

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT - EPARK'S MOVE TO A MOBILE-ONLY
PAYMENT SYSTEM

What We Heard Report

EPark's Move to a Mobile-only Payment System

Traffic Operations
Parks and Roads Services

September 10, 2025

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SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

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Project Overview

In December 2024, with a commitment to minimizing the 2025 tax increase, City Council approved several initiatives that provided opportunities for operational savings.

One of the initiatives was the removal of all physical EPark machines by July 31, 2025 and the switch to a mobile-only payment system. EPark machines required a technology update to allow for chip and pin payment methods and would need to be replaced in order to comply. This would result in \$2.8 million in capital costs, as well as ongoing additional operating expenses.

In April, following the announcement of the removal of EPark machines, City Council discussed the EPark transition and directed Administration to provide a report to Council detailing communications strategies and app updates to include education and transition efforts based on GBA+ approach, including but not limited to seniors.

Outreach was recommended to provide education and customer service opportunities both at identified facilities (libraries, recreation centres, senior centres) and also at the point-of-sale (i.e. EPark zones at high demand times).

Traffic Operations recruited internal City staff to lead outreach opportunities. Traffic Operations provided training and all the necessary tools.

How We Engaged

Between July and October 2025, an on-street outreach team was deployed to educate and engage with the public regarding the transition from EPark parking payment machines to a mobile-only payment system. The team attended a total of 129 outreach events, reaching over 2,471 people.

The team's primary goals were to provide information, offer hands-on assistance, and gather feedback from parkers about their experiences. Two types of outreach events were conducted:

- **Point-of-Sale outreach** at various festivals and events, and near high-occupancy EPark zones during peak times
- **Information sessions** for interested groups, including "Train the Trainer" sessions at City facilities and seniors centres

The following resources were developed and distributed during these outreach events:

- *Brochure*: Educational brochure outlining payment options and instructions on how to access them
- *Poster*: Outlining the payment options with brief instructions on how to use them
- *Presentation*: 15-minute presentation that reviews all the ways to pay for parking and answers key concerns (ex. Is my data safe on HotSpot?)
- *Video*: [How to set up a Hotspot account for EPark](#)
- *Video*: [Signage at EPark zones](#)
- *Video*: [HotSpot Parking app tutorial - provided by HotSpot](#)

Point-of-Sale Outreach

The EPark outreach team was deployed to various festivals, events, farmers' markets, and other popular venues such as:

- Old Strathcona Farmers' Market
- Rogers Place event nights
- Winspear and Citadel on show nights
- Old Strathcona theatre nights and festivals such as the Fringe
- Orange Hub Performance Theatre
- Churchill Square festivals

The team's primary objectives are to educate customers on available payment options, provide direct support, and gather valuable feedback to improve our services.

For the period between July and October 2025, 117 Point-of-Sale outreach sessions were conducted.

Who Was Engaged

Locations visited in BIA's	# of Outreach Sessions	Total Number of People Engaged
124 Street	2	44
Alberta Avenue	2	14
Downtown	94	1,584
North Edge	1	10
Old Strathcona	17	569
Stony Plain	1	10
Grand Total	117	2,231

The public was generally receptive to the outreach team, and many expressed appreciation for the in-person assistance they received.

- Overall Public Reaction:
 - Positive: 37%: These customers were familiar with the HotSpot platform
 - Neutral: 37%: This group needed assistance but was quick to adjust
 - Negative: 27%: These were resistant to the change

What We Asked

We asked EPark customers to share their experience when paying for EPark, including using the Hotspot app, QR code on signage, website or by phone.

What We Heard

During these conversations, four main themes emerged:

1. Current methods of payment are easy to use and convenient

A significant number of parkers have expressed strong approval for the new mobile-only payment application, consistently describing it as both easy to use and highly convenient. This positive feedback suggests a successful transition to the new system, indicating that the application effectively addresses user needs for simplicity and accessibility in parking payments. Data was collected through the EPark outreach sessions via a feedback form, where out of 2,471 interactions at over 129 outreach sessions, 73% had a positive or neutral response regarding using the HotSpot.

2. Access to technology is a barrier for some

We heard that the requirement to use a smartphone can create a barrier for a portion of the population.

- Some customers do not own smartphones, including some seniors, newcomers, tourists, and those with limited incomes.
- Reliable access is not guaranteed. Customers mentioned concerns about phones having dead batteries, malfunctioning, or not having a cellular data plan.

3. Some are concerned about the security of digital payments

For some, the transition from cash or credit cards to a mobile-only payment system caused concerns about the security of payment information.

