

Municipal Parking Meter Administration:
Pricing, Collection, and Enforcement Options for Saint Paul, MN

A Professional Paper

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Susan Earle
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Zhirong (Jerry) Zhao
Signature or Paper Supervisor,
certifying successful completion of oral presentation

Date of oral presentation

Zhirong (Jerry) Zhao
Signature of Paper Supervisor,
certifying successful completion of professional paper

Date

P. Jay Kiedrowski,
Signature of Second Committee Member,
certifying successful completion of professional paper

Date

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1. Introduction

There are 1950 municipal parking meters in the city of Saint Paul, MN. The city monitors and maintains these meters, which are funded by the revenues they collect, as well as parking ticket fine revenues that comes into the city. Meter maintenance and collection is done by Saint Paul's Public Works department, and meter enforcement is done by Saint Paul's Police department.

Due to continued revenue shortfalls, a pattern of general fund subsidization of parking meter operations has emerged. Because of this trend, the city is looking for ways to improve collections, efficiencies, and other aspects of its parking operations. This is especially important in light of current economic conditions and imminent state budget cuts, both of which are affecting the financial position of the city. With policy makers focused on revenue improvements and other financial concerns facing the city, there is an opportunity to explore the issue of parking meter activities and to make real progress towards policy changes and improvements.

The primary research question addressed by the report is this – how can the City of Saint Paul improve its parking meter revenue collections? The focus of the research presented here looks beyond simply the mechanics of the parking meter collection and enforcement, and focuses instead on the technology, policy and administrative choices available to the city to improve parking meter collection rates, total revenues collected and enforcement operations.

Analysis of options for policy change will focus on three broad categories related to parking meter activities – pricing, collection, and violation enforcement. This paper first sets the context, outlining Saint Paul's current parking meter inventory, locations, budget, and financing system. A more in-depth budgetary analysis follows. This analysis includes information on the recent history of parking meter funds and activities in Saint Paul, as well as a comparison of the city's current financial structure to two other municipalities' systems for organizing and managing parking activities. Once this context has been set, three sets of policy options – pricing, collection, and enforcement – are presented and analyzed. Following this analysis, policy recommendations in the three identified categories are offered. Finally, several concrete, actionable next steps that could be implemented in the near future by the City of Saint Paul are identified.

A variety of information was used to complete this analysis. A great deal of valuable information and data used in this paper comes from interviews with governmental officials and parking program staff, both in Saint Paul and other government agencies. Secondary, descriptive data sources are also used, primarily to provide context or examples of the types of programs discussed, reviewed and/or recommended. Budgetary and financial data from the City of Saint Paul is also included to provide a financial context to the parking activities in the city. All of this information was collected, compiled, and reviewed over several months. The data was then analyzed from the perspective of the research question articulated above, and recommendations crafted based on Saint Paul's unique needs and situation.

The key findings of the paper articulate these recommendations for change in the three basic areas of parking policy identified – pricing, collection, and enforcement. Of the three, both pricing and collection policies are recommended to change from the current status quo in Saint Paul. In terms of pricing, the city should pursue policies to encourage a more efficient vacancy/occupancy ratio, which would improve not only city revenues, but also the traffic flow and ambiance of busy areas in the city. Changes in collection are also recommended. The recommended changes include providing additional collection options for citizens to increase payment compliance. Increasing the visibility and availability of the parking debit card payment technology (smart cards) currently available in Saint Paul is also recommended. Though options for enforcement changes were reviewed, the current enforcement policies in Saint Paul were proven to be the best option for the city at this time.

These findings indicate that there is a real opportunity in Saint Paul to further improve its parking collection and enforcement activities. Based on these findings and the supporting analysis, sustainable short term action items are identified. Long term goals for the city to work towards and integrate into long term plans for managing its municipal parking activities are also identified.

The paper is organized as follows. First, background information on Saint Paul's current parking meter and enforcement policies, activities, and budget situation is provided. This includes historical data from 2006-2008, information on the 2009 adopted city budget, and a comparative analysis of parking activity organization within the city.

Once this contextual groundwork is laid, analysis of the three areas of parking policy identified – pricing, collection, and violation enforcement – is presented. Three specific policy options are provided and examined for each of these topic areas. General information on each of the three policies is offered, followed by a discussion of both the benefits and drawbacks of each policy option.

Once all policy options have been discussed, recommendations specific to Saint Paul’s unique situation and needs are made for each of the three policy areas identified. Finally, next steps needed in order to put these recommendations into action in Saint Paul are identified.

It is important to note at the outset that on-street metered parking is not the only option available in Saint Paul. While both private and municipal parking ramps are options for parking in Saint Paul, this analysis does not include a discussion of parking ramps in the city. This should not imply that parking ramps and parking meters are entirely disconnected as city operations, or that they are not seen as an important factor in customer decision making. Parking ramps are, however, a separate part of city operations at this time. Neither funding nor revenues are connected or shared between the two, and they are housed in separate city departments. While their interaction might influence decisions of customers looking for parking in the city, from the city’s financial perspective the two are currently separate operations.

While this organizational structure may not be ideal in terms of managing the parking system in Saint Paul as an entire entity versus distinct, separate operations in the city, it is the current framework in Saint Paul and thus the starting point for the analysis included here. Parking ramps, both publicly owned and privately owned, should be included in any future analysis of citywide parking options in Saint Paul. Taking a more holistic view of pricing and parking policy incentives in Saint Paul will be important, especially in setting hourly parking rates and determining the proper fine amount for a parking ticket. A study conducted by Saint Paul Public Works includes limited information about hourly meter pricing and the potential to reset the price points in the city, should the city council choose to do so. However, without a clear understanding of the incentives and interactions between parking meter prices, parking citation fine amounts, and parking ramp prices, a discussion of the correct parking meter price point would not be very fruitful.

Instead of focusing on price setting in terms of actual cost per hour estimates, the analysis here takes a higher level view. This paper looks at parking policy options across the three identified areas of parking administration and proposes possible technological and administrative improvements to Saint Paul's parking meter and enforcement system.

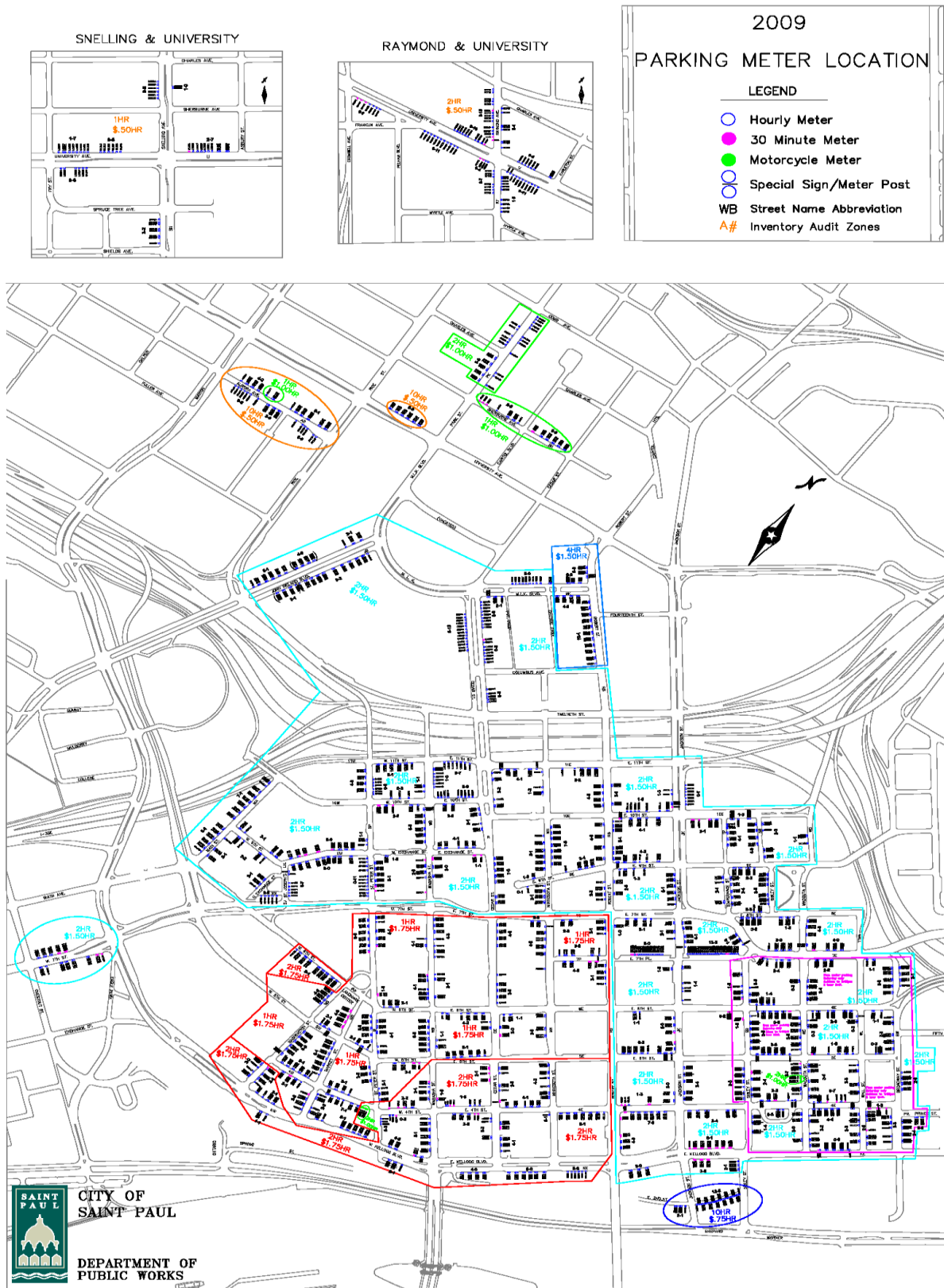
2. Background

2.1 Parking Meters and Enforcement in Saint Paul

Saint Paul owns and operates 1950 single space meters in the city. Parking related activities are run by the public works department, and are housed in one of Saint Paul's special funds, Fund 230: Parking Meter Collection and Fines. This fund also interacts directly with Fund 420: Parking Enforcement, which is the police department special fund used to track spending by the department on parking enforcement activities. Saint Paul's general fund also interacts with Fund 230.

