Planning & Transportation Commission
Staff Report (ID # 13465)

Report Type:	Study Session	**Meeting Date:** 9/8/2021

Summary Title: Municipal Code Revisions - Title 10 (Parking) to Allow Virtual Permits, Paid Parking, and Cleanup

Title: Review and Discuss Potential Amendments to Municipal Code Title 10 (Parking) to Allow Virtual Parking Permits, Paid Parking, and Other Code Cleanup

From: Philip Kamhi

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning and Transportation Commission provide feedback on proposed modifications to the City's various on-street parking permit policies and related Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) sections including those related to virtual parking permits and paid parking.

Executive Summary:

The PTC's feedback on various parking permit policies is requested as staff prepare to bring forward municipal code changes to the City Council. In addition, staff look forward to hearing from members of the public regarding their ideas, thoughts, and or concerns related to the proposed code changes. Staff will incorporate the feedback received into the staff report as well as to the code changes that are presented to the City Council.

The proposed changes are part of the Office of Transportation's work program as adopted by the City Council. Recommended programmatic updates to the permit programs and updates to the PAMC support the City's Transportation Operations and Planning Priorities (Staff Report 10464) including:

- Implement Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) enforcement and establish parking availability rates in the RPP districts
- Develop and pilot new commercial parking regulation options, to potentially include mobile payment, virtual permits, and/or hourly performance pricing rates in select high-demand parking locations
- Develop virtual permit options for residential parking permit (RPP) customers

City of Palo Alto
Planning & Development Services
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 329-2442

Additionally, the items for consideration support the following recommendations adopted in the Parking Work Plan and furthered by the Parking Action Plan in development, which PTC reviewed March 31, 2021.

Recommendation
1. Improve Parking Permit Management System
3. Engage the Community in Modifications to the Residential Preferential Parking Program
6. Update Codes and Guidelines
16. Improve Process to Purchase Daily Permits
17. Consider Paid Hourly Parking
29. Provide Automatic Renewal for Employee Parking Permits
30. Change Payment Schedule for Employee Parking Permits
31. Increase Cost of Employee Parking Permits
33. Change Payment Schedule and Increase Cost of Reduced-Price Parking Permits
34. Remove Inconsistences Between Districts

Background and Context:

The City's existing permit policies have made the management of the permit program difficult for permit holders and staff due to outdated business practices defined within the municipal code. As the City works to update its permit issuance practices with the adoption of Automated License Plate Recognition enforcement and plans to move to a more dynamic parking permit management system, the municipal code policies must be updated in parallel to match the more streamlined and customer-friendly practices the City is pursuing.

Towards this end, in July 2019, Palo Alto procured a new parking citation and permit management system in cooperation with contract company Duncan Solutions (Duncan). The contract with Duncan, and the contract amendment to adopt automated license plate reader (ALPR) enforcement and data collection (Staff Report 11492) provides the City the opportunity to optimize the permit program. Through ALPR the City's parking permit program can provide more flexibility, access, and convenience to our residents, visitors, and the community, and streamline operations for staff, enabling positive movement on the Parking Work Plan items listed above.

Discussion:

Virtual Permits

The City's adoption of ALPR enforcement enables parking management best practices and efficiencies prioritized by Council's budget process in May 2020 (May 13, 2020 At Places Memo). Virtual permitting is a key strategy to realizing efficiencies available due to the implementation of ALPR. Council adopted this strategy, along with regular parking occupancy data collection, in February 2021 (Staff Report 11492).

The City intends to begin to replace existing physical employee, residential, and guest permits with virtual permits over the current and next fiscal years. The permit is "virtual" because there is no longer a physical permit decal/hangtag, and instead the license plate number is the unique identifier associated with the permitted vehicle. Virtual permits are more convenient than physical hangtags or decals and enable vehicle license plate numbers to verify parking session validity automatically. Additionally, the use of virtual permits allow permit holders to more simply update vehicle or guest vehicle information online, eliminating the need for replacements or waiting for them to arrive in the mail. Residents and employees/employers will be able to use the online web portal to process and manage their permit requests. The transition to virtual permits will be phased in over time, based on the permit sales cycles, timeline for enforcement technology, and anticipated education and outreach efforts.

