

## **Parking: Correct Disabled Placard Abuse and recover lost revenue**

### Application

State: Allow cities to recover lost revenue from widespread disabled placard abuse and to raise revenue for financing new or improved transportation services for the disabled community. This effort requires a change to state legislation. Currently cities and municipalities in California cannot charge for disabled parking.

### Introduction

This revenue source would recover losses from illegally exempt parkers. Some studies estimate that between 50-90% of users of disabled placard do not have a qualifying disability. Both data-driven and anecdotal reports of placard abuse signal the need to reduce the number of unlimited free-parking disabled placards in circulation. Other states and cities, notably in Virginia have adopted an “All may park, all must pay” policy which emphasizes the need to provide proximal and easily accessible parking spaces, as well as flexible payment options. However, the incentive to avoid parking payment is removed. Dr. Donald Shoup has suggested that enhanced revenue from such a program can be put toward the betterment of paratransit services for the disabled community.

### Yield Potential

Given the current extent of placard abuse, the yield potential is High. In the case of Alexandria, the subsidy to the disabled community would increase ten-fold if an “all may park, all must pay” policy is implemented. It is difficult to provide exact revenue estimates given that enforcement is difficult; anecdotally, however, abuse is widespread and thus revenue potential is great.

### Use/Restrictions

Cutting down on disabled placard abuse is necessary to recover lost parking meter revenue, which is used for a variety of purposes and supports the transportation system as a whole. A police survey from the City of Alexandria found that disabled placard abuse accounts for 90 percent of lost meter revenue, and a UCLA study estimated a yearly revenue loss of \$125,000 from one block alone. The problem has increased over time as more individuals have been granted disabled placards; a 2011 article from the LA Times estimates that 1 in 10 drivers now hold disabled placards, representing a significant increase over previous decades and far outstripping the actual number of people with qualifying disabilities.

If parking fees were to be imposed on all users, including the disabled placard users, estimated revenue recovery could be used to directly support services that benefit the disabled such as expanded paratransit offerings and more accessible sidewalks and transit facilities.

The program could also be designed as a two-tier system like the one currently in place in Michigan, where only the most disabled users (e.g. those in wheelchairs, with lung conditions or who cannot walk more than 200 feet without stopping) qualify for free curbside parking; others may park in handicapped

spaces nearby in off-street facilities. According to the program description: “After enactment of the new law only 10,000 people, or two percent of the previous 500,000, were allowed to park for free. The Michigan law gives free parking only to those most in need, requires a doctor’s certification with the application process, and uses a new yellow placard, a clear differentiation from the traditional blue disabled badge.”

This funding source would fall under system management, in that it better allocates a scarce resource (disabled parking spots). It could also be used for system expansion by providing funding to services that directly benefit the disabled (e.g. paratransit, curb cuts, elevators on transit and implementation of other accessible services.)

### Sustainability

Ending disabled parking abuse would recover significant losses in parking revenue, bringing metered parking revenue more in line with actual usage and providing cities with a growing and sustainable funding source. Efforts to change current state law and generate local support for implementation could be considered an initial cost. Additional costs of administering a two-tiered program as described above should be taken into account. Revenue from an “all may park, all must pay” system would likely differ from that of a two-tiered system; each should be weighed separately.

### Pros/Cons

#### *Pros:*

Implementing a more refined placard-issuing policy would enable the true number of qualified disabled placard holders to find convenient curb spaces more easily, enforce compliance with parking regulations, maintain proper market-pricing of on-street parking, and create a reserve to subsidize better transportation facilities and services for the disabled. The reclaimed revenue source, derived from able-bodied abusers of disability placards, could be used to fund transportation services and facilities for the disabled community. Such funds would further promote disability rights and the state-wide universality of accessible services. They would also generate additional parking revenue from able-bodied drivers who are compelled to pay to park.

#### *Cons:*

Many advocates for the disabled have warned against mandatory parking fees. In spite of current placard abuse, advocates are wary of enacting a policy that would make life more difficult for an already disadvantaged population. As mentioned above, providing subsidies to the truly disabled could be one way to mitigate these costs, as well as by dedicating recouped revenue to services that directly benefit the disabled.

### Implementation

Implementation could be classified as Low/Medium. While parking reform is relatively straightforward in theory, it requires significant political support. Lessons learned from successful programs in other

cities, such as Arlington, VA (where all users must park) and Michigan (where only the neediest users can park for free) should be taken into account. Enforcement and administrative costs of any new program are also a factor.

Greater political support at the state level is crucial to advance progress on this issue. State support could also fund additional research that would help make a strong case to change the law, as well as provide a more accurate estimate of potential revenue.

### Conclusion/Recommendation

Implementing a more refined placard-issuing policy would enable the true number of qualified disabled placard holders to find convenient curbside spaces more easily, enforce compliance with parking regulations, maintain proper market-pricing of on-street parking, and create a reserve to subsidize better transportation facilities and services for the disabled. The reclaimed revenue source, derived from able-bodied abusers of disability placards, could be used to fund transportation services and facilities for the disabled community. Such funds would further promote disability rights and the state-wide universality of accessible services. They would also generate additional parking revenue from able-bodied drivers who are compelled to pay to park.

There are two primary options for implementation: first, a system where all users pay for curbside parking as in the case of Arlington, VA; and second, a two-tiered system where only the neediest users are granted curbside parking, such as in the case of Michigan. Both cases should be evaluated when designing a system to meet the needs of California's cities.

### Reference Materials

Shoup, 2011. "Ending the abuse of disabled parking placards." [http://www.uctc.net/access/39/access39\\_almanac.pdf](http://www.uctc.net/access/39/access39_almanac.pdf)

Williams, 2010. "Meter payment exemption for Disabled Placard Holders as a Barrier to Managing Curbside Parking." <http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/MeterPaymentExemptionForDisabledPlacardHolders.pdf>

LA Times: "Placards can bring a curbside surprise." <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/may/22/local/la-me-disabled-parking-20110522>

Michigan Disability Brochure: [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/disability\\_brochure\\_33616\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/disability_brochure_33616_7.pdf)

Application for Disabled Placard (Michigan): [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bfs-108\\_16249\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bfs-108_16249_7.pdf)