

Choosing an Event Parking Revenue Control System

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Selecting the best event parking revenue control system for your facility can be a difficult task. While event parking itself is one of the simplest forms of parking revenue control (relying almost exclusively on flat rate fee structures), many of the solutions available today are anything but simple. The fact is that the automation of event parking is a relatively new but rapidly growing market segment and the major parking manufacturers are still sorting out the best way to address that segment. An ideal Event Parking Revenue Control System will rapidly process cash, credit and pass transactions to allow event patrons to get into the venue as quickly and expeditiously as possible. Speed is critical. The best solutions make the parking experience transparent to the patron while affording management the ability to control revenue, reduce shrinkage and predict future requirements through advanced reporting. The majority of the solutions on the market today can be broken down into one of three categories.

Traditional Revenue Control Systems



First, are the applications that were originally designed to operate as revenue control systems for gated facilities with timed parking or for valet operations. These systems were later modified to support event parking. This added functionality and complexity can come at the expense of speed and usability.

Traditional systems like these often require extensive infrastructure at the location, including one or more on-site servers and rock solid connectivity between the server and the remote devices. All operations are handled at the server which becomes a single point of failure. Since any lapse in connectivity might result in an outage, these manufacturers often require high end Wi-Fi installations throughout the facility to ensure maximum uptime. The advantage to this infrastructure is that everything happens in “true” real-time. Reports will have up to the second information and there’s not even a theoretical chance of two patrons using the same pass to enter a facility at the same time (passback violations).

Traditional revenue control systems often support a mixture of Timed, Valet, Self-Park, and Events in one familiar interface. This helps keep training costs to a minimum for attendants regardless of which function they are performing at that time.

Due to their support of multiple parking services, these applications can have higher overhead and complex management interfaces. They may also be plagued by design and technology decisions made decades ago.

- **Advantages** – Good for multi-use facilities. Real-time functionality with no chance of pass reuse.
- **Disadvantages** – Higher costs. Infrastructure requirements are often expensive and, due to exclusive use of Wi-Fi, can be unreliable in some environments.¹ Can be slower than applications designed specifically for Event Parking. Marriage to older technology limits capabilities.

Traditional Enforcement Applications



Next are the systems which were originally developed as enforcement applications which have been modified to support events. These applications are often used in environments (like universities) where enforcement is the primary requirement and event parking is a secondary function.

Enforcement based systems generally support cellular communications and require minimal infrastructure. This means that the handheld will support issuing an event ticket even when cellular communication is spotty or non-existent.

¹ See the following Cisco URL for technical information on Wi-Fi Interference in various environments.

http://www.cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/wireless/ps9391/ps9393/ps9394/prod_white_paper0900aecd807395a9_ns736_Networking_Solutions_White_Paper.html

Unfortunately, many enforcement applications don't support real-time credit card processing, event pass validation or pre-paid tickets.

Choosing the correct cellular provider is critical to the success of these systems. This is due to the fact that the number of cellular connections for a given carrier in a given area may be limited. And, the connectivity that is available during enforcement operations may be very different than when an event is being held. This may require that one cellular carrier be used during enforcement and another is the better choice during events.

- **Advantages** – Great for facilities where enforcement is the primary purpose. May be able to use existing enforcement hardware for separate events system.
- **Disadvantages** – Can be slower than applications designed specifically for Event Parking. Some enforcement applications don't support real-time credit card processing or parking passes. Reporting functionality may be limited or non-specific.

Dedicated Event Parking Systems



Finally, we come to the solutions which have been designed specifically for event parking operations. Leveraging the benefits of being designed with newer cloud based technologies; Dedicated Event Parking Systems, such as Wireless Carpark, are engineered with the unique needs of the event parking market in mind.

These newer systems were entirely written from the ground up to handle event parking either as a standalone application or to work in conjunction with existing gated systems. Their usability, speed and price structures often utilize the strengths of cloud computing where no server or single point of failure is on site.

Speed and reliability are tantamount to dedicated event systems. This speed may come at the expense of true real-time processing. Reporting and pass processing may be a couple seconds behind. Given the priority of a speedy ingress for event patrons, this is an acceptable approach at most venues.

Dedicated event systems, however, often do not have the ability to handle timed, valet, or enforcement transactions that may be supported by other systems.

Systems like WirelessCarpark.com often support both Wi-Fi and/or cellular communications and can be tailored to the specific needs of a location. This communication flexibility may allow them to be used at more than one facility; sometimes without additional licensing. Further, these systems are often significantly less expensive to own and operate; providing a rapid ROI.

- **Advantages** – Excellent for facilities where Event Parking is the primary requirement. Less expensive to own and operate. Provides flexibility, audit control, and superior reporting specific to events.
- **Disadvantages** – May not offer timed or valet parking services.

Conclusion

The type of system you choose is largely dependent on your business needs, with technology and budget playing supporting roles. Each option offers its own set of advantages. If the speed and flexibility offered by a budget friendly dedicated events system is appealing to your operation, please contact John Beyer at Wirelesscarpark.com.

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