Parking meter enforcement hours are Monday through Saturday from 8:00am to 4:30pm. Parking time limits vary by area. *Figure 1. Saint Paul Meter Map* indicates where all meters in the city are located, as well as time limits and pricing for the various areas of the city. Areas without parking meters may have time limits or other restrictions enforced, but are not metered.

Figure 1. Saint Paul Meter Map



The parking meters in Saint Paul are paid for through two primary revenue sources. The first is the revenue generated from customers paying to park at meters in the city. Saint Paul earned approximately \$1.76 million in parking meter revenue 2006, \$1.714 million 2007, and \$1.716 million in 2008. Two payment options currently exist for citizens parking in Saint Paul – either quarters or a reloadable debit parking card (smart cards) can be used at all city meters. The cards cost \$5.00 to be activated, and up to \$100 can be loaded at one time.¹ The same cards can also be used in Minneapolis, though accounts in each city must be set up and used separately.²

Parking meter activities are also funded by parking ticket fine revenue. The city earned approximately \$3.652 million in 2006, just over \$3.50 million in parking fine revenue in 2007, and approximately \$3.12 million in 2008. The city shares fine revenue with the State of Minnesota, sending one third of all parking fine revenue collected to the state. The remaining two thirds are a source of revenue for Saint Paul. This source of revenue is the most significant financing source for the maintenance and enforcement activities for parking meters in the city.

There are two main costs for parking meters in Saint Paul. The first is meter maintenance, which is performed by the Public Works department. The city spent \$427,925 on parking meter maintenance in 2006, \$430,207 in 2007, and \$557,579 in 2008 (all net of transfers to other funds).

The second cost is parking enforcement, which is handled by the Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD). Because the revenue associated with parking meters only is deposited into one city special fund housed in Public Works, inter-fund transfers must be completed to cover the costs incurred by SPPD associated with parking meter enforcement. All revenues go into Fund 230: Parking Meter Collections, which then transfers money to fund 420: Parking Enforcement to pay for the costs incurred by the police department. Fund 230 transferred \$1.38 million in 2006, \$1.39 million in 2007 and just under \$1.4 million in 2008 to Fund 420 to cover the cost to the police department.

Once the appropriate funds are transferred, Fund 230 also transfers money to Saint Paul's general fund to help pay for general support and indirect costs associated with parking activities each year. Budgeted transfer amounts in 2006, 2007 and 2008 were \$4.31 million, \$4.35 million and \$3.68 million respectively. However, the actual transfer amounts were much less, only \$3.75

million (86.7% of budget) in 2006, \$3.55 (81.6% of budget) in 2007, and \$2.87 million (78.2 % of budget) in 2008 (see Tables 1-4 for more detailed budget information). This indicates that, in recent years, revenues have not been coming in as budgeted.

2.2 Budget Analysis

The following budget analysis first reviews the recent history and current budget for Saint Paul's parking activities, including the structural organization of the related funds. Following this analysis is a brief comparison of Saint Paul's parking system to both Minneapolis and Milwaukee in terms of the structural organization or parking activities in the three cities.

Saint Paul's Parking Meter Budget

There is a concern among many elected officials and other key decision makers in Saint Paul that revenue generated by parking related activities (meter collections and fine collections) is not adequate to support all of the associated costs. This budgetary analysis explores this problem, and identifies areas of concern within the parking meter activities budget. This section includes analysis of Saint Paul's recent history of revenue collections and city expenditures for activities related to parking meters. Revenue sources are parking meters, hooding, fines, and other related revenues. The major categories of expenditures include employees' salaries and fringes, materials and supplies, and other miscellaneous expenses.

When examining any governmental revenue source, criteria such as viability, sustainability, adequacy, and fairness should be considered. Parking meter and fine revenues indeed provide a viable source of income for the city, and are sustainable as a way to fund the parking meter and enforcement program. Since charges for meter parking are more akin to user fees than a traditional tax, parking meter charges generally are not biased or skewed to unfairly or overburden certain groups or individuals.

However, an analysis of Saint Paul's budget and financial information shows that the revenue sources used to fund parking meters and fines activities are not adequate or sufficient to cover all of the true costs of parking meter activities. It is true that parking meter and citation revenues are sufficient to cover the direct costs of operations in both Fund 230 and Fund 420. Looking only at the bottom lines of actual spending and financing each year would also indicate that all expenses are being paid for by the revenues generated, and that the spending and financing have generally

been balanced at the end of each fiscal year. However, this balancing is done on the back of Saint Paul's general fund.

Compared to the budgeted amount, the actual transfer amount from Fund 230 to the general fund is reduced substantially in order to balance spending and financing each year. This means that the general fund is absorbing administrative and other general costs associated with parking meter maintenance and parking enforcement in the city. So while it appears that parking meter and fine revenues are not in trouble or underperforming, this reduced transfer indicates that the financing coming into Fund 230 each year is not enough to cover all costs associated with parking meter activities in Saint Paul.

The following tables provide further details and budget information from 2006-2009, and actual to budget comparisons for 2006-2008. *Italicized* line items in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 are areas of concern, highlighting both the revenues that are underperforming and the reduced transfer amounts received by the general fund in recent years.

Table 1. Budget History of Saint Paul Parking Activities

Revenue Generating Activities (Financing)							
	<u>Adopted 2006</u>	<u>Actual 2006</u>	<u>Adopted 2007</u>	<u>Actual 2007</u>	<u>Adopted 2008</u>	<u>Actual 2008 (unaudited, as of 4/27/09)</u>	<u>Adopted 2009</u>
Fund 230: Parking Meter Collections and Fines (Public Works Department)							
City Share of County Court (Fines)	4,000,000	3,651,985	4,025,000	3,505,693	3,725,000	3,126,605	3,251,954
Meter- Related							
Parking	571	1,392	571	907	1,000	123	1,000
Parking Meters	2,171,000	1,759,758	2,197,202	1,714,372	1,858,461	1,716,397	1,865,397
Meter Hooding	116,755	11,913	116,755	130,592	143,783	181,030	144,179
Normal Activity Services and Sales N.O.C.	19,374	26,606	19,374	26,770	27,428	45,455	27,428
Fund 230 Total Revenues:	6,307,700	5,451,654	6,358,902	5,378,334	5,755,672	5,069,609	5,289,958
Parking Costs (Spending)							
Fund 420: Parking Enforcement (Police Department)							
Salaries	797,630	760,065	830,819	782,913	855,332	814,154	881,458
Fringes	267,814	255,346	287,121	277,216	296,415	303,848	321,085
Services	239,402	221,802	247,169	215,556	263,320	219,699	249,618
Materials and Supplies	38,513	56,442	38,513	58,782	40,088	73,189	45,088
Misc	4,680	4,680	4,680	4,680	4,680	4,680	4,540
Debt	79,599	79,598	53,066	53,066	53,066	-	53,066
Equipment, Land, and Buildings	31,708	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subtotal - Fund 420 Costs	1,459,346	1,377,933	1,461,368	1,392,213	1,512,901	1,415,570	1,554,855
Fund 230: Parking Meter Collections and Fines (Public Works Department)							
Transfer to Fund 420 (to cover related costs)	1,468,076	1,377,933	1,461,368	1,392,211	1,512,901	1,415,570	1,554,855
Transfer to General Fund	4,318,351	3,747,066	4,350,059	3,557,187	3,683,907	3,097,713	3,171,446
Salaries	195,520	178,748	210,056	194,652	219,859	212,859	224,023
Fringes	56,124	55,021	61,259	62,730	61,736	74,305	72,407
Services	163,348	156,484	147,862	145,955	165,967	181,652	163,926
Materials and Supplies	64,211	35,232	86,228	22,741	98,345	83,001	91,031
Other (Misc Transfers, Refunds, Etc0	42,070	2,440	42,070	4,129	12,957	5,777	12,270
Fund 230 Total Spending	6,307,700	5,552,924	6,358,902	5,379,605	5,755,672	5,070,878	5,289,958

