

AMANO-MCGANN MEETING

City of Lowell 10/15/10

Purpose

The Engineering department arranged to meet with Amano-Mcgann and representatives from the city of Lowell to discuss the multi-space meters used in Lowell. Lowell uses Amano's multispace meters and automated pay stations for their on-street parking and parking garages.

Attendees

Dave Levesque – Amano-Mcgann
Chuck Carney – City of Lowell
Melissa McNeely – City of Lowell
Steve Barrett – Finance
Corey York – Engineering
Paul Campbell – Engineering
Mark Hald – Information Technology
Jason Marshall – Information Technology
Chris Prehl – Acton Police
Robert Parisi – Acton Police

Summary

Lowell uses multispace kiosks for their on-street parking and automated pay stations for their lots and garages. One kiosk serves approximately 10 parking spaces. Each space is assigned a unique number. Customers pay for their space using coins or credit/debit cards at the kiosks. Lowell does not accept bills at the kiosks due to collection issues, jamming, etc and found that customers were accustomed to paying with coins anyway. After paying for the space, the customer is given a receipt for their payment. There is no ticket to place on the car. A customer can add time to their space using any kiosk in the city.

Using this “pay by space” system rather than pay by time Lowell increased their parking revenue. For example, with a standard single space meter, a customer could pay for two hours of time, leave with an hour remaining, and a second car could park without paying anything. Using this pay by space system, both cars would be paying for the space. According to Lowell, they increased their revenue 40% in the first six weeks switching to multispace meters.

The kiosk is connected to a central computer program which keeps track of which spaces are paid for, which are empty, time remaining on the space, how much money is in the kiosks, etc. The program is used by the Traffic department and Police department.

Lowell found that using this program made collection and enforcement more efficient. Using handheld PDAs connected to the program, the officer has a complete list of which spaces were not paid for. The officer can then focus on these spaces and if a car is parked there, can print out a ticket on the PDA.

Collections are made easier using this program since it monitors how much money is in the kiosk. The person doing collections empties a single locked coin vault when it's nearly full. The kiosk prints a receipt of how much money is being collected that is kept with the coin vault. By doing this, the person responsible for collections is held more accountable. Lowell has found that this lead to increased revenue.

Lowell hires a subcontractor who is responsible for the maintenance and collections of the kiosks. This person is trained by Amano-Mcgann and can make most repairs. If there is a problem that this person can't handle, there is a customer support line and according to Lowell, Amano is very responsive to any problems.

The kiosks communicate with the monitoring program only via cellular modem. Mark Hald is concerned that a good deal of money has been spent putting fiber optic cable at the commuter lot and that the kiosks should be utilizing this. Mark Hald would prefer using cellular modems for kiosks at remote lots like Jones Field or West Acton Station.

Other benefits of the multispace meters include:

- Kiosks are wired into an alarm system that alerts the police to any tampering
- Kiosks are solar powered and Lowell has had no problems with the batteries.
- The system is adaptable. Lowell plans on connecting their system to the MBTA Charlie card system and UMass student ID system.
- Any jammed kiosks can be easily repaired. The kiosks have a reject button which widens the coin shoot allowing anything jamming the slot to fall into the coin vault.
- The kiosks are customer friendly. In the first year of their use, Lowell received 12 calls from customers with kiosk problems out of 395,000 transactions.
- The kiosks have held up well being exposed to the elements.

Lowell has found that switching to multispace meters has dramatically increased their parking revenue. According to Chuck Carney, the parking department was losing nearly a half-million per year and is now turning a significant profit. Lowell highly recommended Amano-Mcgann. They found Amano's software tracking system more advanced and easier to use than their competitors.