Paying People to NOT Park – A First Year Journey

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON | PARKING

2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO
11/5 - 8/17
Colorado Springs, CO
COAST

A First Year Journey

nacas.org/C3X
UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON | PARKING
COAST

• Background
• Previous Efforts
• Planning and Development
• Implementation and Promotion
• Results
• Lessons Learned
Background

• University of Houston
  – Fall 2017 enrollment 45,364
  – Total parking inventory 21,782
  – Student spaces 14,740
    • 4,141 in 4 garages

• Parking and Transportation Services
  – Auxiliary Enterprise
  – Permits, citations, visitor/event parking, on-campus shuttle service, parking maintenance and new parking construction
  – Debt heavy - $6.5M annual debt service, 44% of annual expenditures
Background

- Fall 2015
  - Student permits sold: 26,496
  - Student spaces available: 15,027
  - Student Oversell: 1.76 (service level goal 1.6 – 1.7)

- Future Impacts – next 10 yrs.
  - Student Enrolment projected to increase 3% annually
  - Increase in demand of 10,000 parkers or 6,300 spaces
  - Campus Master Plan will eliminate 4,900 parking spaces
  - Estimated construction cost of $175,000,000
Background
Previous Efforts

• Carpooling/Ride Matching
  – Partnership with Houston-Galveston Area Council and AlterNetRides
    • Area wide membership, not specific to UH community
    • Schedule matching was difficult
    • Safety concerns
  – Partnerships with METRO
    • Late 1990s – proposal to offer free rides to all students
    • Early 2000s – Reloadable discounted fare card introduced
      – Manual registration process
      – Students had to pick up their card at a METRO ride store
      – Many students who registered never pick up the card
Planning and Development

- Challenges
  - Houston is not alternative transportation friendly
    - Walkability score: 49
    - Transit score: 37
    - Bike score 49
    - Out of a score of 100
  - Campus community reluctance
Planning and Development

• First Steps
  – Alternative transportation infrastructure
    - METRO Local and Park & Ride bus service
    - METRO Light rail line serving the campus opened fall 2016
    - ZipCar on Campus
    - Campus Shuttle Service
  – Benchmarking in Texas
  – Does a West/East coast model work in Houston?
Planning and Development

• Keys to Success
  – Multimodal
    ▪ Local riders, Park & Ride, carpools, residential students
  – What incentives are needed to overcome “switching cost”
    ▪ Frequency of service
    ▪ Added commute time
    ▪ Loss of freedom/flexibility
  – Proactively address “what if ???”
  – Make it fast and easy
Planning and Development

- **Coogs On Alternative & Sustainable Transportation**
- Launched summer 2016
- Incentivizes public transportation and carpools
- Goal of reducing demand for parking on campus by 2,000 spaces
Planning and Development

• COAST
  – METRO Bus/Light rail
    ▪ Student discount card provides 50% discount
    ▪ Monthly subsidy of $27.50
    ▪ Local bus/rail students ride free
    ▪ Park-and-ride students pay 35% of full price

  – Carpool Program
    ▪ Registered carpools receive permit discount
      – 2-person: 25% discount
      – 3-person: 50% discount
      – 4+ person: 75% discount
    ▪ Assignments are based on college/office location
Planning and Development

• COAST Continued
  – Zipcar
    ▪ $50/semester in driving credits for on-campus residents
    ▪ Encourage carpooling to maximize impact of credits

• “What if”
  – Daily garage validations for occasional use (1/month)

• Faculty/Staff
  – Enhanced existing program to increase subsidy for local riders from 25% to 50%
Planning and Development

- Year 1 Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Member Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zipcar</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>METRO Student</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
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<td>140</td>
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<td>Carpool</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>890</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Space Demand Offset</td>
<td>540</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Estimated cost for year one $211,000
- Year 4 goal 3,200 members with estimated cost of $800,000
Implementation and Promotion

• METRO
  – Expanded existing agreements to include student subsidy program

• Zipcar
  – Meetings/communication with regional account manager and regional account manager for West region
  – Meetings expanded to include corporate sales and Texas market manager
Implementation and Promotion

- **T2Flex**
  - Custom field to restrict access to purchase permits
  - METRO cards are sold as a permit for reporting/auditing
  - Link all carpool members to 1 permit for monitoring usage
  - Custom reports for auditing
  - Offer non-subsidized fare cards through FlexPort
Implementation and Promotion

• Orientations
  – 20+ freshmen/transfer/graduate/international student orientations
  – METRO presence at all events providing route information

• Lunch-and-learn
  – Targeted faculty and staff living in zip codes with direct routes to campus
  – Co-hosted event with METRO
Implementation and Promotion

- Tablings
  - Key focus for all on-campus tabling events
  - “Picnic in the Park”
  - Invited METRO and Zipcar to events for on-site sign-up and route planning assistance
Implementation and Promotion

• Partnership with UH Sustainability
  – Sustainability Fest
  – Earth Day
  – Recycle Mania