Table 2. 2006 Parking Activity Detail

Revenue Generating Activities (Financing)				
	<u>Adopted 2006</u>	<u>Actual 2006</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% Variance</u>
Fund 230: Parking Meter Collections and Fines (Public Works Department)				
<i>City Share of County Court (Fines)</i>	4,000,000	3,651,985	(348,015)	-8.70%
Meter- Related				
Parking	571	1,392	821	143.78%
<i>Parking Meters</i>	2,171,000	1,759,758	(411,242)	-18.94%
Meter Hooding	116,755	11,913	(104,842)	-89.80%
Normal Activity Services	19,374	26,606	7,232	37.33%
Fund 230 Total Revenues:	6,307,700	5,451,654	(856,046)	-13.57%
Parking Costs (Spending)				
	<u>Adopted 2006</u>	<u>Actual 2006</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% Variance</u>
Fund 420: Parking Enforcement (Police Department)				
Salaries	797,630	760,065	(37,565)	-4.71%
Fringes	267,814	255,346	(12,468)	-4.66%
Services	239,402	221,802	(17,600)	-7.35%
Materials and Supplies	38,513	56,442	17,929	46.55%
Misc	4,680	4,680	-	0.00%
Debt	79,599	79,598	(1)	0.00%
Subtotal - Fund 420 Costs	1,459,346	1,377,933	(81,413)	-5.58%
Fund 230 - Public Works Department - Parking Meter Collections and Fines				
Transfer to Fund 420 (to cover related costs)	1,468,076	1,377,933	(90,143)	-6.14%
<i>Transfer to General Fund</i>	4,318,351	3,747,066	(571,285)	-13.23%
Salaries	195,520	178,748	(16,772)	-8.58%
Fringes	56,124	55,021	(1,103)	-1.97%
Services	163,348	156,484	(6,864)	-4.20%
Materials and Supplies	64,211	35,232	(28,979)	-45.13%
Other	42,070	2,440	(39,630)	-94.20%
Fund 230 Total Spending	6,307,700	5,552,924	(754,776)	-11.97%

Table 3. 2007 Parking Activity Detail

Revenue Generating Activities (Financing)				
	<u>Adopted 2007</u>	<u>Actual 2007</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% Variance</u>
Fund 230 - Public Works Department - Parking Meter Collections and Fines				
<i>City Share of County Court (Fines)</i>	4,025,000	3,505,693	(519,307)	-12.90%
Meter- Related				
Parking	571	907	336	58.84%
<i>Parking Meters</i>	2,197,202	1,714,372	(482,830)	-21.97%
Meter Hooding	116,755	130,592	13,837	11.85%
Normal Activity Services	19,374	26,770	7,396	38.17%
Fund 230 Total Revenues:	6,358,902	5,378,334	(980,568)	-15.42%
Parking Costs (Spending)				
	<u>Adopted 2007</u>	<u>Actual 2007</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% Variance</u>
Fund 420: Parking Enforcement (Police Department)				
Salaries	830,819	782,913	(47,906)	-5.77%
Fringes	287,121	277,216	(9,905)	-3.45%
Services	247,169	215,556	(31,613)	-12.79%
Materials and Supplies	38,513	58,782	20,269	52.63%
Misc	4,680	4,680	-	0.00%
Debt	53,066	53,066	-	0.00%
Subtotal - Fund 420 Costs	1,461,368	1,392,213	(69,155)	-4.73%
Fund 230 - Public Works Department - Parking Meter Collections and Fines				
Transfer to Fund 420 (to cover related costs)	1,461,368	1,392,211	(69,157)	-4.73%
<i>Transfer to General Fund</i>	4,350,059	3,557,187	(792,872)	-18.23%
Salaries	210,056	194,652	(15,404)	-7.33%
Fringes	61,259	62,730	1,471	2.40%
Services	147,862	145,955	(1,907)	-1.29%
Materials and Supplies	86,228	22,741	(63,487)	-73.63%
Other	42,070	4,129	(37,941)	-90.19%
Fund 230 Total Spending	6,358,902	5,379,605	(979,297)	-15.40%

Table 4. 2008 Parking Activity Detail

Revenue Generating Activities (Financing)				
	<u>Adopted 2008</u>	<u>Actual 2008</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% Variance</u>
Fund 230 - Public Works Department - Parking Meter Collections and Fines				
<i>City Share of County Court (Fines)</i>	3,725,000	3,126,605	(598,395)	-16.06%
Meter- Related				
Parking	1,000	123	(878)	-87.75%
<i>Parking Meters</i>	1,858,461	1,716,397	(142,064)	-7.64%
Meter Hooding	143,783	181,030	37,247	25.90%
Normal Activity Services	27,428	45,455	18,027	65.72%
<i>Fund 230 Total Revenues:</i>	5,755,672	5,069,609	(686,063)	-11.92%
Parking Costs (Spending)				
	<u>Adopted 2008</u>	<u>Actual 2008</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>% Variance</u>
Fund 420: Parking Enforcement (Police Department)				
Salaries	855,332	814,154	(41,178)	-4.81%
Fringes	296,415	303,848	7,433	2.51%
Services	263,320	219,699	(43,621)	-16.57%
Materials and Supplies	40,088	73,189	33,101	82.57%
Misc	4,680	4,680	-	0.00%
Debt	53,066	-	(53,066)	-100.00%
Subtotal - Fund 420 Costs	1,512,901	1,415,570	(97,331)	-6.43%
Fund 230 - Public Works Department - Parking Meter Collections and Fines				
Transfer to Fund 420 (to cover related costs)	1,512,901	1,415,570	(97,331)	-6.43%
<i>Transfer to General Fund</i>	3,683,907	3,097,713	(586,194)	-15.91%
Salaries	219,859	212,859	(7,000)	-3.18%
Fringes	61,736	74,305	12,569	20.36%
Services	165,967	181,652	15,685	9.45%
Materials and Supplies	98,345	83,001	(15,344)	-15.60%
Other	12,957	5,777	(7,180)	-55.41%
Fund 230 Total Spending	5,755,672	5,070,878	(684,794)	-11.90%

Comparison to Other Municipalities' Parking Budgets/Structure

The structural organization of parking activities in Saint Paul is not the only way a city could organize their parking meter collections and revenue activities. Other municipalities have devised alternative systems to manage their parking activities, and use different organizational arrangements to collect, track, and distribute parking meter and enforcement costs and revenues.

The City of Minneapolis, MN's system is an example of an alternative organizational structure for parking meter finances. Instead of having activities segregated into different funds across various city departments, all parking activities are included in one enterprise fund. This all-encompassing fund includes meter collections and enforcement, as well as municipal parking ramps and the municipal impound lot. All of these activities are currently segregated into separate funds across various departments in Saint Paul. Because parking ramps are included, the parking fund in Minneapolis is also made more complex by debt service needs. Transfers of other sources of revenue, such as sales taxes and tax increment proceeds, are also paid into the fund to cover the debt service on specific ramps and capital assets.³ Compared to Minneapolis, Saint Paul has chosen to use a much more segmented system to manage its parking activities and finances.

Similar to Saint Paul, the Minneapolis budget document does indicate that there are financial concerns regarding the revenues generated by municipal parking activities in the city. In 2007 the adopted budget document indicated that "While the fund continues to generate a positive retained earnings, it is insufficient to pay debt service, make General Fund transfers, and restore its productive assets (ramps)."⁴ The situation has remained largely unchanged through the 2008 and 2009 budgets.⁵ While Minneapolis takes a larger view of parking by including all activities related to parking in the city, if the comprehensive parking system in Saint Paul were examined in the same way, the analysis would likely lead to similar conclusions. However, the structural differences in how parking activities are either grouped or segmented makes this type of direct comparison quite difficult between the two cities. Nonetheless, it is clear that both cities are dealing with financial concerns and are looking for ways to increase revenues and efficiencies within their respective parking systems.

The City of Milwaukee, WI also takes a similar, holistic approach to their parking activities. The fund that manages all of these parking activities is part of the city's public works department.⁶ Revenues come into this fund from a variety of sources, including the issuance of parking permits (both on and off street), parking meters (both on and off street meters, meter hooding, and meter removal), rental and leasing of specific facilities, and citation revenues (parking tickets), and towing revenues. Related capital expenses and debt services are also managed with this fund. This is also clearly very different from how parking activities are organized in Saint Paul.

Although these types of structural arrangements are not specifically addressed within the discussions of parking price setting, collection mechanisms and enforcement policy, Saint Paul officials should be aware that this more holistic management system of city-wide parking activities is used in other cities. The analysis in this report is presented from the assumption that Saint Paul's current, segmented organization of parking activities will remain largely unchanged in the coming years. This does not mean that analysis of the potential for reorganization should not be conducted in the future.

The analysis and recommendations included also do not preclude or run counter to a potential organizational restructuring. Whether or not a reorganization of parking activities in Saint Paul takes place, the analysis and recommendations presented here will remain relevant and concrete ways for Saint Paul to improve its parking meter administration. The following analysis is intended to provide information about how Saint Paul can improve its current parking meter administration, specifically examining various best practices, technologies, and other policy options currently available to the city. The recommendations are made within the context of the unique constraints and financial situation of Saint Paul at this time.