Virtual permits have a variety of benefits for both permit holders and City operations. Virtual permits are an eco-friendly and cost-efficient option since they eliminate the need for producing and mailing physical permits. Instead, virtual permits become active as soon as the online application is reviewed and approved. The use of virtual permits streamlines parking management by reducing the amount of staff time needed to verify valid permits. License plates can be automatically verified in the field using ALPR, allowing for permit zones to be monitored more effectively and consistently, which should enhance parking availability for permit holders.

Table 1 below describes the phased transition from physical permits to virtual permits. Overall, this transition is expected to begin during FY21-22 and conclude in FY 22-23.

Table 1: Phasing in of Virtual Permits in Select RPPs

Phase 1		
Timing	**Milestone**	**Description**
January 1, 2022	**Transition employee RPP permits to virtual permits**	Transition employee RPP permits to virtual permits in the Downtown, Evergreen Park-Mayfield, and Southgate districts.
April 1, 2022 – November 2022	**Require all residential RPP hangtag/decal permits to be tied to an individual license plate number**	Require all residential RPP hangtag/decal permits to be tied to an individual license plate number: - Downtown and Evergreen Park-Mayfield districts by April 2022 - College Terrace by September 2022 - Crescent Park by October 2022 - Southgate and Old Palo Alto by November 2022
January 1, 2022	All residential RPP households will be eligible to purchase 2 transferable guest hangtags.	
Phase 2		
Timing	**Milestone**	**Description**

April 1, 2023 – November 2023	**Monthly employee RPP permits**	Monthly employee RPP permits - Expand permit cycle options for employee RPPs to include the option for a monthly permit beginning with the spring 2022 cycles and allow for automatic renewals.
April 1, 2023 – November 2023	**Transition residential RPP permits to virtual permits**	Transition residential RPP permits to virtual permits • Downtown and Evergreen Park-Mayfield districts by April 2023 • College Terrace by September 2023 • Crescent Park by October 2023 • Southgate and Old Palo Alto by November 2023
April 1, 2023 – November 2023	Guest permits will transition to virtual permitting for the same sales cycles. Daily visitor and employee permits would be virtual as well.	

The issuance of residential guest permits is of considerable interest to members of the public. To elaborate on Table 1, guest parking permits for residents within RPP areas will be phased in over Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Residents in RPP districts will be eligible to purchase up to two guest permits. In Phase 1 above, the guest permits will be hangtags which are transferable between guest vehicles. In Phase 2, the guest permits will be virtual, allowing residents to update their guest vehicle information through an online portal.

Municipal Code – Paid Parking, Virtual Permits, and General Clean Up
The proposed PAMC updates will allow the City to implement the recommended phased changes to the permit program policies for the City to effectively operate, administer, and enforce the program. Permit policies will be documented in separate parking permit administrative guidelines, and municipal codes necessary to manage and enforce the permit program will be retained within the PAMC.

In addition to updating the permit programs, there is an opportunity to holistically update other parking related municipal codes to prepare for future parking needs and the proposed commercial pilot.

The following PAMC updates are being proposed for PTC feedback and Council adoption:

General
- Update code language related to loading/unloading to include the word "active" to reduce abuse and ensure maximum efficiency of loading/unloading zones.
- Remove specific times for curb/sign regulations and refer to "as designated by posted signage" to provide City flexibility in the management of the curb.
- Define and add language for Transportation Network Company (TNC) violations for parking or standing upon any public highway or street for any period of time longer than is necessary to discharge or receive passengers.

Permits
- Consolidate and centralize RPP municipal code chapters with the exception of Crescent Park No Overnight Parking Program (10.51).
- Establish districts and zones by map and publish on the City's website.
- Require at least 60% of all households purchase permits prior to posting any permit signs when a new district is established, or a block is annexed into an existing district.
- Amend language for how permits are to be displayed to allow for any permit type, including virtual permits.

Commercial Parking Framework
- Provide permit framework for City to designate new paid parking zones, permit types, operating hours and rates, and target parking availability standards.
- Determine how revenues will be used
  - Cost of operation/equipment
  - Allocation of any surplus
- Codify paid parking violations including: requiring payment, use of slugs, tampering with devices, and prohibiting extra time.

