

Yellow Zone Meter Enforcement On Holidays

SFMTA Board PAG – January 20, 2011

Purpose

At the October 14, 2011 meeting the SFMTA Board Policy and Governance Committee (PAG) requested additional information related to yellow zone meter enforcement on holidays, specifically:

- Parking occupancy data at metered spaces on holidays.
- Evaluation of the possibility of altering parking policy and meter signage to allow all vehicles to park at metered commercial loading parking spaces on the eight holidays that meters are currently enforced (meters are not currently enforced on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day).

Current policy

Metered commercial loading (yellow and red) zones are enforced whenever a parking meter is in effect, unless stated otherwise. The SFMTA has no existing exceptions or examples of commercial loading zones not being enforced on holidays.

Parking occupancy

The following table compares parking occupancy data from parking sensors in SFpark pilot areas for both general metered parking and metered commercial loading zones on enforced holidays from 2011 (Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Labor Day, Independence Day, Memorial Day, and Columbus Day, all on Mondays) with non-holiday Mondays from 2011. Data from Veteran's Day and the day after Thanksgiving are not included because this evaluation was conducted before those holidays.

Rate Area/ Type of day	Occupancy at general metered parking spaces	Occupancy at metered commercial loading zones
Area 1: Downtown/SoMa Non-holiday	61%	44%
Downtown/SoMa Holiday	46%	28%
Area 2: Civic Center Non-holiday	60%	41%
Civic Center Holiday	32%	24%

Rate Area/ Type of day	Occupancy at general metered parking spaces	Occupancy at metered commercial loading zones
Area 3: All other areas Non-holiday	68%	45%
All Other areas holiday	67%	44%
Area 4: Fisherman’s Wharf Non-holiday	50%	41%
Fisherman’s Wharf Holiday	57%	40%

Parking occupancy at metered general and commercial parking spaces on holidays is comparable to that seen on non-holiday Mondays in Areas 3 and 4, and is somewhat lower in Areas 1 and 2 though still significant. In Areas 1 and 2, there is less overall parking demand on holidays for both general metered parking and commercial parking.

Policy evaluation

Based on the issues outlined below, the policy of pursuing allowing regular vehicles to park at metered yellow commercial loading parking spaces on holidays is not recommended:

- Runs counter to the SFMTA’s overall direction for parking management of making parking simpler and more customer-friendly.
- **Yellow zones are used on holidays.** Yellow zones play a vital role in facilitating commercial activity and reducing double parking, which causes serious impacts on the rest of the transportation system. As seen in the parking occupancy data, there is significant demand for parking in yellow zones on holidays in all areas. While occupancy rates in yellow zones are somewhat lower on holidays in some areas, generally speaking lower occupancy rates at commercial loading zones are acceptable and desirable because highly available loading zones facilitate deliveries and reduce double parking.
- **Parking supply available.** One of the intentions of this possible policy change is to make parking more readily available for drivers on holidays by opening up commercial loading zones. But occupancy data from general metered parking spaces show that this is not necessary – there is a surplus of parking availability

on holidays. Moreover, the existing short time limits at commercial loading zones would still be in effect (unless another exception in meter regulations were created), which decreases the potential utility of those spaces for drivers.

- **Complexity vs. simplicity.** There are tradeoffs between the complexity of parking regulations and our ability to communicate them effectively to drivers, as well as drivers' ability to understand them. The SFMTA currently has thousands of unique parking meter configurations because we have pursued a highly tailored space-by-space approach to managing commercial loading spaces (with a large variety of starting times, time limits, peak-period tow away zone times, and multipurpose spots that change from general metered to commercial loading to passenger loading at custom schedules, etc.). While this approach is rooted in a desire to serve the needs of our various customers, the resulting number of unique configurations causes several issues, including:
 - The signage required to communicate an overwhelming complexity and variety of parking rules and variations creates, by definition, communication issues. This complexity reduces the overall legibility of the parking management environment that we ask drivers to navigate and, with it, customer satisfaction.
 - Increased workload for the SFMTA Meter Shop and Sign Shop when programming meters, producing signage, installing signage at the correct space, and then tracking and maintaining the different configurations, whether on internal systems or on the street.
 - Increased complexity for enforcement policy and practice.
 - Increased administrative burden of parking managers when attempting to track parking management configurations, as well as trying to continuously, block-by-block, update and fine tune configurations as our dynamic city evolves and businesses open, close, grow, move, or change.

A common customer complaint is that the SFMTA's meter regulations and signage are overly complicated and sometimes leave drivers confused about what the regulations are at a particular time and place. Adding yet another exception or change to existing signage at metered commercial spaces will add additional complexity and exacerbate this problem. Moreover, the large number of loading zones downtown play an important role in managing congestion, and making exceptions to those regulations on eight days of the year would be impractical to communicate effectively.

Recommendation

SFMTA has been moving towards creating a parking user experience that is simple, easy to understand, and customer-friendly. Rather than take a small step towards incrementally increasing the complexity of parking management regulations and their associated burdens, in spring 2012 the SFMTA will take a large step towards making parking management simpler and more customer friendly by:

- Evaluating number and location of commercial loading zones;
- Evaluating how parking meter configurations and regulations could be simplified;
- Complementing that evaluation by assessing how parking regulation signage could be redesigned to communicate parking rules more effectively, legibly, and gracefully;

Adopting a simpler approach to parking meter configurations and regulations will make parking management easier for SFMTA to administer and for customers to understand, thereby helping SFMTA's parking management to be more effective and successful.