3. Analysis

3.1 Analytical Framework

The above budget analysis supports the concern in the city that revenues are not sufficient to cover all costs associated with parking meters, fines and enforcement activities. This has caused costs to be pushed into the general fund, which is not a desirable outcome of parking meter

operations. It is this ongoing revenue shortfall that has prompted further analysis into parking policy alternatives in the City of Saint Paul.

To address these concerns regarding parking in Saint Paul, three aspects of parking meter policy – pricing, collection, and violation enforcement – will be discussed. After an initial review of parking activities in Saint Paul, parking literature, and parking programs in other municipalities, these three policy areas emerged as distinguishing or defining factors of a city’s overall parking meter system and program. While these three policy areas all clearly interact and influence one another, they can also be somewhat isolated for the sake of analysis of potential policy changes. For these reasons, parking meter policy is broken down into these three categories.

Three policy options – the status quo/current policy in Saint Paul and two options for changes - will be discussed for each topic area. A general overview of each policy option is presented, followed by pros and cons of the particular policy option. Data sources include academic research on parking policy, direct information from other municipalities with experience in the policy options discussed, and secondary accounts of examples of similar policy options and outcomes in other cities.

Once all options for each of the three topic areas have been discussed, recommendations for Saint Paul are made. Recommendations for pricing, collection, and enforcement are made with Saint Paul’s unique situation, current needs, and realistic resource availability in mind. Other factors, such as ease of implementation, citizen satisfaction, and other related policy goals are also considered in the formation of recommendations.

Some of the recommendations made will be long term goals for Saint Paul to pursue. Others will be more short term possibilities with the potential for more immediate action. Following the recommendations section, these next steps will be identified.

3.2 Pricing

In the following analysis, price setting is viewed at a higher level, focused not on the actual cost per hour, but instead *how* prices should be determined. It might seem that price setting for parking meters is a fairly straightforward process. A rate is set, hour limits enforced, and revenue collected at the standard rate. However, this standard pricing model, which is the current status

quo in Saint Paul, is just one way parking meter prices can be set. Three price setting policy options are discussed here. The first policy explored is congesting pricing, a system in which prices are determined by market supply and demand. This is followed by an analysis of the standard, status quo pricing system in Saint Paul. Finally, free parking, a policy of setting the price for parking on city streets at zero, is considered.

Congestion Pricing

A congestion-pricing model would respond to changes in demand for parking in a particular area throughout the day. In the purest form of congestion pricing, prices for meter parking would change as market demand increased or decreased in order to maintain an optimum number of open parking spots at any given time. Parking expert Don Shoup describes the goal of this type of congestion parking as the Goldilocks Principle: If half the spaces are vacant, the price is too high. If all spaces are filled, the price is too low. If about 85% of spaces are full, then the price is just right.⁷

While this pure form of congestion pricing is the subject of much discussion and research, it is important to note that this type of price setting policy can be applied in variety of ways across a spectrum of specificity and precision. Instead of changing prices minute by minute, congestion pricing could also mean changing prices a few times a day based on the known demand for parking at certain times – for example to regulate the increased demand for parking over the lunch hour or during a sporting event. Congestion pricing could also be used to target high use neighborhoods, charging higher prices in more high demand areas. While these options are not congestion pricing in the purest form, they are based on the principles of a congestion pricing system and attempt to further the same goals as the more precise price setting system.

Congestion pricing addresses the problems caused by the abundance of free parking in many cities and areas across the United States. Free off-street (and presumably free on-street parking) “makes parking artificially abundant and therefore cheap and does in some ways tend to subsidize auto use when people would otherwise make other choices,” said Robert Poole, director of transportation studies at the Libertarian-leaning Reason Foundation.”⁸

There are also environmental benefits to implementing a congestion-pricing model. For example, individuals may change their habits, leaving their cars at home more often.⁹ This type of pricing

will also address another negative environmental impact of parking shortages – cruising. “In an observation of traffic near the UCLA campus, Shoup found that motorists spent an average of 3.3 minutes driving about half a mile in search of a parking space. Over a year, vehicles traveled a total of 950,000 miles - the equivalent of 38 trips around the Earth - to find parking in the 15-block area, he said.”¹⁰ Not only is this practice bad for the environment, but it also puts off potential visitors by creating a sense of crowdedness and congestion. This is of particular concern for the City of Saint Paul.¹¹ The city is working hard to revitalize downtown and promote its rejuvenated “Events District” to both local residents and potential visitors. Motorists cruising for spots undermine this goal, creates a sense of congestion and crowdedness in the area, and may detour visitors from coming downtown.

While potentially seen as a problem for business owners fearful that high prices will keep patrons away, Shoup asserts that the congestion pricing model will actually work to their benefit. He “contends that higher turnover (prompted by higher rates) will benefit some businesses, and he ensures that the benefits will be more than just theoretical.”¹² Shoup tells the following story to illustrate the potential benefit to local businesses in areas where congestion parking is implemented:

“Put yourself in the shoes of a merchant in an older business district where curb parking is free and customers complain about a parking shortage. Suppose the city installs meters and begins to charge prices that produce a few vacancies. Everyone who wants to shop in the district can park quickly, and the city spends the meter money to clean the sidewalks and provide security. These added public services make the business district a place where people want to be, rather than merely a place where anyone can park free if they can find a space.”¹³

The CapitolRiver Council, one of 17 district councils^a in Saint Paul, represents the downtown areas of the city. This council seems to share Shoup’s view that turnover is a good thing for business, and according to the Pioneer Press “is calling for parking strategies that allow for more turnover of cars and better access to buildings in its downtown development strategy.”¹⁴

^a District Councils are neighborhood groups in each of Saint Paul’s 17 districts. See <http://www.ci.stpaul.mn.us/index.asp?nid=1859> for further information on all of Saint Paul’s district councils and the work they do.

While it may seem counterintuitive at the outset – why would business support charging higher rates for parking near their stores, restaurants, and bars? – the answer is that the price change is not that simple. It is not an arbitrarily higher rate, but rather a floating rate responsive to demand. If the Goldilocks principle is followed then there will be no less patrons able to park near businesses, and increased turn over will actually facilitate a higher volume of traffic into and out of local establishments.

Aside from concerns from business, residents may oppose moving to a congestion pricing model for parking meter, making the politics of the change difficult to overcome. Areas where the parking pricing is implemented might feel targeted or unfairly burdened by the increased prices. Citizens may be adverse to change, and could resist a new parking system in favor of the status quo. Finally, those paying for parking under the new system will also be adverse to the proposal. As Shoup points out, “Drivers do not want to pay for curb parking precisely because its revenue potential is so high: the more parking costs, the more drivers do not want to pay for it.”¹⁵

The solution to some of the political opposition to this pricing system is what Shoup calls a “Parking Benefit Districts”.¹⁶ “To overcome the widespread political opposition to paying for parking, cities can return the curb parking revenue to the neighborhoods that generate it.”¹⁷ These districts would work as parking increment districts, where the incremental increase in parking meter revenue due to the new system would be returned to the neighborhood or area for things like sidewalk improvements, security, neighborhood cleanup, and other neighborhood enhancements.¹⁸

Clearly talk of the potential for parking increment financing implies that Shoup and others believe this type of pricing system would generate new revenue for cities able to implement it. Others are less optimistic that a congestion pricing will lead to significantly increased net revenues for cities. Jay Primus noted in an interview with InTransitionMag.org that San Francisco’s version of congestion parking, a project called SFpark “might not generate any extra revenue because higher meter rates may be offset by a decrease in parking citations.”¹⁹ Though he goes on to note that other benefits of the project may outweigh the revenue neutrality, it is an important point for the City of Saint Paul to consider.

Another potential drawback of these types of pricing models is that the technology needed to get them up and running is quite expensive. Saint Paul in no way has the type of technology needed to implement this type of parking meter system, which would necessitate new parking meters, parking space sensors to relay vacancy and occupancy information, and updated enforcement systems. Other infrastructure to keep citizens informed of parking availability and pricing would also be needed. San Francisco received a multi-million dollar grant from the federal government to execute their parking pilot project, further indication that the costs might be too much for a city to undertake solely through their own resources or debt financing. Maintenance costs might also pose an ongoing burden to cities. This initial investment must be weighed against potential revenue gains.

Several cities are currently testing and/or have successfully implemented variations of this idea, including Redwood City CA, Washington, DC, San Francisco, CA, and Old Pasadena, CA²⁰. As the *San Francisco Gate* so succinctly reports regarding San Francisco's congestion pricing pilot, "As a concept, the new parking system has the potential to ease the headache of hunting for a parking space. But it will come at a price."²¹

Standard Pricing (Status Quo)

The standard pricing system for municipal parking meters charges customers based on a pre-determined hourly rate. The rate does not change at all within the set enforcement times. In some cases time limits or hourly rates vary by neighborhood or location of the meters, but the price is still pre-determined and does not change based on time of day, demand for parking, or any other dynamic factors.

