

Why does the City have parking meters?

By limiting the time that a vehicle may park in a particular space, meters play a vital role in facilitating traffic management, promoting business, and reducing congestion and pollution.

Do all meters operate 24 hours per day?

No. Meters are free during evenings in most places except for City parking lots and the Loop. Days and hours of operation should be posted on the meters.

When do I have to pay the parking meter?

Please look at the time and days of operation on the meters. Generally meters operate from: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on residential streets; 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on business streets, and 24 hours in the Loop and City parking lots. There are, however, exceptions. Days and hours of operation should be posted on the meters.

Are there parking meter holidays?

Unless otherwise posted, there are no meter holidays.

Can I park at a broken parking meter?

Yes, you may park at the broken meter for free if you report it as broken within 24 hours by calling 877.242.7901.

How do I report a broken parking meter?

Please call the 24 hour customer service line at 877.242.7901 and provide information about the meter, including the meter ID number. You will be provided with a confirmation number.

How do I request a refund?

If you have had a payment issue with a parking meter and would like to request a refund, please call 877.242.7901. Please note that all refund requests must be made within 30 days of the original transaction date.

Where is the meter ID number?

The number is located on the meter head on a single-space meter. On the pay and display boxes, the meter ID number is located on the front panel.

What happens once I report a meter as broken?

All reports of broken meters are investigated promptly, most within a few hours.

Can meters be impacted when there are drastic changes in temperature including freezing conditions?

Yes. Similar to most on-street equipment, parking meters may experience problems when there are drastic changes in temperature including freezing conditions. The City of Chicago and the parking meter concessionaire—Chicago Parking Meters, LLC—recognize that any broken meter can be an inconvenience to motorists. The concessionaire is committed to ensuring that each motorist has a pleasant parking experience. During near sub-zero temperatures, the concessionaire will maintain and de-ice parking meters. Problems reported to their customer service personnel are largely addressed within an hour or two.

Will I get a ticket when a pay box is broken because of the cold?

Although parking enforcement personnel work during freezing conditions, they have been instructed to verify whether a parking meter is operational before issuing any parking meter violation. If a parking enforcement aide determines that there is a problem at a meter, he or she is instructed to report it to the concessionaire. Motorists parking at a broken meter should report it by contacting the 24 x 7 customer service line at 877.242.7901.

Will I get a ticket when my windshield is covered by snow or ice?

Motorists are obligated to pay to park at a metered space regardless of the weather conditions. When parking at a pay box, a motorist should display his or her receipt on the curb side of the dashboard regardless of the presence of snow or ice.

Drivers generally clear snow off their windshields prior to driving, parking, and displaying a pay box receipt. And parking enforcement personnel will gently brush away snow to determine if a pay box receipt is displayed. This protocol is not different from years past when the City operated pay boxes in the Loop and some neighborhoods. This protocol is similar to how personnel have historically enforced city sticker, disabled placard, residential permit, and expired plate violations. Personnel may also need to brush snow from a single space meter to determine if it is active or from a vehicle's license plate to capture the plate number.

Parking enforcement personnel are instructed to use discretion. In the rare occasion when a vehicle is covered by an excessive amount of snow or ice, it may be difficult to determine if a pay box receipt is displayed. In cases where a pay box receipt may be obscured by excessive snow or ice, personnel will forego issuing a ticket. In the unfortunate event that a motorist receives a ticket in error, the pay and display receipt can be used as evidence to challenge the ticket.

What happens if I get a meter violation (section 9-64-190 of the Chicago Municipal Code) at a broken parking meter?

It is important to report any parking meter problem that you identify. After reporting the meter as broken, please request an in-person hearing or contest the violation by mail. Hearing officers have access to all reports of broken meters and can access that information when reviewing your case.

Why did I get a ticket if the meter is broken?

Enforcement personnel are trained to recognize inoperable meters. Unfortunately, a meter may not always be visibly broken. If you are issued a meter violation and you feel it was issued in error, please report it by contacting the 24 x 7 customer service line at 877.242.7901. You will be provided a reference number. Then contest the violation by following the directions on the back of the ticket. Use your reference number during your hearing or in your correspondence. Information about your call and the meter history will be available to a hearing officer during the hearing.

The red light is flashing on the single space meter. What does that mean?
The red light means that time has expired and the meter requires payment.

What types of coins do the old-style meters take?

Quarters and sometimes dollar coins.

What types of coins do the “pay and display” boxes take?

Generally quarters and dollars, but the pay and display boxes take credit and debit cards as well. They also accept the East Lakeview Chamber of Commerce gift card.

What are some other benefits of pay boxes?

