

March 26, 2025

202500582

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager

Subject: **Parking Citation Amnesty Period**

REFERENCE DOCUMENT #202401714

At its session on September 4, 2024, the Healthy Neighborhoods Committee referred the following item for review and report:

WE MOVE for the City Administration to create a parking amnesty period from September 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024, for unpaid parking tickets incurred within the City of Cincinnati through July 31, 2024. The amount owed during this amnesty period will include only the original ticket cost and no additional penalties or fees.

BACKGROUND

Parking restrictions help ensure appropriate and safe use of the right-of-way curb areas such as no parking zones, bus stops, handicapped parking, loading zones, residential parking and metered parking for turnover. Parking fines are the way local governments enforce areas where parking is restricted. When parking occurs in violation of the posted signage, parking fines help encourage a change in behavior. By penalizing parking in unsafe zones that increase risk of accidents¹, they are a critical part of pedestrian and road user safety. The City of Cincinnati (“the City”) has a duty to enforce the collection of parking fines, while recognizing the complexities of circumstances and being reasonable throughout the collection process.

Parking Citation Collections Overview

The City upholds a fair and robust process for issuing and collecting parking fines and penalties. Citations paid within 14 days do not have a penalty; citations paid after 14 days but before 21 days are assessed a penalty; and citations paid after 21 days are assessed an additional penalty up to a maximum [*as outlined in the chart below*]. All citations are issued according to the Cincinnati Municipal Code section

¹ ‘Influence of typical drivers’ unsafe driving behaviors to traffic operation: An exploratory study in Kunming, China’ [2017]; *Advances in Mechanical Engineering*

515-11, and citations written in error are eligible for appeal through the City's Violation Bureau, managed by the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Chart: Parking Violation Fines & Corresponding Penalties

Parking Violation	Original fine	Penalty #1	Penalty #2
Meter	\$45	\$10 (\$55 total)	\$35 (\$90 total)
Non-Meter	\$65	\$10 (\$75 total)	\$25 (\$100 total)
Streetcar	\$100	\$0 (\$100 total)	\$100 (\$100 total)
Fire Hydrant	\$250	\$10 (\$260 total)	\$240 (\$500 total)
Handicap	\$250	\$10 (\$260 total)	\$240 (\$500 total)

Collection Process for Unpaid Citations

Vehicle Registration Holds

The City participates in the State of Ohio's Drivers with Excess Tickets Excluding Registration ("DETER") program. Drivers with three or more unpaid citations – or one or more handicap violation citations – are eligible for registration holds from the State of Ohio. This program was established following the state-level decriminalization of parking infractions and has proven to be effective in collecting past-due parking citations. It is also effective in that it prevents drivers with a record of consistent violations from registration of a vehicle in the State of Ohio. Research has indicated that drivers with a background of multiple parking violations are at an increased risk of elevated driving violations such as accidents down the line.² DETER is one of the main collection processes for Ohio cities.

3rd Party Collections / Managed Receivables (MR) program

Citations not paid after 90 days become eligible for submission to the City of Cincinnati's managed receivable (MR) program, currently administered by a third-party vendor. Once part of the MR program, the collection agency can use all resources available by law to facilitate the payment of unpaid citations on behalf of the City. This collections process supplements the DETER program for citations issued to Ohio registered owners.

Towing for Parking Citations

Cincinnati does not have a proactive towing program for *unpaid* citations. However, the City of Cincinnati *is* empowered to tow vehicles for unpaid citations in the circumstance a driver has *three or more verified unpaid parking*; this threshold has been in place for years.

² *Identification and screening of key traffic violations: based on the perspective of expressing driver's accident risk' [2023]; International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion*

If vehicles are found via routine patrol wherein the parking violation constitutes a critical safety concern, they are considered tow-eligible and may be pursued regardless of prior parking infractions incurred. Such parking infractions include but are not limited to *parking in no parking areas, blocking transit routes, and other similar infractions*. All towed vehicles must pay accrued parking citations, as well as tow and storage fees, to be released from the Cincinnati Impound Lot.

Parking Amnesty Program

Amnesty programs are not standard in nature and vary from one community to the next. Municipalities may undertake parking amnesty programs from time to time in specialized situations where the late fees resulting from non-payment of the parking citation within a specified period after issuance are waived in part or in whole in exchange for payment of the unpaid citation amount. If and when these programs are conducted, the aim is to increase awareness of unpaid citations from prior years, lower the bar of entry for curing the amount owed, and ultimately encourage full repayment.

The Administration does not regularly undertake amnesty programs except when requested by Cincinnati City Council.

NEXT STEPS

2025 Parking Amnesty Program

Upon the direction and approval of a motion from City Council, the Administration could proceed with a parking amnesty program in 2025.

cc: Markiea L. Carter, Director, Department of Community & Economic Development