


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: September 17, 2020

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Mike Bonin, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **TRANSITION PLAN TO RESUME PARKING ENFORCEMENT FOR PREVIOUSLY SUSPENDED PARKING INFRACTIONS AND PROPOSED ECONOMIC RELIEF MEASURES FOR PARKING FINES**

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) proposes a transition plan to resume parking enforcement of parking infractions that were suspended in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and economic relief measures for parking fines (CF 20-0147-S7).

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council, subject to approval of the Mayor:

1. DIRECT LADOT, beginning October 1, 2020, to resume parking enforcement and impounds, when applicable, for street cleaning, abandoned vehicles, oversize and overnight restrictions, peak hour and anti-gridlock zones, and expired registration;
2. DIRECT LADOT, beginning October 15, 2020, to resume enforcement of expired preferential parking district permits;
3. DIRECT LADOT to suspend imposing new citation late penalties until October 22, 2020; and
4. DIRECT LADOT, beginning January 1, 2021, to resume scofflaw enforcement and impounds.

BACKGROUND

On March 4, 2020, the Mayor declared a local emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 6, the City Council approved a resolution ratifying the Declaration of Local Emergency. With the Declaration of a Local Emergency and the unique public health risks posed by COVID-19, on March 16, the Mayor relaxed parking enforcement across the City putting a temporary halt to the issuance of several citations so that residents can more effectively practice the safe social distancing necessary during the outbreak. Subsequently, LADOT relaxed enforcement for the following categories:

- Residential street sweeping
- Expired registration on a vehicle

- Peak/rush hour and anti-gridlock zone parking restrictions
- Vehicles displaying recently expired permits within preferential parking districts were granted a two-week grace period following the expiration
- No ticket or tow for abandoned vehicles, overnight parking, or oversize vehicles.

On September 1, 2020, City Council instructed LADOT to continue the current relaxed enforcement until October 1, 2020 and to report back with a phased transition plan to resume parking enforcement and propose economic relief measures for parking fines.

DISCUSSION

Enforcement Transition Plan

Below is an explanation of the City suspended parking violations with recommendations when enforcement should resume.

Street Cleaning and Abandoned Vehicles

The Mayor's Safer at Home emergency order dictated that City residents must isolate themselves in their residences where feasible. Typically, residents are required to move their on-street parked vehicles for street cleaning, and cannot leave them parked on the street for more than 72 hours per the California Vehicle Code. While residents remain at home and use their vehicles less, moving and reparking them is more challenging. To acknowledge that challenge, both street cleaning and 72-hour (abandoned vehicle) enforcement was relaxed under the emergency order, and LADOT closed the abandoned-vehicle complaint line.

After months without street sweeping, the debris and trash build up around unmoved vehicles creates a public health and safety concern with vermin and rodent infestations. Even with the complaint line closed, LADOT receives daily complaints from disgruntled residents requesting vehicles be cited and/or removed. Prior to COVID-19, LADOT's abandoned complaint line received an average of 10,500 abandoned vehicle complaints per month or 126,000 per year.

Many residents are now back to work, and the challenge of moving vehicles is reduced. To address health and safety and respond to constituent complaints, LADOT recommends resuming enforcement and impounds for street cleaning and abandoned vehicles, when warranted, beginning on October 1, 2020.

Peak Hour and Anti-gridlock Zones

With the State of California, and County and City of Los Angeles public health orders to stay at home and close nonessential businesses, traffic volumes and travel delay significantly decreased. This reduction in traffic volume eliminates the need for peak period lanes and punitive penalties and impounds to keep those lanes clear. To allow businesses to operate safely, curbside parking and pick-up and delivery access to restaurants and other essential businesses were temporarily in greater demand. As businesses reopen, there is a noticeable increase in traffic volumes and delay during peak periods. Streets that have peak hour lanes and that are designated as anti-gridlock zones can now benefit from normal operation and enforcement. LADOT recommends resuming peak hour lane and anti-gridlock zone enforcement, when warranted, beginning on October 1, 2020.

Expired Registrations

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) temporarily closed their offices making it more difficult for the public to renew their car registrations, and the City suspended registration violations. In June 2020, the DMV reopened all field offices to the public so suspending this citation is no longer necessary. LADOT recommends resuming enforcement for expired registration, when warranted, beginning on October 1, 2020.

Overnight and Oversized Vehicles

To ensure traffic safety, the California Vehicle Code authorizes cities to restrict oversized vehicle parking where it may constrict or even block vehicle travel lanes. These overnight restrictions require City Council resolution and posted signs to enforce. When LADOT traffic enforcement officers encounter an occupied oversized vehicle in a restricted area, they do not ticket or tow these vehicles. Instead, they coordinate with agencies including the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) who can provide occupants with access to supportive services. At the beginning of the pandemic, while traffic volumes were low, the City ceased oversized vehicle restrictions and enforcement to further assist people experiencing homelessness who use vehicles as shelter. As traffic patterns and volumes return to normal, and oversized vehicles create increased safety concerns, LADOT recommends resuming enforcement and impound for overnight oversized vehicles, when warranted, beginning October 1, 2020. LADOT will continue to coordinate with partner agencies to assist individuals living in oversized vehicles, and to establish protocols that ensure occupied vehicles are not impounded.

