

'Charity Spaces' an Answer to Parking Holidays

By Donald Shoup

In December 2010, the City Council of Berkeley, CA, voted to give what it thought was a generous Christmas gift to the city's merchants, who were still reeling from the lingering recession: free parking at all parking meters in the city.

"There are a couple of messages going out here," said Councilmember Laurie Capitelli. "One, is that we are inviting customers to our commercial districts. Two, we're sending a message to our small businesses, saying, 'We are hearing your concerns, and we do want to respond to them.'"

The Downtown Berkeley Association cheerfully informed its members: "There will be no pay and no time limits! And remember that this is a gift to our customers.

Please tell your employees to leave this space available for customers."

Berkeley's city manager estimated that the city would lose between \$20,000 and \$50,000 in meter and ticket revenue for each day of the meter holiday.

Merchants may thank elected officials for free parking at the time of peak demand, but open spaces become even harder to find. Drivers congest traffic while searching for a curb space, and after they find one, they tend to occupy it longer than if they were paying to park. Parking holidays are well-intended, but the gift is more like a lump of coal for businesses.

Creating a commons problem at Christmas

Free curb parking creates a classic "commons problem" – no one owns it, and everyone can use it. In his famous essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons," Garrett Hardin used free curb parking at Christmas to illustrate the problem:

During the Christmas shopping season, the parking meters downtown were covered with plastic bags that bore tags reading: "Do not open until after Christmas. Free parking courtesy of the mayor and city council." In other words, facing the prospect of an increased demand for already scarce space, the city fathers reinstated the system of the commons.

Hardin also used parking meters as an example of social arrangements that encourage responsible behavior:

To keep downtown shoppers temperate in their use of parking space, we introduce parking meters for short periods, and traffic fines for longer ones. We need not actually forbid a citizen to park as long as he wants to; we need merely make it increasingly expensive for him to do so. Not prohibition, but carefully biased options are what we offer him.

Despite the need to manage parking demand during the peak shopping season, many cities continue to wrap their parking meters in December, giving motorists a commons problem for Christmas. Consider the program in Bellingham, WA:

This year, for the two weeks before Christmas, the city will offer all-day free parking. ... To help shoppers park close to [downtown] businesses

and keep spaces available, the city is asking that people still observe the time limits at meters. Shoppers planning to be downtown for more than a couple of hours are encouraged to park on the ground floor of the Parkade. ...

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Free curb parking will not "keep spaces available," and few motorists will comply with the request to "still observe the time limits at meters." Meter holidays invite commuters to park free all day in metered spaces, leaving less parking for customers.

Although well-meant, meter holidays create a shortage of curb parking at the busiest time of year, making it

more difficult for shoppers to find a curb space and exacerbating traffic congestion.

Consider this Durango, CO, newspaper report of what happened when the city bagged its parking meters at Christmas time:

As sleigh bells ring and the countdown to Christmas comes to a close, the city has been promoting free downtown parking for holiday shoppers. ... But there is just one small problem: There's nowhere left to park. ... [Business owner Alan] Cuenca said he has noticed some motorists driving dangerously, pulling aggressive maneuvers to secure their spot before spreading commerce and holiday cheer. "It's created a frantic frenzy just to find a [parking] spot." ...

Harnessing the seasonal urge to help mankind

Rather than provide free parking, cities could instead post signs during the Christmas season saying, "The city will donate all parking meter revenue in December to pay for food and shelter for the city's homeless population."

Shoppers might like this more than a parking holiday that makes it harder to find a curb space. They might also feel better about paying to park downtown if they know their money is going to help the homeless.

Parking charity rather than meter holidays will help those in the greatest need, prevent parking shortages, and aid businesses that depend on curb parking. Wanting free parking for Christmas will begin to look quite greedy.

Parking charity can extend beyond the Christmas season. Many stores





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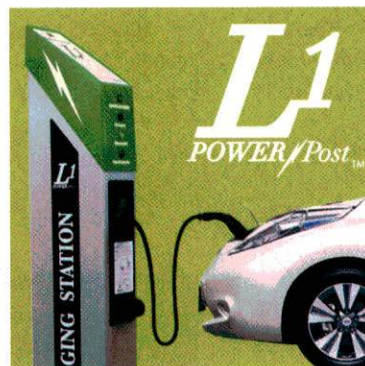
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LED Solutions Boost Long-Term Sustainability at ATL

By Tim Hill

Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (ATL) is one of the busiest airports in the world with millions of passengers flying through or connecting in the hub each year. The facility offers several on-site amenities, including covered parking for more than 10,000 vehicles.