Currently the pricing system in Saint Paul follows this type of traditional, standard price setting format. In Saint Paul prices only vary by area (see Figure 1. Saint Paul Parking Meter Map), but do not change based on other demand factors. The prices are also unchanged based on the time of day.^b

There are advantages to this type of pricing system. It offers predictability for customers, and eliminates potential confusion for both regular parkers and visitors to the area. It is also easy for citizens to know how much their parking will cost based on the amount of time they need. Also,

^b See *Figure 1. Map of St. Paul Parking Meters* for more details on parking enforcement and pricing across the city.

other types of pricing systems such as variable hours or congestion pricing might be unfamiliar for some customers. In contrast, a standard pricing system offers familiarity to citizens taking advantage of the municipal street parking.

Many who subscribe to Shoup's theory of parking see inherent problems with this standard pricing model. As indicated above, this type of system does not respond to changes in demand, and so can foster problems such as cruising, under or over pricing, and increased congestion in busy, urban areas. These are some of the disadvantages of any standard pricing parking meter system, no matter what the price may be set at.

Free Parking

This option would allow drivers to park for free on all city streets. This option seems quite appealing at the outset. Free parking makes citizens happy, and maintenance and enforcement costs are drastically reduced when meters are completely taken out of the equation.

However, city-wide free parking would likely create a tragedy of the commons situation.²² While parking may be free for citizens, it is impossible to provide it at truly a zero cost. The driver does not pay to use the spot directly, but everyone pays for it in some way.²³ Cities must maintain the streets and areas around the parking spots, and all who make use of these city assets must bear the consequences of individuals cruising for spots (see discussion above). Free parking also influences the behavior of commuters and other visitors to downtown or commercial areas. By essentially subsidizing parking for these drivers, free parking undermines investments that encourage public transportation and carpooling.²⁴

This option also reduces city revenues, and does not allow the city to benefit from what some consider one of its most valuable assets – parking real estate. “Shoup contends that many cities, hamstrung by convention, superstition and guidelines hearkening back to the halcyon days of suburban sprawl, have been giving away their most valuable real estate: parking spaces.”²⁵ The problems associated with free parking highlight an interesting aspect of government charges for service. Shoup argues that the point of government pricing is not only to raise revenues, but also to regulate public resources.²⁶ By allowing citizens to park for free, the government gives up this power. Free parking may cut city costs, but it also means the city is no longer able to use one of

its public resource management tools, and can no longer use parking costs to promote or discourage certain behaviors as it sees fit.

One might argue that costs are not the only way to achieve parking policy goals. It is possible that through rules and parking restrictions, cities can achieve desired goals while still allowing citizens to park for free. But Shoup contends that “Cities sometimes restrict the use of curb spaces by regulations such as 1- or 2-hour limits, but time restrictions are difficult to enforce and often violated.”²⁷ It is true that cities may still generate revenue through parking enforcement and parking fine revenues. But the city would still face at least the same level of enforcement costs as when meters are enforced, but would lose the meter revenue it currently collects.

Even with time limits enforced, free parking can still cause congestion, cruising, and other problems. “If on-street parking is cheaper than off-street parking, cruising is individually rational. Collectively, however, it congests traffic, wastes fuel, causes accidents, and pollutes the air. Cities create all these problems when they underprice curb parking.”²⁸ Even with time limits in place, the free parking will be cheaper than off-street parking in ramps or lots, thus continuing to foster the problems caused by underpriced parking with little to no benefit to the city, and arguably causing net harm to parkers as they continue to cruise for spots.

Shoup also discusses the potential negative effects of free parking, especially in business districts and other areas of high commercial activity. “Suppose also that curb parking remains free in other business districts. Everyone complains about the shortage of parking, and drivers congest traffic and pollute the air while they search for curb parking. The city has no meter revenue to clean the sidewalks and provide other amenities.”²⁹ This is the alternative to the congestion parking discussed above, and the comparison Shoup draws is sharp. Free parking has the potential to derail current efforts to build up downtown Saint Paul as a premiere events and entertainment destination by causing increased congestion, delays, and pollution in dense downtown areas.

Table 5. Pricing Policy Options

<u>Option</u>	<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Congestion Pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduces Congestion - Environmentally friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficult to implement - Revenue potential is unclear - Politically Challenging
Standard Pricing (Status Quo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No implementation costs - Familiar to both citizens and enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not address environmental/congestion concerns - Prices would have to be raised in order to realize increased revenues (politically challenging)
Free Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminates enforcement costs - Makes citizens happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creates a tragedy of the commons situations - Bad for businesses - Makes downtown/tourist areas feel congested, less attractive to visitors - All meter related revenue is lost

3.3 Collection

Parking meter payment methods have advanced far beyond pumping quarters into machines. Ideas like pay-by-phone meters, EZ-Pass style parking payment systems,³⁰ and other innovative technologies are being piloted in cities all over the United States. However, most cities are just starting to upgrade their parking collection methods.

The following options recognize the current situation in Saint Paul and present realistic options to update parking meter collection methods. The first policy reviewed is Saint Paul’s status quo parking meter payment using quarters or the smart cards currently available from the city and Saint Paul’s current stock of parking meters. The second option is to replace current parking meters with multi-space parking meters that use updated credit card and other technology to collect payment. Finally, pay-by-phone technology is explored as a potential meter payment collection method.

Quarters and Smart Cards (Status Quo)

The most common, familiar way to pay for parking is paying using quarters or other coins. Coins are fed into the meters up to a set amount of time, at a set rate, and at set intervals. This system has been in place in many municipalities for quite some time, and continues to be the status quo in many cities.

However, maintenance and other costs associated with operating parking meters continue to rise. In response, parking meter rates are also going up in many cities across the United States. In

many cities the rates are getting so high that many people will not have enough quarters to pay for the parking time they need at city meters.³¹

Saint Paul already has a potential solution to this problem – smart cards. All meters in Saint Paul are currently smart card compatible. However, according to Saint Paul Public Works, very little revenue is generated from their use.³² San Francisco has contended with the same issue. While smart cards are a good option for parking, they are not always well advertised and likely are not widely used. In San Francisco for example, only 10-12% of meter revenue comes from the smart cards.³³ This highlights one of the major difficulties with the use of smart card technology for municipalities – distribution of the cards. As San Francisco’s SFpark manager Jay Primus points out, with credit card payments, other entities such as banks or credit card companies do the distribution. This is not the case with smart cards - the city has to rely on itself to get them out there. “I doubt any city’s going to do that great a job,”³⁴ says Primus.

There are distinct advantages to using smart card technology that municipalities can take advantage of. One is that the city gets the revenue up front, before the customer parks their car. This is an advantage because, even if the card is lost, the city has already received the revenue from the purchase. In addition to making revenue collection easier for municipalities, compliance is also easier for citizens. This benefits the city by increasing compliance and payment rates, which has the potential to increase total revenue collections.

Multispace Meters

Most standard parking meters systems offer one meter for one space. Multispace meters would increase this ratio, offering only one meter for several parking spots.

Many cities have implemented these types of meters and have seen benefits from their use. Some have seen increased revenues from their implementation. For example, “Portland, Ore., one of the smart-meter pioneers, saw an increase of more than \$2 million in parking revenue between 2002 and 2005 after replacing its more than 7,000 meters with 1,130 multispace meters, according to Randy McCourt of DKS Associates, a transportation planning and engineering firm. ‘Any community that’s got a substantive stock of parking meters, I would highly encourage it,’ McCourt says.”³⁵ This benefit is noted with caution, however, as the City of Milwaukee has “not noticed an increase in revenues since the installation of the multi-space meters.”³⁶ This may be

due to factors unique to Milwaukee and actions taken by public officials, but should be noted nonetheless. In addition to increase revenue potential, reduced maintenance costs are also a financial benefit of multi-space meters.³⁷

Another benefit of multispace meters is increased customer satisfaction. Del Estabrook from the City of Fresno is also pleased with the multi-space parking meters in the city.^{38,39} She says that, “In the future [she] would like to eliminate the one space meters and purchase multi-spaced meters,” as they have the potential to “greatly expand customer service.”⁴⁰ And as a document detailing Milwaukee’s new multi-space meters points out, “The multi-space meters, while different, would take less time for the public to adapt [to] than other options.”⁴¹ Milwaukee has noted an overall positive response from the public to the new multi-space meters,⁴² and Harvard University also sites customer service considerations among the benefits of multi-space meters.⁴³

Businesses may also be pleased with their use. This was the case in Milwaukee, where the “desire to install multi-space meters was driven by the downtown business associations” looking for additional payment options and services for their customers.⁴⁴ Concerns regarding customer access and turnover were also part of the reason for changes to Glendale, CA’s parking policy, including upgrading to multi-space digital meters.⁴⁵

Finally, since most new meters will be digital, it offers cities an opportunity to move towards a more proactive, informed parking management and enforcement system.^{46,47} This would bolster the city’s ability to use the tool of parking policy available to them, and would make the enforcement of parking regulations more effective.

