12-hour bags and \$30 for 24-hour bags

The Downtown Parking Initiative is part of a larger review of the City's parking and transportation infrastructure, which includes four parking-related studies currently underway (with lead consultants and target completion dates):

- **Downtown Parking & Travel Plan** (Desman Associates, early 2015)
- **Parking Garage Assessment** (Hoyle Tanner & Associates, July 2014)
- **Transportation Demand Management Action Plan** (RSG, early 2015)
- **Parking Study in Residential Areas** (RSG, early 2015)