

Where To Park?

I feel sorry for most festival organizers when it comes to event parking. It's a no win situation, but it is a problem that needs to be addressed head-on. And, the problem doesn't end on where to park festival attendees. It also involves dealing with local businesses and residents. These people must be considered otherwise your festival or event will be plagued with complaints from angry citizens, and angry citizens usually translate into uncooperative politicians and bureaucrats. Along with parking challenges comes traffic control during the event. That's why forming a parking and traffic control committee early in the planning process is very important. I know there are a lot of festival committees out there that feel that they have plenty of existing parking so why bother planning. I guess that's fine if you are only planning a small local festival, but if you are looking for out-of-town visitors, a having planned parking and traffic control is a must! Even if it's just to have directional signage! Careful thought early in the game will mean fewer problems during your event. It's not just the BIG picture that needs to be considered, it's the small details too. Last year Judi and I went to an event that included a large parade. The parade was to go straight down the main street and then turn right onto the street that led to the park and the final destination. However, someone had forgotten to put "No Parking" signs at the corner of the street. In the morning several cars had parked there. By the time the parade came it was too late to find the owners and asked them to move their vehicle. As a result the larger floats couldn't make the turn and were told to continue straight. Needless to say, this caused mass confusion. The whole parade became disrupted; parade participants didn't know where to go, parade watchers didn't know where to stand and the police had difficulties controlling crowd and traffic! This was a situation that could have been avoided if the committee had paid attention to the "little things".

Creating a simple but thorough checklist will go a long way towards having minimum problems come parade day. Here are a few ideas to consider adding to the list:

- Prepare a parking strategy with map that shows existing parking availability, no parking areas and potential off-site parking areas
- Determine if off-site parking required
- Determine if a shuttle service is needed and what the costs would be, plus if it could be paid for by a sponsor
- Determine how many "No Parking" signs are required and where they would be placed (make the signs large enough to be seen clearly)
- Determine how many "Directional Signs" are needed and where they would be placed (consider placing signs at all town entry points)
- Develop a strategy to work with local residents and businesses
- Develop a "parking patrol" strategy
- Work with town officials and local police to make sure "No Parking" areas are strictly enforced
- Plan for a number of handicapped parking spots
- Plan for convenient drop off areas
- Plan for parking attendants at off-site parking areas
- Make sure your local media advertises all road closures, parking areas and

parade route. These should also be included in any festival materials produced.