While this presents a convenience for passengers, these parking facilities also present a challenge for airport officials due to their strict lighting needs and associated energy costs. To address both issues head on, airport agency officials decided to evaluate the existing infrastructure to determine whether an upgrade to a more energy-efficient solution could help reduce costs.

Instead of simply replacing the more than 4,300 existing 210-watt metal-halide fixtures with a similar product, officials worked with a range of suppliers to find a solution that would satisfy their stringent lighting and energy demands.

Project goals included finding not only a product that would deliver the appropriate amount of light, but one that would also offer improved efficiency, reliability, long-life and a payback time of roughly three years.

To help ensure solutions would meet such strict parameters, officials worked with numerous manufacturers, inviting each to install sample fixtures, including light-emitting-diode (LED) and induction products, in specific locations throughout the parking facilities. Once installed, officials would then collect lighting data underneath each test installation.

Altogether, five manufacturers participated in the study, offering up a total of 10 products. Once the test products were installed, officials collected

foot-candle readings at 2,000 data collection points on two separate occasions and calculated the average number of foot-candles and standard deviations for uniformity comparison. In addition, they also worked with a Virginia Tech University professor to review and validate findings to select the most cost-effective and efficient solution.

After reviewing and analyzing the findings, officials settled on 80-watt McGraw-Edison Valet LED fixtures from Eaton's Cooper Lighting Division for a 1-to-1 retrofit of the facility's existing metal-halide products. The LED fixtures had the lowest wattage consumed and the highest average foot-candles.

"When evaluating solutions against the data, we paid particular attention to those that would allow for improved visibility with respect to both vehicular movement and pedestrian safety," said Doug Strachan, Creative Innovations Manager of Atlanta's Department of Aviation. "We also looked for a manufacturer that was able to offer a range of services from the onset of the project all the way through completion to help ensure we reached our lighting and energy goals."

The McGraw-Edison Valet LED fixtures did just that, officials said, offering superior optical control, as well as improved vehicular movement and pedestrian safety in the parking structures. Selected products included modular Lightbar technology, featuring the patented AccuLED Optics system, to deliver uniform and energy-conscious illumination in the airports' parking structures.

These factors were extremely important to airport officials, who aimed to improve the distribution of the lighting in all parking garages, while



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world. Only a Grinch would demand free parking for Christmas. drivers will begin to see that charging for parking can do some good for the season, and if stores place a few charity meters in their most convenient spots,

If cities donate their meter money to charity during the Christmas might applaud the store's altruistic parking policy.

while they are in the store. And customers who walk past the charity meters because customers who park in them will probably spend more per minute

A higher turnover of cars in the charity spaces will also benefit the store for four hours can park farther away and save \$4.

donating 25¢ to charity to park near the front door, while a driver who parks to make a quick purchase and who parks for only 15 minutes might not mind want it. Suppose the charity meters charge \$1 an hour. A driver who is in a hurry