Public transportation use in the U.S. saves 1.4 billion gallons of gas. Learn more fun facts and calculate how much money you could save riding METRO at our table at today's #SustainFest16. We'll be at Butler Plaza today until 1:30 pm!
Implementation and Promotion

• Communications
  – Emails
    ▪ Permit alternative
    ▪ Back to school
    ▪ Re-enrollment
Implementation and Promotion

• Communications
  – Facebook
    ▪ Creation of “Special Offer” that linked to COAST page
    ▪ Sharing alternative transportation themed news stories
  – Twitter
    ▪ More visuals/gifs
    ▪ Quick polls
    ▪ Retweets on various UH twitter accounts
Implementation and Promotion

“Group rates every time you travel.” Love this vintage VW advertisement. You too can get group rates if you CARPOOL to campus! Learn more at www.uh.edu/carpool.

Get a discounted parking permit and a guaranteed parking space for commuting to campus with a carpool.

75% off University of Houston parking permit

Expired • Online only
93 PEOPLE GOT THIS OFFER
Implementation and Promotion

UH Parking @uhparking · Feb 21
When you see uh.edu/carpool and realize you could be saving 75% on your permit AND saving time taking the HOV lanes #coastUH

UH Parking @uhparking · 2 Sep 2016
There aren’t enough parking spaces? Ugh, we know. So we’re paying you to not park: #coastUH

COAST - UH Commuter Discounts
Coogs on Alternative and Sustainable Transportation is a new incentive program for University of Houston students, faculty and staff members who use alternative... youtube.com
Implementation and Promotion
Implementation and Promotion

• Web
  – Dedicated web and email addresses
    ▪ uh.edu/coast – landing page
    ▪ uh.edu/coastmetro – information on METRO
    ▪ uh.edu/carpool – carpool specific
    ▪ coast@uh.edu – multi-user email
  – Permit discount button
Implementation and Promotion

• Dedicated Customer Service Office
## Results

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Actuals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zipcar</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>METRO Student</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>METRO Faculty/Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carpool</td>
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<td>640</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>890</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,825</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Space Demand Offset</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>1,582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

• Budget
  – Year 1 Forecast versus Actual
    
    |                      | Forecast | Actual | Variance |
    |----------------------|----------|--------|----------|
    | Student METRO        | $198,000 | $166,298 | $(31,702) |
    | F/S METRO            | $65,520 | $41,692 | $(23,828) |
    | Carpool (Guaranteed Ride Home) | $2,600 | $- | $(2,600) |
    | TOTAL                | $266,120 | $207,990 | $(58,130) |

  – Reconciling the unknowns
    • Average time to reload – 39 days
    • Active Users – 63% reload within 60 days
    • Summer – Active users drop to 40% of members
Results

- **Budget**
  - Cost/Active Student Member: $137.63/year; $11.47/month
    - Forecasted $330/year
  - Cost/Active F/S Member: $400.88/year; $33.41/month
    - Forecasted $468/year
  - **Net Effect**
    - Year 3 membership at Year 1 expense
Results

• Student Feedback
  – “It’s free so I would think that who wouldn’t want that?”
  – “I have been parking in the garage for the past few years, then I found out about the COAST program and realized the cost was only $181. So I asked my friends to carpool.”
  – “It’s more environmentally friendly, something I personally like.”
  – “It has the potential to save you time and you are not driving, so you can use that time to study. That’s what I do on the bus. That saves me a lot of time.”
Results

• Student Feedback
  – “I am in a dance team which practices at night. It would be more difficult for me to get home in the evening because of the bus schedules.”
  – “It makes it so difficult because you have to care for other people’s schedules when you are here for maybe just an hour. You have to wait for the people you carpool.”
Lessons Learned

• Vendors
  – They may not have the capability to work with your needs. They also may not admit this
  – Relationships are key, especially with mass transit providers

• Student Acceptance
  – Sophomores and Juniors had a higher conversion rate than expected driving our first year enrollment beyond goals
  – Ride matching service is essential, not optional
  – 2-person carpools aren’t an effective option if you are space constrained
  – Tiered discounts work
  – Be open to change and quick to implement it – especially ideas from your students
Lessons Learned

• Demographics Matter…
  – Previous efforts at coordinated alternative transportation program had not worked
  – Millennial generation embraces alternative transportation more than previous generations¹
  – Millennials are more “money conscious” than Gen X²

• …And will continue to matter
  – Centennials expect collaboration and customization³
  – Social media is THE communication platform

Lessons Learned

• Year 2 Plans
  – Adding “a la carte” options to accommodate students with evening classes or other commuting obstacles
    ▪ Reduce subsidy and combine with prepaid garage permit
    ▪ Addresses our most commonly stated obstacle while also reducing expenses and generating revenue
    ▪ Aligns our product with expectations of Gen Z (Centennials)
Lessons Learned

• Year 2 Plans
  – Ride matching service – will launch outside of single sign-in
  – In discussions with ride sharing providers
  – Plan to add a bike share component
COAST to commute to conserve to save

Session Check-In Code: 40