



Green Auto Market

The Business of Green Cars, Fuels & Technologies

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Semi-legal parking: What drivers must deal with in congested urban environments



In the not-too distant future, parking cars in crowded cities is expected to improve drastically. Self-driving cars will drop off riders and take care of the parking. Automated parking systems (APS) are starting to provide parking for cars on multiple levels stacked vertically to maximize the number of parking spaces while minimizing land usage.

The problem in large cities for local residents, workers, and those attending events, is that parking is going to remain an ever-increasing problem for several years. For those ridesharing drivers picking up riders or delivering meals, parking is taking a lot of perseverance and patience, laser-focused vision, and the risk of getting a parking ticket. It can mean pulling into a red zone, blocking a driveway, or using payment cards and dropping in coins at meters. The stress level can be high, and it can be quite a relief to find out you've dodged another parking ticket.

Part of the problem is that the cost of parking is going way up. Not that many years ago, it was shocking to find out you'd be paying \$20 to park for a business meeting or social event in a big city. As for now, the average daily parking rate in midtown New York is \$41, according to Bankrate. Honolulu is No. 2 at \$38, followed by Boston at \$34, Chicago at \$32, with Los Angeles and downtown New York tied at \$30 as the most expensive U.S. cities for parking costs. Metered parking cost has been shooting up, with drivers complaining about getting hijacked by a city trying to bring in more revenue through meters and parking tickets. Parking costs are on the rise in major U.S. cities as officials grapple with reduced revenue and political difficulties in raising taxes. Demand is part of it – drivers will pay more for parking when there's absolutely nothing else available in crowded, congested cities.

As I've discovered driving for Uber, Lyft, and Postmates (a food delivery service), finding short-term parking can be quite stressful and sometimes costly. You might pull up for the passenger pickup and there's no place to park, and you'll be blocking traffic on a narrow street. What are your options? Park in a red zone or driveway? Circle the block looking for a decent place to park? Another scenario is that you've parked on a narrow street waiting for the rider to come out, and there are cars creeping up behind you. One of the drivers honks his horn, and others join the fray. You may have to leave that spot and circle around again, or call the rider.

Some riders seem perfectly comfortable making the Uber or Lyft driver wait five-to-10 minutes until they come out. Taxi drivers have been known for arriving at a home or office early and calling the rider to come out to their cab. Uber and Lyft riders are much more comfortable having the driver wait in an environment that might be tough to park and deal with the delay. It may be a generational difference for passengers – most of whom are Millennials riding with Uber and Lyft and who utilize food delivery services. The social rules of order appear to be transforming.

Food delivery drivers have to include short-term parking into their cost of doing business.

Mobile-app food delivery services are taking off in cities now with UberEats, DoorDash, GrubHub, Postmates, Caviar, Seamless, and other services taking off. Drivers are independent contractors and have to build the cost into the trip. Suburban shopping malls are full of parking for drivers willing to take a long walk, but picking up meals at restaurants and stores in cities usually means looking for open metered parking spaces, or paying for parking garage fees. Some garages will allow drivers to leave the building for free if they've only been there less than 15 minutes. Other garages will require a payment of \$2 to \$5 for drivers to see that gate come up and freedom given from the parking garage – even if they've been there just a few minutes.

The future of mobility technologies is being carefully tracked by urban planners and developers, employers, owners of residential properties, university administrators, and event managers. Here are a few trends to watch for:

- **Green Parking Council** is supporting development of sustainable, efficient parking garages. Examples include Propark America's green parking Canopy facility at Denver International Airport. BMW Group's DesignWorks USA and Green Parking Council worked with Propark on setting up the Canopy garage with LED lighting, EV charging, and alternative energy applications, including geothermal. Automation Parking Systems installed an automated facility in New York City in 2007 and has been working on improvements ever since. Robotic parking pallets are able to stack cars for efficiently using parking garage space.
- **More recently, the city of West Hollywood, Calif.,** opened up an automated parking garage attached to City Hall on Santa Monica Boulevard. The mission has been to remove the nuisance of driving around looking for parking. Drivers can just pull their cars into one of the small garages and the automated system does the rest. The city's three-story automated parking garage with the capacity to house 200 cars was unveiled in May, and it marks the first municipal robot parking garage built on the West Coast.
- **Tony Seba**, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur and Stanford University lecturer, author of *Clean Disruption of Energy and Transportation*, and a two-time keynoter at AltCar Expo, had a few radical statements to make about the future of parking. Autonomous vehicles, along with carsharing services like Zipcar and ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft, will be game changers. Annual sales of new vehicles will shrink, highways will open up, and many of the parking spaces we have in our cities will go away. Highway capacity can be increased four times when autonomous vehicles show up on our roads; there will be no need for 80% of our parking spaces as autonomous vehicles show up exactly when and where they're needed by the owner, Seba said.
- **Mobile apps for parking** are offering some short-term solutions. Parkmobile, ParkWhiz, ParkMe, PayByPhone, and FordPass, are among the services available in select U.S. cities. Drivers are able to rent spaces from their smartphones, and will be directed to finding the space. It takes away the hassle and frustration of trying to find a parking space on multi-story parking structure with unexpected costs appearing. Riders using Uber and Lyft will typically bring up the problem of finding and paying for parking spaces when deciding to go take the

ridesharing option instead of driving. They're also interested in having more accessible and affordable parking options for those times they will be driving and parking their own car.

Parking and dealing with the stress of driving for ridesharing and food delivery services is part of my new book, [*Tales of UberMan: An auto journalist shares his Prius with savvy riders*](#). You can also read about some of the trends in the marketplace and new technology innovations [in the book's blog](#).



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Infrastructure: US Fueling and Charging Stations – July vs. June 2016

Biodiesel (B20 and above): 186 – down from 195 in June
Compressed Natural Gas (CNG): 931 – up from 923 in June
Electric Vehicle Charging Stations: 14,013 – up from 13,720 in June
Ethanol (E85): 2,795 – down from 2,807 in June
Hydrogen: 29 – up from 27 in June
Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG): 80 – up from 75 June
Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Propane): 954 – down from 1,117 in June

Source: Alternative Fuels Data Center