Milwaukee city officials also point out potential negative impacts of multi-space parking. For example, while multi-space meters may have fewer maintenance issues, “when a multi-space meter requires repair, it is a more critical issue than having one single space meter down.”⁴⁸ This is because the revenue lost from having a multi-space meter is multiplied by all of the spaces that meter collects revenues for, versus a potential revenue loss of just one meter’s worth of payments when a single-space meter malfunctions. These repairs might also be more difficult due to the increased complexity of the multi-space meters compared to the single space meters. Other considerations include increase costs for communication networks among meters, increase costs

for providing receipts and other services to customers, and potential learning curve considerations for users.⁴⁹

Pay by Phone

Another option for collection of parking meter payments is to allow citizens to pay by phone. With a pay-by-phone system, drivers would call a toll free number displayed on signs posted in areas with metered parking, identify the spot they are parking in, and indicate how long they would like to park. Many programs would require that an account be set up, including a credit card to be charged for the parking. Once this is done, a specific phone number can be linked with a specific account for a quick and easy transaction.^c

The City of Miami has implemented a pay-by-phone system, and offers customers a variety of features not available when using traditional meters, including ease of payment, text message reminders to customers whose meters are about to expire, the ability to remotely extend parking time, and the ability to print parking receipts online.⁵⁰ These benefits are also available to customers parking in the areas in San Francisco where the city is testing similar technologies. Although reactions have been somewhat mixed, the city of San Francisco has determined that their pilot pay by phone program is worth expanding from a few select neighborhoods to the entire city.⁵¹ These benefits to customers are one of the positive aspects of a pay by phone system.^d

Another benefit of a pay by phone system is that it is an update that can be done with relatively little capital investment or confusion for citizens. This is because a city's current meters can be left in place and operational while simultaneously implementing a pay by phone system. The city of Milwaukee is considering implementing pay by phone in this way sometime in the future, having concluded that "The pay-by-phone solution was something the City considers to be a possible add-on to multi-space meters, not a complete solution."⁵² The system's adaptability

^c For an example of a one page set of pay by phone instructions, see the information made available by The City of Decatur, GA on their website -

http://www.decalurga.com/client_resources/getaround/cellpaymeterflyer2rev_sm.pdf.

^d The city of Vancouver, Canada notes similar benefits to customers. "City of Vancouver Pay By Phone Parking, Powered by Verrus," Copyright 2009, City of Vancouver, Engineering Services. Last Modified Wednesday, October 24, 2007. Available online at <http://vancouver.ca/engsvcs/parking/paybyphone.htm>.

makes it possible to implement as a later stage of parking upgrades, and makes it compatible with current city parking systems, no matter what stage or state they are in.

This layering capacity is related to another benefit of this type of collection upgrade - the potential to reduce the need for, and thus the cost of, maintenance on meters. Even if traditional meters are left in place for customers who do not choose to use the pay by phone option, having meters use reduced as some customers choose the alternate payment method

There are potential downsides to a pay by phone system to consider. Even if traditional meters are left in place, any new system has the potential to cause confusion for customers. Also, because a city would likely leave current, traditional meters in place, there would be relatively little savings on day to day enforcement costs. In fact, a city may actually have to make a capital investment in handheld wireless devices for parking enforcing officials to be able to see if a car has paid by phone, since a the traditional meter for that car would still flash expired. “The enforcement officer has to check and see if the person has paid by wireless device, says Nhan. “They check on a wireless device, so you need to get those if you’re going to do pay by phone.”⁵³ The City of Coral Gables, FL uses handheld Blackberry devices to check license plates to see if a car has paid via cell phone.⁵⁴ While this provides an easy solution for police officers out checking cars, it’s easy to see how even this small investment can add up if a city chooses to arm all parking enforcement officers with smart phone devices.

There is also likely a new operating cost that cities will have to pay in order to utilize pay by phone technology – transaction fees. Nhan indicated that fees from vendors, credit card companies, and banks can add up for a local government. These fees are typically charged on a per transaction basis. San Francisco currently pays 11 cents per transaction, but Nhan said fees can be as high as 40 cents per transaction, depending on the kind of contract a city is able to negotiate. Citizens may also face increased charges for the features offered by these services, as is the case in the cities of New Orleans⁵⁵ and Redwood, CA.⁵⁶

Finally, the increased revenue potential of using this kind of system is unclear. Addressing the revenue potential for new parking technologies being test in San Francisco, Nhan said, “Ideally you would find increased revenues and increase ability to pay. If you make it easier to pay you

might see more revenues that way,” but said she believes the real potential for substantial increased revenue is “very minimal.” She says many in the industry will try to sell cities on the increase for revenue potential. However, she has not seen enough proof to be totally convinced, and says that cities should not make the switch to new technologies based on promises of increased revenues alone.⁵⁷

Table 6. Collection Policy Options

<u>Option</u>	<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Quarters/Smart Cards (Status Quo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both are already in use in Saint Paul - Smart Cards currently provide alternative to quarters for customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smart cards are not well used or marketed - Quarters are inconvenient for customers
Multi-Space Meters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduces maintenance costs - Convenient for customers - Positive for businesses - Potential increase in revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital costs associated with new meters; operating costs associated with new services - Maintenance problems multiply revenue losses - Revenue potential not fully known
Pay By Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively small capital investment needed at start - Convenient for customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Costs associated with new enforcement devices - Unfamiliar to customers ; most different from current practices and system - Transaction costs associated with new services

3.4 Enforcement

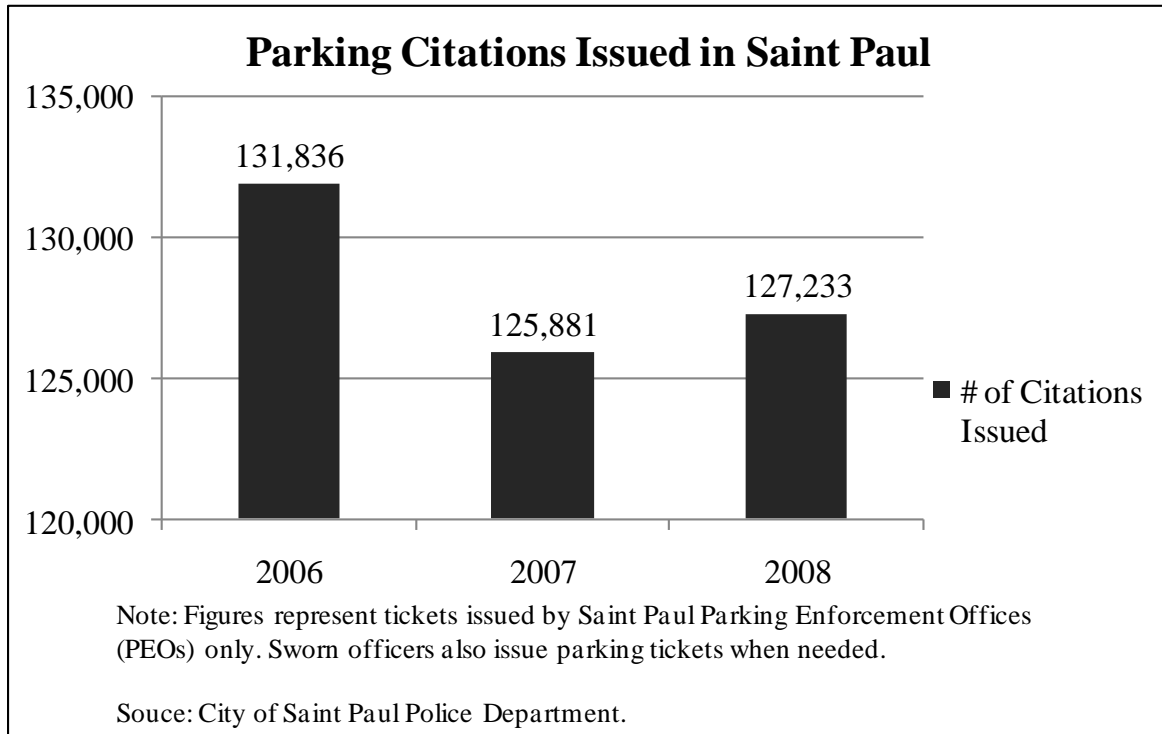
The pricing and collection methods used in municipal parking are important but, without proper enforcement, the rules set up by cities in order to regulate parking are meaningless. A city’s enforcement and fine collection policy is an important part of overall parking meter operations and financing. Three policy options are discussed here. First, the status quo for parking enforcement in Saint Paul is reviewed. An alternative to issuing traditional tickets is the issuance of administrative parking citations. The administrative tickets option is analyzed following the discussion of Saint Paul’s status quo. Finally, a third option available for parking enforcement, the use of the continuance for dismal process, is also analyzed.

Current/Standard Enforcement (Status Quo)

Saint Paul currently uses traditional enforcement methods to encourage compliance with parking regulations. Pricing and time limits for parking meters vary (see *Figure 1. Saint Paul Meter*

Map). Non-payment and violation of posted time limits are two of the offenses tickets can be issued for. Examples of other city-issued parking violations include parking in a no parking zone, illegally parking in a handicapped area, or within certain distances of corners and alleys. The chart below shows the recent history of parking ticket issuance by parking enforcement officers in Saint Paul.