Pay and displays reduce clutter on sidewalks and make neighborhoods more attractive. These smart boxes notify operators wirelessly when they require collection or are broken. Consequently, collection and maintenance crews need to visit meters less often. Travel reductions shrink the carbon footprint of collectors and mechanics and reduce congestion.

How else are the pay boxes “green”?

These environmentally-friendly devices are solar-powered, eliminating the need to dispose of 45,000 lithium and 9 volt batteries each year. In addition, the pay and display receipts are biodegradable.

If I still have time on my pay box receipt, can I use it to park at another pay box?

Yes, a great benefit of pay and displays is that they allow motorists to take unused time with them. For example, if a motorist parks in a neighborhood parking spot (\$1.25 per hour), he or she may use the pay and display receipt to park in another \$1.25 per hour space at a pay and display anywhere in the city as long as the receipt has not expired. He or she cannot, however, use the \$1.25 per hour receipt to park in a more expensive area (\$2.50 or \$4.25 per hour).

Will a pay box allow me to prepay for time?

That depends. Many pay and display boxes allow motorists to prepay from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. (or later), with the earliest time being 5 a.m. If, however, the pay and display is located in a morning rush hour parking zone, it may not allow motorists to pre-pay for time.

Do pay boxes protect against identity theft?

Yes, they are compliant with Payment Card Industry Security Standards. This set of requirements ensure that companies that process, store, or transmit credit card information maintain a secure environment.

How do I use a pay box?

For detailed instructions, please visit cityofchicago.org/revenue and select the “About Parking Meters” link. Once there, select the link labeled “Pay and Display Instruction Sheet.” There are Spanish and Polish translations online as well.

How do I display a pay box receipt on my motorcycle or scooter?

Since motorcycles and scooters lack a dashboard, the City of Chicago ordinance requires that the pay box receipt be displayed on the front head lamp by using the adhesive on the back of the receipt. A motorcycle or scooter owner should write the license plate number on the receipt to discourage theft. A receipt is only valid if displayed on the motorcycle or scooter bearing that license plate number.

CPM worked closely with ABATE, the largest motorcycle lobbyist in Illinois, and redesigned the receipt that is now being provided. It reached out to the scooter lobby for feedback as well in redesigning the receipt.

How does the pay box keep time?

In September 2009, the concessionaire successfully implemented a program that adds up to 1 minute, 59 seconds to each initial pay-and-display purchase. The program was implemented to mitigate any minor time variations between the pay boxes and other digital clocks, such as watches or those on cell phones. Studies show that cell phones may not properly synchronize and may keep the wrong time. However, pay boxes are scheduled to synchronize every night wirelessly with a central server clock – which is synched with atomic time to ensure accuracy.

How many pay boxes will be installed?

Under the terms of an agreement with the City, the parking meter operator (Chicago Parking Meters, LLC) must offer cashless alternatives at all meters by 2011. The operator, however, already replaced more than 32,000 parking meters with more than 4,100 pay boxes. The operator assumed all of the costs of this rollout, estimated to be between \$40 and \$50 million. They will replace the pay boxes whenever necessary, but likely at least every seven years.

How do I avoid a ticket while making a payment at a pay box?

Parking enforcement aides are instructed to look for motorists before issuing a parking meter violation. They are asked to determine if a motorist might be at or walking to or from a pay box. Unlike the old single space meters, parking enforcement aides know when the pay box receipt has expired. They give motorists a grace period before issuing any violation. In the unfortunate event that a ticket is issued in error, motorists should contest the violation and provide a copy of the pay box receipt.

How many parking spaces can be served by a single pay box on the public way?

A maximum of 15 spaces can be served by one box. Pay and display boxes generally increase the number of cars that can park on a block.

Where on a block are the pay boxes placed?

On short block faces, the operator attempts to put the pay and display in the middle of the block. On longer blocks where two pay and displays might be installed, the goal is to break the block up into thirds.

Are there other criteria used to determine where pay boxes should be situated?

Yes, there are a number of other factors that may impact the position of a pay and display box. For instance, the operator avoids placing boxes in front of a business' entrance or neighboring gangway. The goal is to allow for easy ingress and egress from the business and alley. Also, the operator tries not to place pay and display boxes in front of restaurants that might apply for an outdoor café license. Although the boxes can be fairly easily moved, the operator does not want to inconvenience a business. There are a few other considerations, including the placement of gas and electric lines, fire hydrants, loading zones, and other restricted parking areas. In addition, the operator tries to make decisions based on the types of businesses being served.

Can businesses request that a pay box be moved in order to assist elderly or disabled motorists?

