



## Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID)

### MEMO

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Date: April 7, 2011

To: Transportation and Parking Commission  
Bill Knobloch, Parking Operations Manager  
Bill Putnam, Traffic Operations & Safety Engineer

From: Mary Carbine  
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Re: Input on Downtown Multi-Space and Staff

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Dear Committee members and staff,

Thank you for all your work to successfully implement the multi-space parking meters in the Central Downtown. We know this was a major step forward for the city, and the BID was pleased to be a partner with the Parking Utility in helping with business and community outreach about the new meters.

We know that a great deal of work went into meter implementation, as well as observing customer interactions and tweaking software and directions to improve the customer experience.

With more multi-space meters planned for installation, we'd like to offer observations and suggestions from downtown businesses owners and customers that could help further improve the customer experience.

#### **About Madison Central BID**

Madison's Central Business Improvement District encompasses the greater State Street and Capitol Square areas. It includes some 220 commercial properties and 370 retail, restaurant, entertainment and service businesses, many of which are locally-owned and/or small businesses.

The aim of the BID is to increase the vitality and health of the district and promote business within it. Our constituents are commercial property and retail business owners in the district, and their customers, both residents and visitors.

Through our Downtown Ambassador program, we staff a Visitor Information Center near the Buckeye Lot, and have direct contact with downtown customers.

Several BID Board members own businesses in the 400 block of State Street. They use the multi-space meters regularly and observe other customers using the meters.

## BID Observations and Input

What we've observed:

1. Buckeye Lot, Gorham Meter. Lines regularly form at the Buckeye Lot meters, especially at the Gorham St. location. It's not uncommon to have lines of 6 or more people. We can expect this to increase during the summer peak period. The lines move more slowly during high traffic events, when many users are visitors. Visitors may never become familiar with the machines and their transactions may always take longer.

These waits are inconvenient and create a negative experience for customers. We've observed people simply walking away (and risking a ticket) after waiting in line for a long time.

We understand from Parking Utility staff that more than 1/3 of total multi-space meter transactions so far were at the Buckeye Lot Gorham meter.

Are there enough meters at Buckeye in relation to spaces in the lot? Can a 2<sup>nd</sup> meter be added to the high-use Gorham location, or is a "dual" model available?

We understand that there has been or will be a software upgrade that will make credit card reading faster, but given the customer volume at this location, that may not be enough to alleviate the situation.

2. People have trouble remembering their space in the Buckeye Lot, and then it's a long walk back to the car (plus losing your place in line). Can there be some prominent signage, visible when you drive in the lot: "Remember your space number for the parking meter"?
3. People have trouble with the directions, especially:
  - a) Having to figure increments of money (rather than time). People have difficulty calculating how much money to put in to achieve the desired time. Have you tested using time increments instead (so people can ask for 15 minutes, 1/2 hour, etc.)? The soon to be implemented "max" button should help.
  - b) Trying to figure out paying with coin vs. credit card.

While we don't have all the answers to improve the user interface or directions, we wonder if parking professional associations have information on best practices for user interface design. Also, it may be informative to look at the soon-to-be implemented B-cycle bike-sharing station interface design for ideas.

We recommend improvements in the areas above before or at the same time as any larger-scale expansion of meter installation.