Figure 2. *Parking Citations Issued in Saint Paul*⁵⁸



A typical fine in Saint Paul is broken down into a few different parts. Out of a typical \$25 expired parking meter ticket, the actual fine accounts for \$20. The remaining \$5.00 is broken into two fees – a state surcharge of \$4.00 and a second district court fee of \$1.00.

As noted above, parking fine revenues are split between the city and other government entities. The city keeps two thirds of the fine revenue, while the remaining third is passed on to the state of Minnesota. For example, of the \$20.00 expired meter fine, the city of Saint Paul receives \$13.33 and the State receives \$6.67. The \$4.00 state surcharge and \$1.00 district court fee is added after this split.

Late penalties are also considered fine revenue, which is unique to Ramsey County. If late penalties are charged to violators, Saint Paul also receives its two thirds of these revenues.^e Saint Paul's split of two thirds—one third is also a unique feature of its parking enforcement and fine revenue sharing arrangement with the state. All other municipalities in Ramsey County split their fine revenue with the state fifty-fifty.⁵⁹ In this way, the current parking enforcement system in Saint Paul is more financially beneficial relative to other local municipalities. Other benefits of the system are familiarity and consistency, both for those issuing and those receiving parking tickets.

Violation is taken very seriously by parking officials. Senior Commander Greg Pye says that parking enforcement is an important quality of life issue for Saint Paul residents. “'Parking enforcement fits into the broken-windows theory of crime,' Pye said. Small things like broken windows in a neighborhood and nuisance crimes can lead to bigger problems because people have a sense that nobody cares, the theory goes.”⁶⁰ In this respect, the ticketing and enforcement of parking violations is an integral part of wider city safety and quality of life goals.

The Pioneer Press reports that police “officials told parking-enforcement officers by memo at the end of 2005 they expected each to issue at least 55 violations a day.” Unfortunately, “in 2006 that goal was reached less than 25 percent of the time.”⁶¹ This is one of the potential drawbacks of the current system – in order for revenue to be generated, tickets must be issued. If violators are not identified and fined, no revenue is earned. Also, a pattern of non-enforcement may lead to decreased compliance rates.

Administrative Tickets

As the State of Minnesota has turned to increasing fine surcharges and fees as a source of revenue, many local governments have seen the costs of minor traffic and other violations increase rapidly for their citizens. Because of the high cost of parking tickets, “many officers are reluctant to issue a ticket for a relatively minor violation. They also know the high fine makes it more likely the violator will challenge the ticket in court, driving up costs for the court system,

^e Late charges for tickets include both late payment fine penalties and collection fines. The late penalties are split between Saint Paul and the State of Minnesota, but collection fines are not. This fine is added to the ticket to cover the cost of sending a ticket to a collection agency in order to force payment.

for prosecutors and for police departments that see more days where officers are spending hours in a courthouse waiting to testify about a traffic stop.”⁶²

It is this sentiment from cities that has led many to consider the option of administrative tickets. As discussed above, cities currently share fine revenue with the county and state. Administrative fines would be administered by cities directly, and all revenue would be kept in the local municipality, eliminating the revenue split. As cities are facing massive revenue shortfalls, many stemming directly from state cuts to local aid, more and more cities see administrative tickets as a potential source of increased revenue.⁶³

However, there would be new costs associated with these revenues. Right now cities are able to utilize the county court system for the parking ticket appeals process. If cities were to keep all of the revenues from writing administrative tickets, they would also have to assume all of the costs associated with running an appeals process. Some cities and governmental agencies issuing administrative tickets have already developed appeals processes. For example, the City of Woodbury requires those issued administrative citations to send notice to the city of their desire to appeal within seven days of the citation being issued. Once eight to ten notices have been received, the city schedules a hearing date for those appealing administrative citations. During these hearings, “An impartial citizen serves as the hearing officer, who decides whether to sustain, reduce, or dismiss the citation.”⁶⁴ The City of Minneapolis Park Board also uses administrative parking fines. Their appeals process uses a form filled out by those issued a citation to plead their case.⁶⁵ While neither process seems to be prohibitively expensive, the fact is cities will have to devote time and resources to these new responsibilities.

Higher levels of government are weary at best about the legal and policy implications of city administrative tickets. The federal government might react negatively to the idea, seeing as “Federal law prohibits states from ‘masking’ traffic violations by commercial drivers on driving records, and federal officials could determine that’s what’s happening with administrative penalties.”⁶⁶ According to Pat McCormick, “If the feds decide the state is sanctioning the practice, they could impose financial penalties as high as \$1 million in the first year and higher amounts in ensuing years.”⁶⁷ In addition to the legal concerns raised by the federal government, the possibility of fines also creates a disincentive for states to allow cities to set up their own

administrative fine systems. The State of Minnesota also has its own reasons for opposing the fines, a loss of revenue being the most influential factor.

Other complications exist that make the possibility of administrative tickets for cities difficult. Neither the State Auditor nor the State Attorney General supports the practice, claiming that it is in violation of state law.⁶⁸ Other concerns regarding administrative tickets were expressed by Saint Paul City Attorney John Choi. Choi points out that if someone does not pay their administrative fine, there is no recourse available to the city. This is because administrative tickets would operate separately from the criminal justice system. Offenses would be fines, not crimes, and so there is no way or the city to force collection on fines not paid.⁶⁹ Also, as noted above, the overhead costs associated with administrative tickets were identified by Choi as a potential barrier to implementation.⁷⁰

Finally, Choi referenced some of the issues the City of Minneapolis is facing regarding a recent traffic enforcement initiative – the city’s Photo Cop program. The program took pictures of individuals running red lights and then sent them tickets for the violation. After being challenged in court and eventually ruled illegal, the City of Minneapolis is now facing the possibility of having to refund up to \$2.8 million of revenue collected from fines generated by the program.⁷¹ If a local government in Minnesota begins to collect administrative fines and they are later ruled to be unlawful, then that city could face the same problem.⁷² Returning revenue, possibly months or even years after it has been collected, would be a difficult, daunting task for a municipality to undertake.

By adopting this type of policy the city would be taking a calculated risk that the legislature will pass a law clearly granting cities legal authority to issue administrative tickets. City Attorney Choi indicated that legislation to clarify the position of lawmakers on administrative tickets comes up every year. Choi does not believe that legislation will pass either way this session, which means that issuing administrative tickets would remain a risky choice for cities to make.⁷³

Continuance for Dismissal

Continuances for dismissals (CFDs) can currently be issued by the city for various low level traffic offenses. The program allows prosecutors to use their discretion when deciding whether or not to pursue prosecution of an offense. If the prosecutor so chooses, they can issue a CFD,

which essentially ends the pursuit of prosecution if the offender agrees to pay a set fine. City Attorney John Choi identified this program as an option for city lawyers.

The revenue stream for this program is a little different from typical fine revenue collections. First, fifty percent of the revenue generated by the fine is given right to the city. Then the remaining fifty percent is treated like a normal fine – two thirds of this second fifty percent is given to the city, one third is passed on to the county and state. This revenue sharing difference generates increased revenue for the city. For example, on a \$200 CFD, Saint Paul would receive \$167: \$100 in the first fifty-fifty split and \$67 from the two thirds-one third split of the second fifty percent. This is an increase of \$33 per \$200 fine over the standard fine revenue sharing system, which would give the city only \$134 (2/3rds of \$200).

While this may be a viable option to increase revenues from higher level traffic offenses, which can range from \$121-\$381 in fines,⁷⁴ it is unlikely that significant revenue can be generated using CFDs for parking violations. On an expired meter violation, for example, Saint Paul currently receives \$13.33 under the normal two thirds-one third split. If this same \$20.00 violation went through the CFD process, Saint Paul would receive \$10.00 from the first split, and then an additional \$6.67 from the second split for a total of \$16.67. This would only be an increase of \$3.34 per ticket. It is also important to note that these numbers assume the ticket is paid in full, which is not always the case.

Table 7. Enforcement Policy Options

<u>Option</u>	<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Parking Tickets (Status Quo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - System is already in place - Saint Paul currently enjoys a uniquely beneficial fine revenue sharing split - Familiar to citizens - No new costs associated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revenues are currently lacking - Depends heavily on tickets being written
Administrative Tickets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased revenue potential - Provides new option for City Attorney's Office and law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently not supported by the state legislature - Risky policy for City to adopt; opens city to potential revenue losses if state laws change
Continuance for Dismissal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase revenue potential - Possible under current state law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to relatively small fine amounts, additional revenue generated by CFDs may not be sufficient to invest the time and energy into changing current policies - Could create difficulties or confusion for enforcement officers and citizens

4. Recommendations and Next Steps

The following recommendations take into consideration both the research above and the current financial situation in Saint Paul.

4.1 Pricing

Neither the standard pricing system nor a policy of free parking is recommended for the city. The standard pricing system has proven to be inefficient, both in terms of revenues generated and as a policy tool to shape the behavior of citizens. Free parking also is not recommended for the city, as it creates a tragedy of the commons situation. Free parking would also increase cruising and congestion, especially in downtown Saint Paul. This would encourage behavior that runs counter to both the city's mission to be the most livable city in America and the goal of creating a vibrant downtown events district in Saint Paul.

