



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: October 20, 2015
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Chad Lynn, Assistant Director of Public Works Services ✓
Desarae Jones, Management Analyst, Public Works Services ✓
Subject: Request by Vice Mayor Mirisch to Evaluate the Use of Vehicle License Plates to Satisfy the requirements for Residential Parking Permits

INTRODUCTION

This report provides information related to a request by Vice Mayor Mirisch to consider the use of vehicle license plates to satisfy the requirements for Residential Parking Permits.

DISCUSSION

Background

The City has two major Residential Parking Permit Programs; the Overnight Parking Permit (O/N) and the Preferential Parking Permit (PPP) programs.

The O/N permit relates to the overnight parking prohibition which uniformly prohibits parking on the public right-of-way anywhere within the City limits from 2:30 am to 5:00 am. The City provides for an annual permit for residents that demonstrate they do not have adequate off-street parking in high-density, multi-family areas. Additionally, the City provides residents in multi-family areas with access to 13 one-night parking exemptions for guests and unexpected needs. In multi-family areas, all Disabled Placards are exempt from these regulations. In single family areas, Disabled Placards are exempt by City Ordinance when parked adjacent to the registered address of the disabled placard. There is no permit or general parking exemption for residents in single family residential neighborhoods.

The PPP program addresses all other specific permitted parking regulations within the City and these regulations are commonly referred to by zones which are designated by a single or double alpha character, such as A Zone or AB Zone. Residents in PPP parking zones may obtain up to 3 Annual Parking Permits which may be used by the resident or their guests when parked adjacent to the registered address and while visiting the resident. Residents may also obtain one-day exemptions as-needed for additional guests parked adjacent to the registered address and while visiting the resident.

Pursuant to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) all Disabled Placards are exempt from these restrictions.

Currently annual permits are issued using a combination of plastic hangtags and stick-on Permits. A hangtag is issued along with any combination of O/N and zone specific PPP stick-on permits based on the specific customer need. The stick-on permit is then applied to the hang-tag and is ready to be displayed in the vehicle. For instance, a resident that is eligible for an O/N permit and has purchased three PPP permits will receive three hangtags, one O/N permit sticker and 3 zone specific PPP stickers to be applied to the hangtags.

The City currently issues approximately 13,000 annual Preferential and Overnight Parking Permits. The City currently has 72 distinct PPP zones, each with unique time related parking restrictions. A preferential parking zone is a residential area with streets or boundaries where parking restrictions require vehicles to display a valid permit to park during the restricted hours.

Historically, the City utilized stickers that were affixed to the rear bumper of the vehicle, much like the permit system currently utilized in neighboring Cities. The City moved to hangtag style permits based on user feedback that included both a reluctance to place a permanent stick directly on the vehicles body (bumper) and the desire to have the flexibility of moving the parking permit between vehicles. Based on this feedback the City moved to the hangtag style of permit which addressed both concerns. The use of the hangtag also provides uniformity from an enforcement perspective as the hangtag follows the design and displaying properties of Disabled Placards, which officers are required to do visual inspections of in the process of observing and issuing a citation.

In recognition of residents or guests that may forget to properly display their permits, the City has a robust Courtesy Dismissal program related to the permits. The City offers a one-time courtesy dismissal for O/N violations to anyone contesting their first O/N parking violation. Additionally, the City provides residents [O/N or PPP permit] a courtesy dismissal for each registered permit on a rolling 12 month basis; in most cases this provides residents with multiple dismissal opportunities. Courtesy dismissals are in addition to citations that are dismissed for other official reasons, such as officer error or signage problems.

License Plate as the Permit

Staff has been asked to consider the use of a vehicle license plate to convey the current privileges associated with hangtag permits. Although interim solutions may be possible, a long-term solution that preserves the intent of the City's permit regulation will require upgrades to the City's current technology infrastructure, including the permit database and the addition/upgrade of License Plate Recognition systems for use in a parking enforcement environment. Once the technology is in place to provide for these services, policy and potentially code changes will be needed to implement the system.