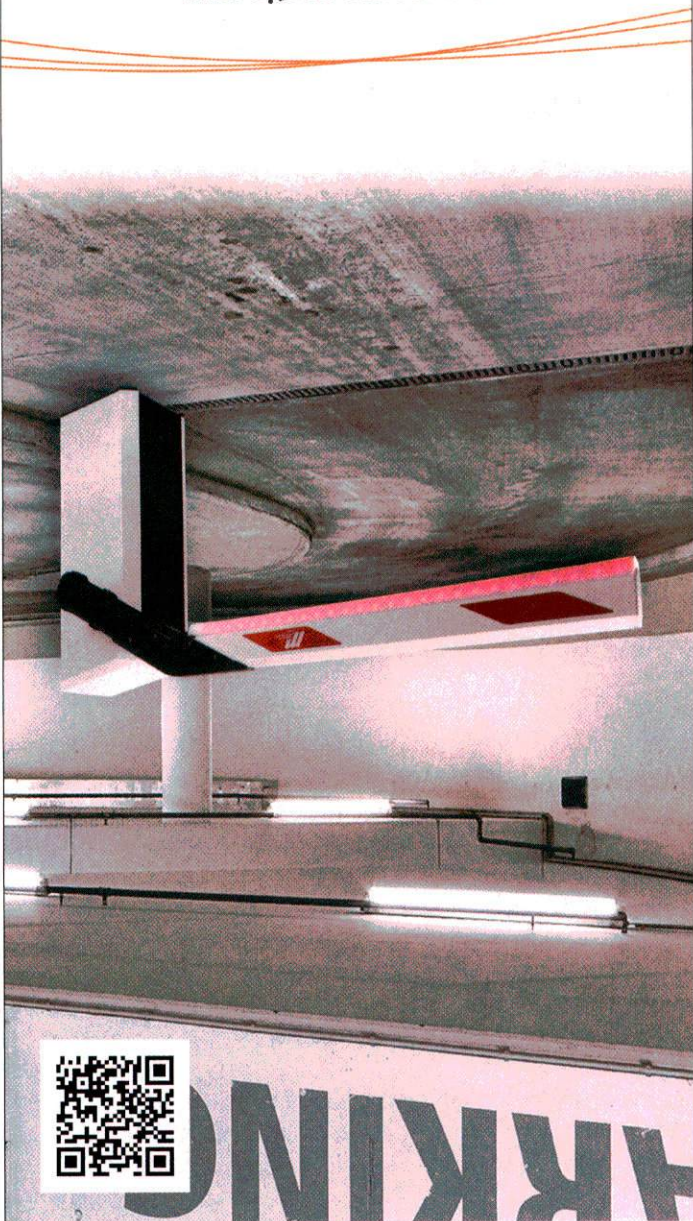
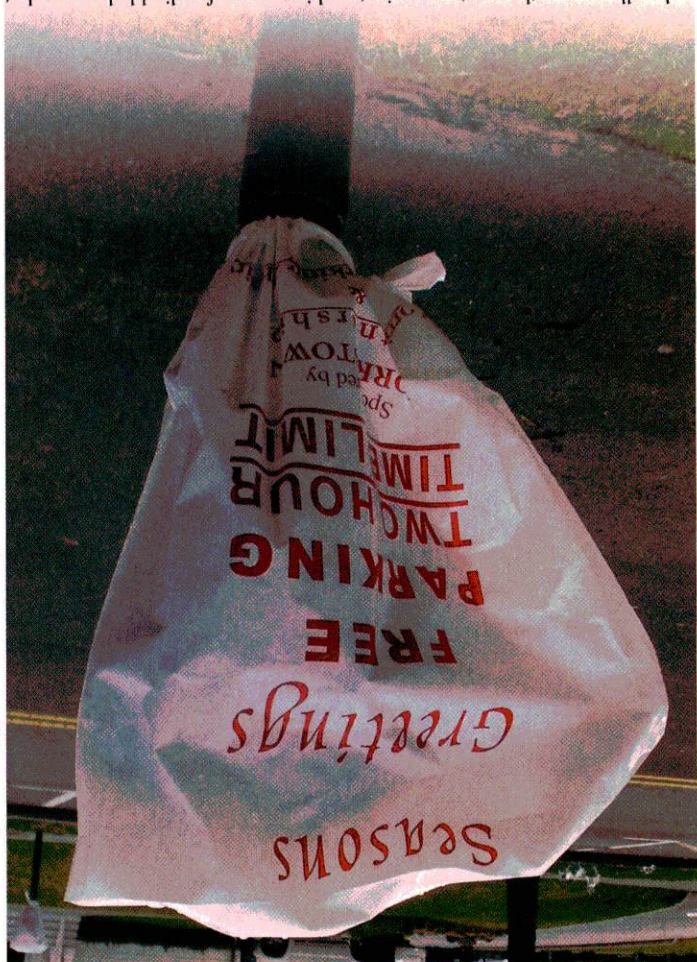
Some drivers may be happy to pay for convenient parking when they really charity at a nearby meter.

disabled spaces will look even more conceivable if they can instead donate to without harming disabled shoppers. Able-bodied drivers who do park in or two spaces open, allowing able-bodied drivers to park in convenient spots

The prices for the charity meters can be set at a level that will keep one its metered spaces to charity.

spaces in the lot free. The store can then donate all the revenue generated from meters in a few spaces adjacent to the disabled spaces, while keeping all other provide spaces for all drivers who want quick access, a store can install parking

able-bodied drivers sometimes park in them. To deal with this problem, and to and malls reserve the most convenient parking spaces for disabled access, but



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