

OAKLAND

CASE STUDY

Smart Technology
Improves the
Customer Experience





Evolving City Needs Bring Technology Update

Oakland, California is a bustling city that mixes small town community with big city industry. As industry in the area reaches an all-time high, more and more professionals, business owners, students, and families are settling in Oakland, just across the bay from California's technology center. With 3,800 single-space meters and 574 multi-space pay stations, the City of Oakland is home to over 400,000 residents who rely on the city's successful parking program.

Before contracting with IPS Group, Inc., Oakland's parking technology was outdated by 20 years. Meters were unable to communicate with a backend database, which meant that faults went unreported unless called in by customers. Maintenance staff visited each location, meter by meter, to check status and repair problems. Often, it took over two days to detect a meter fault and up to three days to repair it—resulting in a week of lost revenue per faulty meter. “We were behind the times,” says Danita Lee, Parking Meter Collection Supervisor for the City of Oakland, “We weren't able to present back office support when asked about meter revenue or about the percentage of meters operating. We weren't able to report anything other than what we were actually collecting on the streets.”

The customer experience likewise needed improvement. With coin-only meters, customers often looked for change from local business owners, but the sheer number of requests forced “no change” policies. With no other payment options, customers often left vehicles in violation. “It was frustrating for the merchants in the area as well as for the users,” continues Lee.

Impressed with Berkeley's parking program—composed of IPS Group multi-space and single-space meters—the City of Oakland made a commitment to finance new technology.

Streamlining Meter Management

The City opened a competitive RFP process in search of a parking solution that would improve the customer experience, provide back office support, and accurately report uptime, operating meters, and alerts. After careful consideration, Oakland awarded the contract to IPS Group, Inc., not only because they met the basic requirements, but because they demonstrated a commitment to develop future technology. “We needed a company that would be there down the road...the fact that the product is here today and will still be here tomorrow puts IPS Group in a position to help jurisdictions move forward in the parking world,” says a city spokesperson from the Revenue Office of the City of Oakland.

Once retrofitted with IPS technology, Oakland's meters were able to communicate with a common data management system. “It was a whole new world for me,” says Lee, “The technology was great. We weren't used to having a meter that worked properly.” A functional data management system provided the City of Oakland with reports detailing the number of meters in operation, the number of transactions per month, credit card versus cash statistics, and much more.

In addition, a functional data management system provided immediate alerts when a meter was down. Rather than spending hours visiting each meter in the field to check meter status,



maintenance crew could receive notifications via text message the moment an alert sounded. “With IPS meters, the City of Oakland has streamlined a process for repairs. We can perform repairs very quickly so that meters can collect funds. This allows for a continuous revenue stream,” says Allen Law, Manager of the Electrical Maintenance Division with the City of Oakland.

The Results

After updating to IPS technology, the customer response transformed. While customer calls previously alerted parking administration of a non-functional meter, calls began to come in praising the City’s new technology. Customers appreciated the IPS meter’s enhanced payment options and user-friendly interface. Since installing IPS Group’s smart technology, credit card usage at the meter skyrocketed to 61% of all transactions. As a result, coin collections have decreased, alleviating strain on coin collection’s resources. Before IPS Group’s technology, the crew collected 90 bags of coins per day. Now coin collection has been cut in half.

Likewise, the accuracy of the IPS system has been a key feature since the upgrade. “I have supporting documentation to see why revenue dropped or increased,” says Lee. “We have done some great things for the citizens of Oakland as well as for our partners by providing a smart meter that gives them multiple options and consistently operates 97-100% of the time.”

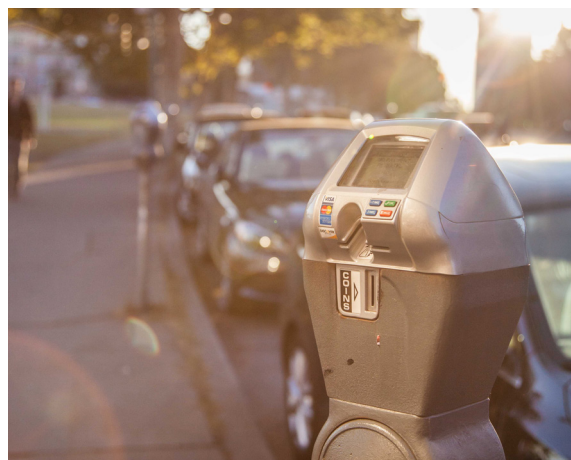
“Improving service—that is the added value of our partnership with IPS

Looking Ahead

The IPS smart meter provided the City of Oakland with relevant data to drive parking policy. Using data from the Data Management System, the City of Oakland hopes to implement a dynamic pricing structure to improve the customer experience and relieve congestion. “We can increase the rates in areas with an average of 85% occupancy or more. If we have areas with occupancy less than 25%, we can decrease the rate,” explains the city spokesperson from the Revenue Office of the City of Oakland. “This motivates people to walk a few extra blocks for cheaper parking. If you want to pay the higher rate for front row parking, those parking spots are more often available. Because of the DMS, we can look at each route and each meter to obtain business intelligence information to implement that plan.”

The City of Oakland also hopes to expand their IPS meter base by 40%, while updating

to new technology as it’s developed. With IPS Group leading new research and development, the City of Oakland feels confident that their parking system will continue to grow in size and scope. “The political and user standpoint is to improve the parking experience,” says the city spokesperson. “As we’ve gotten further involved in the changing needs of the parking world, we’ve found out that parking matters to a lot of people. Improving customer service, improving efficiency, keeping staff resources down in a very limited world—that is the added value of our partnership with IPS Group.”



Highlights:

- Meter uptime has improved to **97-100%**
- Credit card usage is **61%**
- Coin collection cut in half, freeing up resources
- Real-time alerts streamlined the meter repair process, **decreasing repair time** from one week to one day
- **Accurate data** provided critical business intelligence to drive parking policy





ABOUT IPS GROUP, INC.

IPS Group, Inc. is headquartered in San Diego, CA (USA), with offices in Canada, the Netherlands and Italy (www.ipsgroupinc.com). IPS is a design, engineering and manufacturing company focused on low power wireless telecommunications, payment processing systems and parking technologies and has been delivering world-class solutions to the telecommunications and parking industries for over 20 years. The company offers a complementary PROVEN product suite, comprised of multi-space pay stations, pay station upgrade kits, single-space meters, vehicle detection sensors, smart cash collection systems, web-based reporting and remote management software with advanced data analytics. IPS is delivering the Internet of Things (IoT) and Intelligent Parking Systems to transportation and parking operations all over the world.

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