Staff recommends that if a license plate is used as the permit credential, that the license plate be used in lieu of a traditional permit. This would mean that if implemented, residents would choose between the hangtag and the use of the license plate as the permit credential. For instance, if a permit holder chooses to register one license plate, they would only be eligible for two hangtags, for a total of three permit privileges. This configuration ensures that only three permit privileges are conveyed to a user, which conforms to the limitation provided in the City's Municipal Code.

This policy will also create a potential technology consideration, which includes the ability of the system to relate the license plate to the permit privilege and potentially the ability of the user to change and update the actual license plate associated with the privilege as they may have a new vehicle or a temporary vehicle while their primary vehicle is out of service.

Technology

Use of the License Plate to satisfy the permit requirements will require the acquisition of new equipment, the upgrade of existing equipment and infrastructure, and integrations between these systems.

If License Plates are used as permit credentials, the most effective method to identify, track and enforce permit compliance is through the use of License Plate Recognition (LPR¹) technology. The City is currently in negotiations related to the extension of the citation processing agreement which will expire on December 31, 2015. Negotiations for an extension take into consideration a technology refresh which includes the addition of a LPR system which can be adapted to support this functionality. Staff is currently planning to return to the City Council with a recommended agreement extension, including the LPR technology, in November/December of 2015, prior to the expiration of this agreement. Based on this timeline, the acquisition of new LPR technology would be anticipated in the first quarter of 2016 with implementation toward March/April 2016.

Additionally, the City may require customized functionality in the new LPR technology to address the extensive number of distinct permit zones and differing regulations between adjacent block faces. The City may also require customization to geo-fence license plate permit privileges to ensure the permit is being used in proximity to the address which receives the permit privilege. For example, with a current hangtag, the PPP zone is printed on the permit and is visible to the enforcement officer to ensure the vehicle is parked in the associated permit zone. If the permit privilege is conveyed using the license plate, the LPR unit will need to either automatically geo-fence the permit to a radius around the associated address or will need to display this information to the officer to manually verify/enforce, both of which are generally not off-the-shelf features of parking enforcement LPR technology.

Upgrades and modifications will also need to be made to the system which supports the issuance and tracking of the parking permits. Examples of new functionality include the ability to capture and record the users' license plate information at the time of permit registration. The current system does not provide for a distinct database field in which to house the license plate information, as the current hangtag permit is transferable. This functionality will need to be added in order to support the ability to push this information to the LPR system in the field. It is also recommended that the permit system provide the user with the ability update and change their information; such as providing for a new vehicle or the use of a temporary vehicle if their primary vehicle is disabled. The City is currently in the process of upgrading the system and is anticipating a limited release for testing in the first quarter of 2016.

Once the foundational technologies have been selected, acquired, upgraded, and/or implemented for their primary purposes, the City may begin the process of integrating the technologies to support the use of the License Plate as the permit credential. While

¹ This system and functionality is distinct from the traditional law enforcement Automated License Plate Recognition (APLR) systems used by the City's Policy Department. Since these systems are used for the enforcement of time-zones, they require input from the user related to the parking restriction and require multiple passes within a zone to record and compare time-elapsd markings to establish that a violation has occurred.

the intent to integrate these technologies is being considered and negotiated related to these projects, integrating these systems to communicate and map the appropriate data for LPR and Geo-Fencing will require a distinct effort.

It is anticipated the work needed to integrate these system can begin in the second quarter of 2016. Staff recommends that a roll-out of License Plate Permit capability be planned on a limited basis (for testing) during the annual permit renewal process which starts in July/August of each year for September completion. If the timeline for technical improvements does not provide for the 2016 permit renewal season, staff recommends a limited roll-out during the 2016 permit year for evaluation and full implementation in the 2017 renewal year.

FISCAL IMPACT

Limited funding is available in the current CIP and Operating budgets for the acquisition of an LPR system and the upgrades of the permit system. It is anticipated that incremental costs associated with preparing these systems for the ascribed functionality are minimal and may be absorbed in the individual project budgets.

Costs associated with the customizations and integration are unknown at this time. It is anticipated additional funds will be needed for this specific work and may be requested as part of the regular 2016/2017 budget process.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is seeking direction on the implementation of this functionality and if additional funding and resource needs should be brought forward for approval prior to approval of the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year budget.



George Chavez
Approved By