Congestion pricing would be ideal to implement for Saint Paul, especially in the downtown events district the city is trying to cultivate. The City of San Francisco has begun a pilot program to implement this type of pricing model, and hopes to not only reduce congestion in their high

volume travel areas, but to reduce emissions and increase the livability in the city.⁷⁵ These benefits could also be realized in Saint Paul.

However, congestion pricing in its purest form is not recommended for immediate implementation in the city of Saint Paul because the capital investment is far too great for the city to undertake right now. San Francisco and other cities that have purchased and implemented the technology needed to facilitate this type of pricing model have received most of their funding for the projects through grants from the federal government. If Saint Paul is able to secure grant dollars in order to undertake a pilot congestion pricing project then this type of pricing model would be recommended. However, since the dollars are not there at this time, this option is not recommended

An adapted form of congestion pricing - a tiered pricing model - is recommended for Saint Paul. A recent parking study done by the Public Works department indicates that occupancy rates have actually been decreasing since 2003. The study concludes that “The overall effect was positive in providing sufficient curb side capacity for short term parking, reducing recirculation of traffic looking for curbside parking while providing users with alternate parking.”⁷⁶ However, the drop in occupancy to 56% is actually an inefficient occupancy rate for parking meters. Prices and hours should be adjusted in order to increase the occupancy rate to be closer to the recommended 85%.

In order to achieve this goal of 85% average occupancy a tiered or time- adjusted pricing system is recommended. One city that has implemented this type of pricing system is Redwood City.⁷⁷ A similar system would be beneficial to Saint Paul, and would likely increase parking meter revenues while maintaining closer to optimal occupancy rates.

4.2 Collection

The status quo of using quarters as payment for parking meters is not recommended to be used as the primary payment collection method. However, since this collection method is familiar to many residents, it should not be completely discarded. Unfortunately, current meters are not able to be retrofitted.⁷⁸ This means that in order to begin the process of changing meter revenue collection methods, an investment in new parking meters must be made.

Hybrid meters should begin to be phased into use in Saint Paul. These meters should accept quarters, smart cards, and credit cards. By moving to a hybrid model of parking revenue collection, citizens will be able to choose their method of payment. A system for replacing old meters with new, hybrid meters should be developed, including exploring the possibility of working with Minneapolis to purchase new meters if the cities are able to agree on the same types of meters.^{79,80} Multi-space meters should be used when possible to cut down on both maintenance and enforcement costs for residents.

Moving in this direction also leaves open the possibility of using pay by phone technology in the future, since this option could be added to any type of parking meter system devised. It would give frequent parkers another option for payment, and once integrated into the budget would not significantly increase overall operating costs of the system. However, in the context of current budget difficulties for the city, the need for a capital investment to effectively upgrade enforcement devices likely makes this option a long term goal for the city to pursue and not an immediately actionable change.

Finally, a campaign to get the word out to citizens about various payment methods should also be implemented. Saint Paul already has smart card compatible parking meters; however this option is quite underutilized.⁸¹ The use of the smart cards is more efficient, both in terms of payment for customers and in terms of revenue generation and collection for the city. Making these cards available at more convenient locations, and spreading the word about their availability, is something the city can do in the short term to increase their use.

4.3 Enforcement

For parking enforcement, the current, standard practice of writing parking tickets remains the best option for Saint Paul. Especially given Saint Paul's unique situation of keeping more fine revenue than other Ramsey County municipalities, the status quo of parking enforcement and fine revenue collection will likely continue to be the most cost effective option for the city.

Both alternatives have significant drawbacks that make their implementation ill advised. Administrative tickets would be the best option from a purely revenue focused perspective. However, it is unclear what the administrative costs to the city would be, and there is a potential for the increased costs associated with taking on all aspects of parking tickets (writing,

processing, appeals, collection, etc) to outweigh any appreciable revenue increase. Saint Paul's unique split with the state means that they are receiving state administrative and processing services at a discount compared to other municipalities, which decreases the appeal and benefit of administrative tickets even further for Saint Paul specifically.

Administrative tickets also continue to be opposed by the Legislative Auditor and other state officials. It is unlikely that a law will be passed this year to allow cities to write their own administrative fines for parking offenses. Until the practice is declared legal, issuing administrative tickets would open the city up to too much risk.

The continuance for dismissal option seems promising for some city issued tickets as a way to direct more revenue into the city. However, for the low level offense such as parking, the process seems to be more trouble than it is worth. The increased revenue potential is only approximately \$3.34 per ticket, and will likely not be an option for all tickets. Also, all fines might not be paid in full, since there is always potential for offenders to make a deal with a hearing officer. The marginal potential benefit that could come from pursuing more CFDs for parking violations is not enough to make it a viable solution to Saint Paul's parking revenue issues.

Thus, standard parking enforcement remains the best option for Saint Paul, even when the revenue split is considered. However, the tickets need to actually be written. A recent public works study indicates that out of all parking meters tracked, 10% of cars were parked illegally. However, only one out of every ten illegally parked cars (excluding disability permit cars illegally parked) were issued a ticket.⁸² Another 3% of meters were found to be illegally fed. Increased enforcement efforts would not only increase parking ticket revenue, but would also encourage more voluntary compliance to pay for parking. Both of these results would increase parking meter revenues.

4.4 Integrating Recommended Policy Options

Though the analysis above treats the three policy areas discussed – pricing, collection, and enforcement – in relative isolation, it is important to note that, in reality, they all must interact in order to create one, cohesive parking policy for a city.

For a more precise congestion pricing model to eventually be adopted, new parking meter technology will need to be implemented. As prices change and likely increased to better match observed demand, new collection options such as credit cards and pay by phone technologies will become essential in order to better to promote compliance. While ease of payment can go a long way towards increasing compliance rates, enforcement must be effectively and consistently carried out in order to take away an individual's incentive to risk non-payment.

For a city's parking meter policy to be as effective as possible, decisions must be made taking into account all aspects of parking administration policy. Price setting, collection options, and enforcement techniques should work in unison to guide the city towards the desired outcomes of more accurate pricing of a scarce city resource, more convenient and accessible payment options, and an enforcement system that more effectively mandates compliance.

Table 8. Policy Recommendations

<u>Options</u>	<u>Justification</u>	<u>Next Steps for Implementation</u>
Pricing		
Congestion Pricing – Tiered Pricing System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pure congestion pricing, while ideal, requires significant capital investment in order to fully implement - Free parking has multiple negative consequences, both for the city and citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify specific areas of the city where a tiered pricing system should be implemented
Collection		
<p>Near Term: Promote use of Smart Cards in Saint Paul Long Term: Hybrid, Multi-Space Meters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smart cards are effective, but poorly advertized - Pay by phone has significant benefits, but requires an initial capital investment for enforcement - A hybrid option allows for ease of transition for citizens - Multi-space meters require smaller capital investment and reduce maintenance costs long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote and encourage use of smart Cards in Saint Paul - Integrate hybrid meters into long term capital improvement planning for parking activities in Saint Paul - Explore possible joint purchase with Minneapolis or other local jurisdictions
Enforcement		
Parking Tickets (Status Quo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No new costs associated with current system - Familiar to citizens and front line employees charged with enforcement - Administrative tickets are too great a risk for the city - CFDs will not generate enough revenue to justify changing policy - Favorable revenue split (relative to other cities) is maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No changes needed at this time

4.5 Next Steps

The following actions are identified as potential next steps that can begin to be implemented in the near term to improve parking in Saint Paul.

- *Look into tiered pricing system.* See Redwood City⁸³ as an example of the type of system that could be implemented in Saint Paul. If a tiered pricing system is adopted, the city could begin to reap some of the benefits of the principles of congestion pricing without incurring the implementation and capital improvement costs of a pure congestion pricing system.
- *Make smart cards more accessible for residents.* The biggest impairment to capturing the benefits of Smart Card use in Saint Paul is their limited availability and lack of visibility and distribution in the city. By offering other points of sale, perhaps even through the City of Saint Paul's website, the use of Smart Cards could increase.
- *Audit parking enforcement activities.* The report issued by the Public Works department indicates that tracking the type of data needed to more closely monitor parking enforcement activities is available (or could be collected). This is not to track the performance of individual parking enforcement officers, but rather to gather information to be able to track illegal parking and target enforcement efforts where they will be most efficient.
- *Look to Milwaukee as a general example of how to make parking changes a reality.* Milwaukee can serve as a good example of a successful parking transition, particularly since Milwaukee and Saint Paul often are compared as similarly sized, geographically similar municipalities.
- *Keep hybrid meters and pay-by-phone implementation in long term parking upgrade plans.* It is likely financially unfeasible to move to hybrid meters or pay by phone systems immediately. However, as plans for capital improvements to Saint Paul's stock of parking meters are developed, these options should certainly be included as possible features when upgrading. Keeping them as part of the long term plan will help the city move towards a more long term, sustainable solution to problems with parking revenue collections. Setting hybrid meter use and pay by phone options as priorities will also allow the city to take advantage of joint purchase opportunities (perhaps with Minneapolis⁸⁴) as they arise.

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