The City and the operator recognize the need for parking transactions to be convenient. There have been requests from time to time to move a pay and display box because of the nature of the business being served. For instance, it might be more important for a pay and display to be situated a little closer to a rehabilitation facility or a chiropractor

than to other types of businesses. Persons with disabilities may still park for free at parking meters and, consequently, are not required to display a pay and display receipt.

Can the City change the duration of time (also know as the “period of stay”) at the meters in front of my business or institution?

Yes. Most meters allow for a maximum of two hours. Two hours, though, might not be enough for theaters, concert halls, cinemas, gyms, or schools. You can now make requests to extend the period of stay online. Please visit cityofchicago.org/revenue and select the “About Parking Meters” link. Then select the “Business Feedback Form” to provide information to us about the needs of your business.

Why did parking meter rates increase?

Properly priced parking meters create better turnover and availability, making locations served by meters more popular. However, demand for on-street parking has grown at a faster rate than supply. Rates have not kept pace, and under-priced meters promote cruising for parking spaces. Cruising ultimately leads to increased congestion, travel time, and pollution. Under-priced meters also subsidize automobile use at the cost of public transportation.

What are the rates in Chicago?

Generally, the rates in 2010 were 1.25 per hour in the residential neighborhoods, \$2.50 per hour in the Central Business District, and \$4.25 per hour in the Loop. In the Loop and parking lots, the rate was reduced 50% between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.

In 2011, in most areas of the City, representing 82% of the metered parking spaces, rates will be \$1.50 per hour.

In the Central Business District outside the Loop (Area bounded by Lake Michigan to the East, North Avenue to the North, Halsted to the West, and Roosevelt Road to the South, exclusive of the Loop Area), representing approximately 16% of the metered parking spaces, rates will be \$3.00 per hour.

Inside the Loop (Area bounded by Lake Michigan to the East, Wacker Drive to the North and West, and Congress Parkway to the South), representing less than 3% of the metered parking spaces, rates will be \$5.00 per hour from 8 AM- 9 PM, \$2.50 from 9 PM – 8 AM.

What are the boundaries of the Central Business District?

The central business district is the area bounded by:

South: the south side of Roosevelt Road;

East: Lake Michigan;

North: the north side of North Avenue;

West: the west side of Halsted Street (excluding the area within the boundaries of the Loop).

What are the boundaries of the Loop?

The Loop is the area bounded by:

On the South: the south side of Congress Parkway;

On the East: Lake Michigan;

On the North: the north side of Wacker Drive;

And on the West: the west side of Wacker Drive.

What is the schedule for rate increases over the next three years?

Loop (per hour): 2011: \$5.00; 2012: \$5.75; 2013: \$6.50;
Central Business District (per hour): 2011: \$3.00; 2012: \$3.50; 2013: \$4.00; and
Neighborhoods (per hour): 2011: \$1.50; 2012: \$1.75; 2013: \$2.00.

What are the scheduled rate increases after 2013?

Increases are generally scheduled to track with inflation.

If I buy 2 hours of parking at a 2 hour single space meter, can I add time to the meter later prior to the meter expiring?

If someone adds additional coins, the single space meter will add time until it tops off at the maximum limit, whether that is 2 hours or some other duration.

What is the parking meter concession?

The concessionaire (or "Chicago Parking Meters, LLC") paid the City of Chicago \$1.156 billion. In addition, Chicago Parking Meters, LLC, is required to maintain, upgrade, and repair parking meters for 75 years in return for the revenue from those meters.

How was the parking meter concessionaire selected?

The City sent a request for qualifications to more than 150 infrastructure investors and parking investors in February 2008. Ten prospective bidders sent in responses. Six were deemed qualified. Ultimately, two companies bid, and the highest bidder, Chicago Parking Meters, LLC, was chosen on December 1, 2008. For a detailed discussion of the selection process, please visit cityofchicago.org/revenue and select the "About Parking Meters" link. Once there, select the link "Selection Process and Timeline".

Isn't the concession just a long-term lease?

No, the agreement between the City of Chicago and Chicago Parking Meters, LLC (or "CPM") represents a concession to operate the parking meter system. The agreement requires CPM to provide "metered parking services" which includes the operation, management, maintenance, and rehabilitation of the system, and the collection of parking meter revenue. No interest in real estate of any kind was conveyed in any form (sale, lease, or other). The only title received by CPM was for the existing meter inventory, and that inventory reverts back to the City's possession upon the agreement's expiration or termination.

Why is the concession to operate meters for 75 years? Why not a shorter period?

This is a requirement of investors. Typically, debt issued to fund infrastructure projects is 30-year debt. Lenders require an additional 10-year "tail" in case revenues don't come in high enough to pay the debt off during the original 30-year period. Equity investors are able to increase their returns by refinancing debt during the term of the concession and thus require at least an additional 10 years. That results in a minimum term of 50 years. In addition, the City received strong indications from the bidders that they would increase the up-front payment to the City if given an additional 25 years. And the increase is greater than the time value of money of an additional 25 years worth of revenue.