Timeline (as of August 2021):

	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
Residential RPPs																							
Downtown																							
Physical permit tied to individual license plate				■																			
Permit maximum per household reduced to 4																■							
Virtual permitting																■							
Tiered pricing																■							
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
Physical permit tied to individual license plate				■																			
Permit maximum per household reduced to 4																■							
Virtual permitting																■							
Tiered pricing																■							
College Terrace																							
Physical permit tied to individual license plate									■														
Permit maximum per household reduced to 3																					■		
Virtual permitting[1]																					■		
Tiered pricing																					■		
Southgate																							
Physical permit tied to individual license plate											■												
Permit maximum per household reduced to 4																							■
Virtual permitting																							■
Tiered pricing																							■
Crescent Park																							
Physical permit tied to individual license plate										■													
Virtual permitting																							■
Tiered pricing																							■
Old Palo Alto																							
Physical permit tied to individual license plate											■												
Permit maximum per household reduced to 3																							■
Virtual permitting																							■
Tiered pricing																							■
Guest Permits																							
Downtown																							
2 physical, transferable hangtags for guests only				■																			
Virtual permitting																■							
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
2 physical, transferable hangtags for guests only				■																			
Virtual permitting																■							
College Terrace																							
2 physical, transferable hangtags for guests only									■														
Virtual permitting																					■		
Southgate																							
2 physical, transferable hangtags for guests only											■												
Virtual permitting																							■
Crescent Park																							
2 physical, transferable hangtags for guests only										■													
Virtual permitting																							■
Old Palo Alto																							
2 physical, transferable hangtags for guests only											■												
Virtual permitting																							■
One-Day Visitor Permits																							
Downtown																							
Maximum 50 per household																■							
Virtual permitting																■							
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
Maximum 50 per household																■							
Virtual permitting																■							
College Terrace																							
Maximum 50 per household																					■		
Virtual permitting																					■		
Southgate																							

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[1] Virtual permitting for areas currently enforced by Palo Alto's police

	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
Maximum 50 per household																							▓
Virtual permitting																							▓
Crescent Park																							
Maximum 50 per household																							▓
Virtual permitting																							▓
Old Palo Alto																							
Maximum 50 per household																							▓
Virtual permitting																							▓
Employee RPPs																							
Downtown																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Cycle options for monthly or every 6-months				▓																			
Pricing TBD				▓																			
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Cycle options for monthly or every 6-months				▓																			
Pricing TBD				▓																			
Southgate																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Cycle options for monthly or every 6-months					▓																		
Pricing TBD					▓																		
Transferable Employee RPPs																							
Downtown																							
Virtual permitting				▓																			
Pricing TBD				▓																			
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
Virtual permitting				▓																			
Pricing TBD				▓																			
Southgate																							
Virtual permitting					▓																		
Pricing TBD					▓																		
Reduced-Price Employee RPPs																							
Downtown																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Cycle options for monthly or every 6-months				▓																			
Pricing TBD				▓																			
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Cycle options for monthly or every 6-months				▓																			
Pricing TBD				▓																			
Southgate																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Cycle options for monthly or every 6-months					▓																		
Pricing TBD					▓																		
Daily Employee RPPs																							
Downtown																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Evergreen Park - Mayfield																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						
Southgate																							
Virtual permitting	▓																						

City staff intends to take the described PAMC updates to Finance Committee, and then to the full City Council, in October 2021. Paid parking would be implemented separately following additional outreach as part of a future commercial pilot, which will go back to PTC and City Council prior to adoption.

Resource Impact:
Resource impacts are dependent on policy decisions that will be discussed throughout this process. With the proposed permit policy phases, it is anticipated that there will be a reduced burden on staff by optimizing the permit programs and reducing confusion to customers. Fiscally, virtual permits will eliminate the cost of physical permit stock, and streamline enforcement efforts for additional program savings.

Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) will be implemented in late fall 2021. The use of the ALPR will support virtual permitting, time limit monitoring, and data collection.

Stakeholder Engagement:
Staff have been in regular communication with both permit customers and neighborhood parking leaders about these proposed changes. The proposed phasing will allow staff to continue to conduct business, community, and stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation of improvements to the parking permit programs.

Environmental Impact:

The proposed amendments are categorically exempt from CEQA per Section 15301 in that the proposed changes will have a minor impact on existing facilities.