

CAL POLY SAN LUIS OBISPO ZONED PARKING FOR COMMUTER STUDENTS

FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

The Cal Poly Transportation and Parking Services team at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo has implemented a zoned parking system for commuter students. The program, which includes an award-winning communications campaign to encourage alternate forms of transportation, has reduced congestion and improved the university's parking permit procedure.

The Cal Poly Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS) team at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo launched a new program in fall 2017 to make parking more efficient and features streamlined management of permit sales and strategic lot utilization. The initiative, which includes an award-winning communications campaign, has reduced traffic and congestion, made finding parking spaces easier, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Previously, all commuters were sold a "general" permit, which allowed students to search for parking spaces in all general lots throughout campus, and they routinely circled multiple lots in search of a spot. This caused student frustration and complaints regarding the time it took and the lack of parking in areas closest to the campus core.

When the zoned parking was implemented, short-term parking permit availability was also eliminated in various zones, and much of the daily parking was relocated away from the campus core. In 2018-2019, TAPS further refined the zoned parking program by increasing the permit price for the parking area closest to the campus core; permits for lots further away cost less, which gives students pricing options. To date, this zoned parking for commuter students is the only such program in the CSU system.

TAPS also established a visitor-only area, which has removed visitors from student commuter lot areas and has allowed more short-term and daily/weekly parking availability for student commuters who do not possess a long-term permit.

In addition, TAPS began selling commuter permits via waitlist and lottery. This process has improved the equity for obtaining a permit and eliminated system crashes due to technology constraints. Implementation of this program did not require new software or equipment, and program costs were related to marketing and communication initiatives.

To complement the zoned parking program, TAPS also launched its award-winning "My Other Car Is" marketing and communication campaign promoting alternate modes of transportation to and from campus. The campaign included posters, social media, print advertisements and signage. As reported in The Parking Professional magazine, the campaign's messaging "showcased students, faculty, and staff who carpool ("My Other Car Is Haley"), ride a bike ("My Other Car is My Bike"), take the bus ("My Other Car Is the Bus") and walk ("My Other Car is Flip Flops/Boots/ Etc.')." TAPS also promotes Rideshare Week, Walk to School Day and the ReCycle Bike Fair.

MILESTONES

Phase 1

- First-time freshmen restricted from purchasing permits.
- Commuter parking assigned to general areas.
- Daily/weekly permits sold in commuter lots only.

Sep
2017

Phase 2

- Permits sold via waitlist.
- Implementation of visitor only parking area for campus tours and events.
- Price differential instituted for the most popular lots closest to the campus core.

Sep
2018

Phase 3

- License plate recognition implemented.
- All permits are sold virtually.
- Permits sold via waitlist/lottery.
- Expansion of daily/weekly commuter area to a long-term permit area.

Sep
2019

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

Permits were sold for assigned areas, and immediately there were improvements to pedestrian and vehicle traffic patterns during peak commute times.

Campus customer satisfaction scores improved from 2017 to 2019.

Web presence improved, and social media impressions increased by 150 percent.

Lot sales are closely managed by specific location and the campus is able to better predict use and availability for special events.

The process helped TAPS better understand daily demand and to use underutilized areas for special events.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS

With the reduction of traffic, congestion was also alleviated along with fewer potential accidents with vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

In 2018, TAPS received two international marketing awards for its "My Other Car Is" campaign from The International Parking and Mobility Institute Parking Matters and the International Competition for Marketing & Communication Professionals. TAPS was also awarded "Best Work Places for Commuters" and a bronze level "Bicycle Friendly University."

PROJECT TEAM

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LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 Program details should be reviewed and discussed with campuswide groups, such as the Parking & Transportation Advisory Committee, Housing, ASI and employee groups.
- 2 Initiatives are best executed in a phased approach for effective change management.
- 3 A strong marketing and communication plan for consistent messaging and reinforcement of the program is imperative.
- 4 Affecting change on a university campus can be very difficult as there are many stakeholders to consider, and a politically sensitive topic, such as parking, can cause many speed bumps on the road to change. The TAPS team hopes this program will show peers the possibilities of changing programmatic policies and manage parking inventory may influence travel behavior and successfully improve the parking experience on campus.



Members from the project team, from left, Gaven Hussey, Kelly Bishop, Evan Archambeault, Marlene Creamer, Jessie Miller and Amy Voorhies.

FURTHER REFERENCES

Cal Poly News: “TAPS Awarded for Spearheading Sustainable Solutions in Parking”

https://calpolynews.calpoly.edu/creport/2019/nov_20

Cal Poly News: “Cal Poly’s Administration and Finance Division Earn State Awards for Sustainability Efforts”

https://calpolynews.calpoly.edu/news_releases/2019/november/sustainability_awards