Expired Preferential Permits

LADOT and its contractor closed public service centers to maintain the health and safety of the public and the contractor's employees. While services continued online, by telephone, and through mail, LADOT recognized that there may be instances where permits processed by mail are delayed, and the Mayor granted a two-week grace period for expired permits. Beginning the week of October 1, 2020, the public service centers will reopen and resume processing parking permits in person in addition to the other mediums. Once those centers are reopened, LADOT recommends a minimum two-week grace period to resume enforcement of expired preferential parking permits, when warranted, on October 15, 2020.

Scofflaws

Vehicles that accumulate five or more delinquent citations, known as scofflaws, can be booted and/or towed. In the emergency orders to relax enforcement, the Mayor also granted extensions on all outstanding parking fines, which suspended scofflaw enforcement. During this time, LADOT's Smart Boot vendor contract expired and is in the process of renewal. LADOT expects to execute the contract within the next 90 days. Upcoming citation amnesty programs that will tentatively be in effect until December 31, 2020 could assist scofflaw motorists with coming into compliance. LADOT recommends resuming scofflaw enforcement, when warranted, starting January 1, 2021 once the vendor contract is renewed.

Parking Fine Economic Relief

The City of Los Angeles offers several programs to assist low income individuals and individuals experiencing homelessness with outstanding parking citation debt. At the direction of the Mayor's office, LADOT is also working on new economic relief programs to allow citation amnesty and provide an early citation payment incentive. The citation amnesty program will grant a one-time opportunity for those with citations over three years old the chance to have all late fees waived and pay the base citation amount(s) over a period of time thereby clearing DMV holds, tax intercepts, and/or tow orders. An unemployment citation amnesty program will assist those that lost their job during the pandemic by allowing them to have late fees waived and pay only the base citation amount over a period of time. As enforcement resumes, an additional program will allow motorists an early payment discount for parking violations previously relaxed under Safer at Home order (e.g. street sweeping, expired tags, expired preferential parking permits, etc.). This program will reward those who pay citations within 48 hours with a \$20 discount.

Programs the Department already has in place to provide economic relief include:

- Community Assistance Parking Program (CAPP): LADOT offers the CAPP for individuals experiencing homelessness that allows them to pay their parking citations through volunteer community service or through enrollment in a homeless service program. As of June 30, 2020, LADOT assisted 1,070 participants to complete 14,238 community service hours for a total of \$559,783 worth of citations converted to community service.
- Low Income Payment Plans: LADOT worked with the State Legislature to shape bills that created or modified payment plans for the indigent and eligible low income motorists. Depending on the existing payment plan, the City may waive all late fees for eligible motorists and allow up to 18 months to pay off the base citation fines.
- Accessible Adjudication Hearings: To prevent further spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the public and City staff, LADOT quickly pivoted to accommodate the public by conducting adjudication hearings through mail and telephone and most recently through video conferencing. The video conferencing was only allowed through the emergency order of the Governor. LADOT intends to submit a legislative proposal to request to make this a permanent option.
- Temporary Suspension of Parking Fines and Payments: Under the direction of the Mayor and in response to the economic impact created by the pandemic, LADOT suspended parking fines and granted extensions on all deadlines for payments until October 1, 2020. Motorists are allowed up to 21 days to pay citations to avoid the late penalties. With the complexity of programming systems to determine the number of remaining days for payment of citations issued pre-suspension, during the suspension, and post-suspension, LADOT recommends allowing 21 days, until October 21, 2020, for motorists to pay their citations to avoid new late penalties. Beginning October 22, 2020, citations older than 21 days would be subject to the late penalty schedule.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Parking citation revenue is deposited into the General Fund. In Fiscal Year 2019-20, prior to the Declaration of a Local Emergency, LADOT projected parking citation revenue to reach approximately \$135 million annually or an average of \$11.25 million per month. For Fiscal Year 2020-21, assuming current conditions remain the same with reduced parking enforcement and officers are deployed similarly for the remainder of the fiscal year, parking citation revenue is estimated to be between \$55

million and \$60 million or \$4.5 million to \$5 million per month. Compared to the 2020-21 Adopted Budget, the estimates for the current year are up to approximately \$85.5 million below budget, which is about 62% below budget. Delayed normal parking enforcement is one of the main drivers for the \$6 million revenue loss each month. The revenue may continue to drop with work output impacts related to the recently approved employee Separation Incentive Program, upcoming furloughs, unfilled vacancies, and other factors associated with the pandemic.

The new citation amnesty programs combined could be revenue generating or neutral as the citation payments would otherwise be difficult to collect. Assuming the early payment program extends to the end of the fiscal year, it is estimated to result in a revenue loss of approximately \$1-2 million.

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