Did the City get a good deal?

Yes, the City received a very good deal. Third party financial advisors used sophisticated modeling software to determine the likely range of bids. They predicted bids between \$650 million and \$1.2 billion for the parking meter system. The City's minimum acceptable bid was \$1 billion, a figure calculated to compensate for the loss of existing meter revenues and stabilize the budget. The best and final bid was \$1.156 billion from Chicago Parking Meters, LLC, an amount at the top end of the projections. For a detailed discussion of the valuation, please visit cityofchicago.org/revenue and select the "About Parking Meters" link. Once there, select the links labeled "Value" prepared by third party financial advisor William Blair.

Why do some reports suggest that the City could have received more?

Most underestimate risks and operational costs. Chicago Parking Meters, LLC, owns the risk of installing equipment, escalating labor costs, fuel costs, expanded use of public transportation, and, most importantly, changes in driving behavior. Those risks are significant. For a detailed discussion of the valuation, please visit cityofchicago.org/revenue and select the "About Parking Meters" link. Once there, select the links labeled "Value" prepared by third party financial advisor William Blair.

What is the difference between "reserve" and "concession" meters?

There are two types of parking meters operated by the concessionaire: reserve parking meters and concession parking meters. The City retains the revenues (minus an operating expense of 15%) for reserve parking meters, while the concessionaire receives the revenues from concession parking meters. The City has the power to change the status of a meter from reserve to concession, and vice versa.

What is the true-up system?

Under the agreement, the City has agreed to an initial set of scheduled rate increases, followed by annual adjustments to the system value equal to inflation. To the extent the City implements changes that negatively impact the meter system value, the City may be required to compensate the concessionaire ("true up"). Similarly, if the City takes action that increases the value of the system more than is required, the City may capture that value. Adjustments to meter system value can be in the form of increases in rates, hours and the number of meters.

How is the dollar amount of any true-up determined?

Each meter is different. Not only do meters operate at different rates and hours throughout the City, but utilization also differs depending on the area and businesses served. Each meter equates to a fraction of the overall system based on its rate, hours of operation, and utilization (note: this fraction is recalibrated annually based on changes in utilization). When a meter is closed--or added--the total system value may be impacted. Comparing the fractional value to the revenue for the entire system derives the revenue value for a particular meter. Negative impacts are credits due to the concessionaire. Positive impacts are credited to the City. Small changes are less likely to carry a significant economic impact, especially when utilization is factored into the analysis already. Further, financial impacts may be mitigated by other changes to the meter system.

Did the City bear the same financial risk before the meter concession?

Yes. The City owns the economic impact today just as it did prior to the concession when the removal of a parking meter reduced the City's revenue. Today, if the meter is

a reserve meter, there is still economic impact to the City's revenue. If the meter is a concession meter, the closure of a meter may necessitate a payment to the concessionaire...or it may not.

What is the process for a developer who needs to temporarily remove parking meters?

Temporary removals usually result from commercial development projects. The municipal code requires developers to apply for a permit and compensate the City for any associated loss in meter revenue. This provision of the code predates the parking meter concession agreement. Money from the developers is then deposited into a compensation fund. That compensation fund is used to offset reductions in City revenue (for reserve meters) or, when necessary, to compensate the concessionaire (for concession meters).

What is the formal process for a business or developer who proposes permanently altering the public way in a manner that would require the removal of parking meters?

Permanent meter removals have and continue to require aldermanic approval and passage by the City Council. The City Council retains the authority under the concession agreement to add and remove meters, to set rates, durations, hours and days of operation. When an alderman introduces an ordinance concerning parking meters, the City reviews the potential social-economic impacts. Initial considerations for removing a meter include the impact on congestion, pollution, traffic control, development, and safety. The City also considers the economic impact. For permanent closures, the City may seek to offset revenue losses through the exercise of reserved powers like adding meters. Alternatively, the City may increase the hours or days of operation or adjust the rates.

Does the business or developer have to pay costs for permanent removals?

There are really no costs assumed by a developer or business if the meter removal is approved by the City Council. As stated above, the City would have owned similar economic risks even if the concession agreement had not been negotiated. To date, however, aldermen and city officials have worked closely together in an effort to avoid negative economic impacts. For instance, on one occasion an ordinance was introduced to remove meters to increase sidewalk width in order to have sidewalk cafes installed. Passage of the ordinance would have reduced the system in service. However, the ordinance was amended to allow for the addition of a handful of parking meters, thereby ensuring that there was no negative impact to the City or the businesses.