

City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Modernizing parking operations and providing better service

Background

Lancaster, Pennsylvania is one of the oldest inland towns in the United States. It has a population of about 60,000 people. The parking operation in the city consists of 1,200 on-street spaces. About 300 of the spaces are covered by multi-space kiosks while the other 900 utilize with single-space meters. The authority also owns or manages seven garages with an additional 5,500 spaces.

In 2015, Larry Cohen, Executive Director of the Lancaster Parking Authority, was looking to modernize the parking operation in the city. "Our priority in Lancaster is to provide good customer service. We wanted people to have an alternative to carrying around a pocket full of quarters to pay for parking."

At the same time, Cohen did not want to make major capital investments in new on-street meters and equipment. So, adding a mobile parking app that integrated with the existing meters, created a win-win situation.

"It's about compliance rather than enforcement," said Cohen. "With the app, we were really focused on giving folks an easier way to comply with the parking regulations, so they don't get ticketed."

Evaluating mobile parking apps

Cohen did a formal RFP and evaluated the top five parking apps in the industry. He looked at the apps that were being used by the nearby cities of Harrisburg, Reading and Allentown. He also explored app used by the large cities in the area like Washington, DC, Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Cohen liked the idea of going with an app used by a larger city, so he could leverage their base of users as they visited Lancaster. He also felt the apps used by the large cities were more stable and less likely to go out of business. According to Cohen, "I wanted to work with an industry leader. A company that I knew would still be here five years from now. With some of the smaller players, I was worried they would get swallowed up or shut down." After an extensive evaluation process, Cohen selected ParkMobile.



Lancaster, PA by the numbers

 **2015**

1,000 transactions
per month

 **2018**

9,500+ transactions
per month

 **+850%**

Monthly increase

Implementation of ParkMobile

The implementation of ParkMobile in Lancaster was easy for the city. “Compared to the complicated deployments of hardware and software I’ve done over the years, the ParkMobile app deployment was fairly simple. There were not many issues at all. Actually, it was almost too easy. I was waiting for something to go wrong, but it never did.”

Launching ParkMobile in Lancaster

When the app launched in Lancaster, people were not immediately receptive. “It is an older demographic in the area, so acceptance of the app was a little more difficult,” said Cohen. When the app launched in late 2015, the city was doing about 1000 transactions a month in the app. But over time, the people in Lancaster have come around. In July of 2018, Lancaster did over 9500 transactions. That’s an 850% increase since the launch.

“Our adoption has been consistently increasing from month-to-month and whoever uses the app, raves about it. In the 30 years I’ve been in the business, the mobile app is the biggest game-changer I’ve seen in on-street parking.”

Larry Cohen, CAPP

Executive Director of the Lancaster Parking Authority

