Smart Parking is Here

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Parking! Definitely a challenge in large cities and even here in Ithaca. Smart parking systems are optimizing parking availability as this article from Microsoft discusses. Locally, we're a fan of the ParkMobile app which makes parking in downtown, Collegetown, and on the Cornell campus a breeze.

With some cities dedicating more than a third of their real estate to parking, you'd think it would generally be pretty easy to find a parking spot. But did you ever notice how that never seems to be the case? Especially when you're in a rush. In fact, 30% of all traffic in city cores is estimated to consist of people looking for a parking spot. Imagine how much less traffic there would be if we could remove almost of a third of the cars from downtown areas.

It's no wonder that city governments consider parking infrastructure and policies whenever they look to improve their local transportation. Getting drivers off the road and into parking spaces without causing traffic delays has the potential for greater impact than adding an entire new road lane. The challenge is to find ways of optimizing parking infrastructure without negatively impacting citizens or traffic.

Solving parking problems with technology

Many cities aren't currently utilizing their parking infrastructures to the fullest potential and are eagerly looking to change that. Some are already aligning their policies to two main goals: make the right number of parking spaces available, and price them appropriately. Parking prices should reflect market rates (rather than being subsidized), and there should be convenient parking available for those who are willing to pay for it.

To more effectively price parking in various locations and at various times, many city governments are installing sensors that monitor parking space usage, demand at different times of day, and the effect of other environmental factors. In fact, studies indicate that there will be nearly one million sensor enabled parking spaces by 2020.

Solutions like AvePoint Citizen Services enable government agencies to collect sensor-driven parking data and integrate it with other data sources for a holistic view. For example, AvePoint Citizen Services can analyze data from smart parking meters to help government agencies see exactly when and where parking spaces are being used, and can inform dynamic pricing solutions that adjust parking fees based on time and location. An analysis of a central business district might suggest having lower prices in the morning than in the afternoon, while parking fees in a cultural center might peak in the evening when nightlife events occur.

Smart parking meters can also alert cities when repairs are needed. Instead of depending on regular checks by parking enforcement, cities can be informed immediately when a meter goes out of service. This saves cities money on unneeded status checks and enables them to continue receiving revenue. Data on device and system repairs can be analyzed to predict when, where and why meters will break down, so that cities can schedule proactive maintenance.

Cities also know that drivers want convenient parking spots—a tough problem to solve for in congested areas. The City of Seattle recently set out to improve parking availability by setting a target of one or two empty parking spots on every block . Using data analytics, they identified areas where parking was in high demand, and decided to raise prices in those areas, while lowering prices in others. This approach gives drivers an incentive to park on the blocks which historically have a high number of empty spots and also reserves the most popular parking spaces for drivers willing to pay a higher price.

Leverage new technologies to improve outcomes

Previously, cities looking to address parking challenges with modern technology had to develop custom applications. Today, there are a number of pre-built options that they can leverage. AvePoint Citizen Services, built on Microsoft Cloud technology, is a solution that gives cities the ability to analyze data from a number of sources in order to optimize their parking strategies.

Along with remote monitoring capabilities, AvePoint Citizen Services can also gather usage statistics from public [citizen services] infrastructure such as smart parking meters. This data can be analyzed using Microsoft Cortana Intelligence Suite to gain insights into behavior and habits of drivers. The insights gained from the advanced reporting capabilities of AvePoint Citizen Services enable rapid and precise identification of inefficiencies, so that agencies can reduce operating costs, streamline processes, and promote accountability between departments.

You can learn more about AvePoint Citizen Services on the AppSource marketplace. Changes to parking strategies can save time for citizens while also saving money for your city. It’s time to put new technologies to work – find out how your city can start implementing them today!