

## Automated Parking Pay Stations Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a parking pay station?

Parking pay stations are automated parking meters that manage multiple parking spaces in garages, parking lots, and on the street.

### 2. Why use automated pay stations?

This technology offers many advantages to both the customer and the City including:

- **Multiple payment options** – The units accept credit or debit cards, and U.S. cash and coins.
- **Printed receipts** – Pay and take your receipt with you. The time your parking expires is printed on your receipt.
- **Pay-by-cell option** – Subscribers to this service can pay for parking or add time to their parking using a cell phone. A small per-transaction fee applies. The service will even call to remind when your parking time is about to expire.
- **Reduced maintenance** – Pay stations need service twice a month compared with meters which require service up to three times each week. The Civic Center installation will eliminate nearly 21,000 individual meter collections each year.
- **Less down time** – It is illegal to park at an inoperative meter but if the pay station closest to you is inoperative, you can pay for your parking at ANY pay station and be on your way.
- **Rate flexibility** – Multiple rates can be programmed into the units to allow for promotional rates, extended stays and free weekend and holiday parking.
- **Transaction tracking** – Lost receipt? Provide your space number and date and we can retrieve your transaction details from the database and print a duplicate receipt.
- **Remote programming** – All rates can be programmed from a central computer instead of manually adjusting each individual meter.
- **Less sidewalk clutter** – Just a few pay stations can manage all of the parking spaces on an entire block.



### 3. How will I find a pay station?

Typically two to four pay stations are placed on each block identified by a “Pay Here” sign above each unit. ([Civic Center map](#)). Remember, you can pay for, or extend, your parking at **any** pay station.

### 4. How do I use the pay station?

Each unit has [step-by-step instructions](#) to guide you through your transaction. Just press any button to “wake” the unit from power save. Then enter your space number and follow the prompts on the screen. You’ll see the panel light up when the unit is ready to accept payment. Insert your payment and collect your receipt from the cup below. Take your receipt with you to remind you exactly what time your parking expires. Display of your receipt in your car is not required.

KING RECEIPT PARKING RECEIPT PARKING RECEIPT	<b>RECEIPT</b> <b>City of Bellingham</b> Parking Services 1300 Carolina Street (360)778-7780 <b>Stall #XXXX</b> Expiration Date/Time <b>EXP 02:59PM</b> <b>MAR 13, 2009</b> Add Time #: XXXXXX Purchase Date/Time: 02:39pm Mar 13, 2009 Total Due: \$0.25      Rate: 20 Minutes \$0.25 Total Paid: \$0.25      Payment Type: Cash Ticket#: 00001628 S/N #: 100005051250 Setting: Railroad Public Lot Mach Name: 1100 A Railroad Meter limits enforced Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Thank You!
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## **5. How do I add time to my parking?**

If your time has not expired, you can [add additional time](#) by entering your space number and selecting option 2, "Add Time" from the pay station menu. Press enter, then key in your add time code from your receipt. Follow the prompts and a new receipt will print showing your adjusted expiration time. If your original time has expired, start a new parking transaction.

## **6. What types of payment are accepted?**

In addition to U.S. coin and cash the pay stations accept debit and credit cards. If paying with coin or cash, use exact change. In order to conserve processing energy, the pay stations do not give change.

## **7. Why was the Civic Center chosen for the 2010 installation?**

Currently, the only option for visitors to the Civic Center is two-hour, on-street meters. Many visitors find it takes more than two hours to complete their business. Motorists must either leave a meeting to "feed" the meter or stay and risk being cited. The new pay stations will test a variable rate schedule that allows extended stays at higher hourly rates.

## **8. Will there be free parking by City Hall and the Whatcom County Courthouse?**

Providing free parking does not support the City's long-term goal of reducing vehicle travel. Studies show the most effective way to encourage vehicle travel is to provide free parking. Providing free spots adjacent to paid parking encourages motorists to drive even more as they circle around waiting for a free spot. As part of this installation, the free parking in front of City Hall, at the east end of Lottie Street, and on the east side of the Courthouse will be numbered and transition to paid parking, managed by pay stations. The City maintains a few public spaces in the parking lot directly north of (behind) City Hall and visitors to the Courthouse can use the parking lot immediately south of the Courthouse when space is available.