- Hesitancy to share financial information: Some customers are not comfortable entering their credit card details into a mobile application due to concerns about data privacy and the potential for fraud.
- Skepticism about the new system: Some members expressed a preference for the simplicity of the old machines.

4. There is a learning curve for first-time users

We heard that using the HotSpot app for the first time is not always intuitive.

- Some customers reported difficulty finding the zone number on signs and understanding the sequence of steps required to start a parking session for the first time.
- Hands-on help makes a difference. Many people who were initially frustrated were able to successfully use the app after a step-by-step walkthrough from the team. For example, the team observed a woman about to leave, saying the app was too complicated. A team member spent a few minutes showing her how to enter the zone and her plate, and she was thrilled once she saw how it worked.

5. Customers want more ways to pay

We heard a consistent desire for more inclusive payment options that do not rely solely on a personal smartphone and the HotSpot app.

- A "pay-by-phone" option without the need for a pre-existing account, also known as an Interactive voice response (IVR) system, was the most popular suggestion.
- Other non-digital alternatives were also mentioned, such as the ability to pay at a nearby city office or designated retail location

Information Sessions

On July 24, 2025, we sent invitations to Edmonton Public Libraries, Senior Centres, 50+ Living facilities, and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) to register for EPark information sessions. These sessions, led by City staff, were designed to educate the public on EPark on all the ways to pay for parking. They also offered an opportunity for one-on-one assistance in a classroom setting and provided information for training purposes.

EPark information sessions were requested by:

- Edmonton Downtown Business Association
- Westend Seniors Activity Centre
- Mill Woods Seniors Association
- Amazing Elders - SAGE

Attachment 1

- North Edmonton Seniors Association
- Woodcroft Condos
- Forest Terrace Heights Community League
- Sage Seniors - Wellness Fair Booth
- Central Lions Seniors Association

As of October 17, 2025, we have successfully conducted twelve information sessions, reaching 240 people. We anticipate receiving additional requests.

This information can be used by those assisting customers with EPark payments.

[Info Session Contact List](#)

Who Was Engaged

Groups Engaged	Total Number of People Attending (to-date)
Senior Centres	230
BIAs	10

What We Asked

These sessions were designed to explain why the machines were removed, demonstrate how to use the mobile payment options, clarify accepted forms of payment, and address security concerns.

Attendees also had the opportunity to ask relevant questions during these sessions.

What We Heard

During the information sessions, we observed recurring themes that were consistent with the feedback we received from our point-of-sale engagement. In addition, we observed that the majority of the seniors had cell phones.

Attendees frequently asked about how to effectively use the new payment options and the security measures associated with these new methods. There were also questions regarding future improvements.

Public Inquiries

A high volume of inquiries was initially received after the announcement of EPark’s switch to a mobile-only payment system.

311 Inquiries

These were from residents who called 311.

Call Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Year Total
All Others - Troubleshooting	65	51	84	104	78	116	44	41	583
General Information	143	139	152	236	191	379	229	158	1627
EPark Changes Comments	2		29	82	23	27	20	21	204
Totals	210	190	265	422	292	522	293	220	2414

EPark Inquiries

These came by email to the epark@edmonton.ca

Attachment 1

Type of Inquiry to EPark	April	May	June	July	August
General information	39	29	17	13	2
Payment process questions: no mobile phone, no data, no credit card, data security concerns	166	38	15	12	9
Total	205	67	32	25	11

Summary

When Administration initially shared the news EPark was transitioning to a mobile-only payment system, an increased number of inquiries and complaints were received. However, there has been a downward trend in complaints, which suggests that users are beginning to adjust to the new system.

Our outreach efforts have provided valuable insights into the challenges users are facing, and we've also received positive feedback from many who have successfully adopted mobile-only payments.

We plan to continue our educational initiatives to further support this transition.

Next Steps

The feedback we've received will inform our continuing work to create a modern and efficient parking system that serves people of all driving ages and abilities. The following steps will be taken:

- Explore alternative payment options to improve accessibility. An interactive Voice Response (IVR) system will be implemented by the end of Q1 of 2026. This will allow customers to activate a parking session over the phone, without the need to have an account. This option will not require data or a smartphone

Attachment 1

- Review and improve the clarity of on-street signage and instructions.
- Develop further communications to address public concerns around security and data privacy.

CONTACT:

Please email epark@edmonton.ca, call 311 or email HotSpot Support at support@htsp.ca or by phone at 1-855-712-5888.