

## Episode 20: Details, Details, Details.

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Listener shout-out this episode goes to Elvis. Not only is he a dedicated listener, he regularly contributes content ideas for the show. His puzzlement with users if the Nextdoor app rivals my own. Thanks for your listenership, Elvis – we do appreciate it!

Once again, the city has made a change for change sake that makes absolutely no sense and has only been done halfway. What am I talking about? Well, it's time for another installment of "City Hall hates cars and drivers but loves issuing parking tickets and does everything it can to extort money by tripping you up." Actually, this may be the first installment...anyway...

All around San Francisco, there are city parking lots that are metered. At one time, each parking stall in these lots had an assigned parking meter and, each of those meters had a unique number that allowed you to pay for parking via a super convenient app called "Pay by Phone." Anytime you park at a meter that has a code, you can fire up the app and pay for your parking. So far, so good...

About a year ago, MTA decided to remove the individual meters from these lots, probably because they were always being vandalized or otherwise broken, and replace them with a central kiosk system whereby you enter your car's license plate number, add time, pay and then get this ticket that you place on your dash so the meter folks can see how long they have to wait around before they can issue you a ticket and then take a break. When the change was made, the super convenient Pay by Phone app was updated to recognize being at one of these lots and rather than pay using a meter number, you pay using your plate number. Still so far, so good.

Then all of a sudden, one day, something happened. A brilliant person or team within MTA decided, "Hey, let's change our parking lots from pay-by-plate to pay-by-stall number." I suspect the logic here is something like this: when you park and walk away from your car, it's much easier to memorize a 2-digit stall number than it is to memorize your plate number. I imagine lots of people input their plate number wrong and fought tickets and this was really cutting in to MTA-worker break times, so they changed. So, let's switch it up to pay by stall - change made, app updated and that should be the end of it, right?

Oh no...for you see, the city changed the rules and told the makers of the app to update it so when a user enters the kiosk number they are prompted to enter their stall number but what they failed to do is actually number the stalls so it's impossible to complete the transaction by app. The driver is now forced to go to the machine, print a ticket, put it on the dash and, consequently, make life much easier for the ticket-writer who, face it, now simply has to look at a printed ticket on a dash rather than go into their system that shows who paid by phone, thus speeding up the process whereby the ticket-writer issues more tickets, thus justifying his or her salary and, thus, making it quickly to the closest donut shop. That's a lot of thus-es.

But what's really at work here is the city making life more complicated for drivers in order to make life easier for its ticket-writers. The needs of the few, outweighing the needs to the many as it were. I mean, if you're going to go to a pay-by-stall model, paint numbers or post signs at each stall so I know what the damn number is. It's really so logical and so elementary, but in SF and especially at City Hall, we lack the competence to do anything right.

It's obvious the people who came up with these idea and then, reviewed and approved the project plans either take the bus everywhere, have drivers or, most likely, are exempted from having to pay for parking. I'll bet it's that.

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