## **9. Will it cost more to park?**

Stays of two hours or less will continue to cost \$.75 per hour. The City will use this new technology to test a [variable rate schedule](#) in the Civic Center. After the initial two hours, the cost per hour will increase as the length of stay increases. Motorists will have the option of staying in a parking space all day for \$15.00. Staff will closely monitor parking behavior during the six-month test period to make sure the extended-stay option is not negatively affecting parking turnover in the area. If there is inadequate turnover to support area businesses, the units will be reprogrammed to the standard rate schedule.

## **10. What hours do I have to pay?**

Like the current meters, the Civic Center pay stations will be enforced Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Parking on weekends, evenings and holidays remains free.

## **11. How do officers monitor the parking without a receipt on my vehicle?**

When you enter your space number and pay to park, the data from your transaction is immediately transmitted to a database stored on the Internet. Enforcement officers download this file, either at the pay station or via their handhelds, to view a list of the spaces paid or expired in real time.

## 12. If I pay for all day can I come and go?

The pay stations do not support in and out privileges. If you have paid for the day and are unavoidably pulled away, posting the receipt on your dash when you return may save you a citation. If you are cited, you may need to schedule a hearing to [formally contest the citation](#) and explain your circumstance to the judge.

## 13. Are disabled placards/plates still valid?

Yes, holders of disabled placards or plates can still park in spaces controlled by pay stations without payment. Vehicles displaying valid disabled hang tags or license plates can occupy on-street spaces at no charge and without abiding by the posted time restrictions. Please note: the city-wide prohibition against remaining parked in one spot in excess of 24 hours still applies.

## 14. What do I do if the pay station is inoperative?

Current pay stations are rarely inoperative. If the unit you are using seems to be malfunctioning, **any** pay station in the area can accept your payment. Enter your stall number and follow the prompts. If you continue to have difficulties, contact Parking Services at 778-7780 and staff will be happy to assist you.

## 15. What if I paid to park but am mistakenly cited?

The error we see most frequently is that drivers enter the wrong space number when they park. But your receipt provides proof of payment. Take your receipt and citation to Parking Services in City Hall immediately and if we can confirm the two match, the Municipal Court should be able to void the citation. If you cannot find your receipt, or your payment cannot be confirmed, you may need to go to the Court to schedule a hearing to [formally contest the citation](#).



## 16. What will happen to the meters?

The 152 meters that currently manage the parking in the area will be removed to make more room on the sidewalks for pedestrians. They will be returned to inventory and stored for reuse in the next area that transitions to metered parking.

## 17. Where will I park my bike when the meters are gone?

Where there is room, some of the old meter posts will remain and be retrofitted with bicycle “rings” that fit right onto the post. This will add bicycle parking without additional sidewalk drilling. Unfortunately, many of the sidewalks in the Civic Center are too narrow to hold bicycles without impeding pedestrian travel. Removing the meter posts will increase sidewalk space dramatically without the time and expense of re-pouring the walks.

## 18. Did we try pay stations in the past?

The initial installation of pay stations in 2006 was plagued with bad weather, equipment challenges and vandalism. Units were removed from the street before the issues could be resolved. In contrast, pay stations installed in the downtown Parkade at the same time stayed in place. Once the issues were resolved, these stations have operated continuously with very few interruptions. In 2008, pay stations were also successfully installed in the 1100 block of Railroad to manage an off-street lot.



### **19. Are there plans to install pay stations in other areas?**

Metering parking spaces is the best way to ensure the spaces turn over in the course of a day to serve the needs of multiple customers. As the benefits of the system become more apparent, we expect other areas will wish to offer customers the same level of convenience. Future installations will be planned as the budget allows.

**For additional information contact Parking Services at 360.778.7780 or submit your comments/questions via e-mail: [parksmart@cob.org](mailto:parksmart@cob.org).**