

March 28, 2014

Parking Operations and Enforcement Audit

Background

Parking meters are installed to manage the use of street space, to provide short-term parking, and to encourage those who require long-term parking to utilize off-street facilities. There are now over 10,000 on-street parking meter spaces in Vancouver for short-term parking.

The Parking Operations and Enforcement branch employs over 200 permanent and auxiliary staff and is divided into 1) Parking Enforcement and 2) Parking Operations.

Parking Enforcement:

This is the largest section of POE. Its primary function is to enforce parking by-laws in the City to meet the objectives of controlling the use of street space as well as provide internal Customer Service regarding ticket inquiries from citizens via phone and email.

Parking Operations - Meter Maintenance

The Maintenance section, located in National Works Yard, is responsible for maintaining Vancouver's 10,000 metered spaces. Each year maintenance personnel conduct several preventative programs to ensure meters are kept in good running order. The City also spends significant capital to update meter heads and mechanisms. Out-of-order meters are targeted to be checked and repaired within 24 hours of a public complaint. Malfunctioning meters can be reported by a parking enforcement officer, a meter coin collector, a patron, or any passerby who notices the meter is either broken or not functioning. Most of the broken or jammed meters can be repaired on the street. The more difficult cases are brought back to the meter shop for an overhaul. Coins recovered from broken or jammed meters are collected and then sent to Churchill for deposit into the City's bank account.

Parking Operation - Coin Collections

The revenue from the City of Vancouver's parking meters is collected seven days a week. To reduce the risk of theft, the coin collection process is designed to minimize leakage by having the coin collector have as little contact with the actual coins as possible. However, due to the nature of the work process, coin collectors will come in contact and handle loose coins occasionally.

Although staff are paired up to collect coins and their pairing is at random and varies daily, in order to be efficient, they do work separately from each other in a designated collection zone. Thus, detecting and monitoring controls such as cash counts and reconciliations are important to safeguard the City's parking revenues. Marked coins and the use of pre-counted coins collected are crucial to test the integrity of our staff and the accuracy of coins processed by Churchill on the City's behalf.

The daily collections are also designed to reduce the number of “jammed” meters and risks of theft. However, incidents of jamming remain high and are a focus for management. This type of vandalism ties up a significant amount of Parking Enforcement and Operations’ resources and causes revenue loss, affects staff productivity, increases calls from citizens and damages the City’s reputation.

Pay-By-Phone

The introduction of Pay-By-Phone in 2006 provided our patrons with another means to pay for on-street parking. The City has seen significant growth in this method of street parking payment over the past few years. With its popularity and use, there is increasing reliance on systems and third party processing. Management of information and technology support, systems review and data analyses are critical to the success of parking operation and enforcement activities.

Scope

The scope of the audit includes analysis of risk exposures and examination of the effectiveness and efficiency of key business processes such as meter coin collections, parking enforcement and payment processes by coins, credit cards, and pay-by-phone. The objectives are to determine the extent of compliance to applicable policies, procedures, efficiency of internal controls and effectiveness of business operations.

Conclusion

The review found that there were a number of opportunities to improve the current systems for coin collections and meter maintenance, these included:

- Third party verification of meter coins collected by Parking Operations & Enforcement
- Identification of strategies to reduce instances of meter vandalism
- Protecting employee and public safety while collecting meter coins
- Strengthening IT support to business continuity

Where immediate action was required, management has taken steps to remedy gaps in safety and high risk issues. Innovative operational enhancements such as photos on the Parking Enforcement website, devices to prevent jammed meters and real time Ticket Manager system interfaces are either in the process of being implemented or investigated to improve branch operations.