

# Parking situation may improve with coming term

By **Melanie Mensch**

Staff writer

Ah, the woes of campus parking. Feeding the meter with any spare change in the depths of your book bag. Hunting parking lots for an open space, permit hanging diligently on the rear view mirror, but stuck in driving in circles for a spot to open any... minute... now.

Betting against the odds the parking cop wouldn't be around for another hour. Losing that bet when you return to see that pink envelope on the windshield.

The gripes and grumbles of students driving to campus may increase this fall as parking prices and citation fees increase as well. But students must give a little to get a little, according to Tad McDowell, UNL Director of Parking and Transit Services.

"Parking is a highly criticized business," he said. "But I'm optimistic about the changes we've made and the future of parking on campus this academic year."

In order to increase revenue sources, to keep permit prices from skyrocketing and to pay for new parking facilities, parking prices and citation fees will be slightly higher than last year.

Beginning July 1, the meter rates increased from 25 cents an hour to 50 cents an hour. Campus meters still take nickels, unlike city meters, which also recently increased to 50 cents an hour, will take the new dollar coin.

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**Tad McDowell**

director, UNL Parking and Transit Services

Also, higher citation fees will deter students from parking in ticketable situations.

For example, expired meter tickets, formerly \$5, will now be \$10. Other tickets, such as invalid permit tickets, will cost \$30 instead of \$25. Previously \$100 tickets for counterfeited or altered permits will now cost students twice as much.

Students can also expect changes in parking areas this fall.

The parking lot on the northwest corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and Vine streets will close because of construction for the new Chemical Engineering Building beginning

July 17.

However, students and faculty displaced by the construction can park in lot at the southwest corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and Vine streets, which will be converted from an Area 3 parking area to Area 10. During the coming academic year, Area 3 permit holders can park in the student parking area south of the Beadle Center on 19<sup>th</sup> Street.

Construction is underway for a new 1,700 stall parking garage on 17<sup>th</sup> and R streets, which is planned to be completed by October 2001. Although nothing is definite yet, McDowell said permit holders would be able to park here at no additional cost, and visitors could purchase a daily pass to park in the garage.

McDowell also said there's plans to remove the railroad tracks directly north of the utility plant in order to expand parking lots across the street of Harper, Schramm and Smith dorms.

"I know the situation seems bad to students and it will be somewhat difficult," McDowell said, "but once this garage is up, we want other parking garages to follow."

Another change students need to note is that bus passes will no longer be automatically given with permits.

McDowell said in order to conduct a survey about the Star Tran usage by students, the bus passes will still be free and available to students at the Parking and Transit Services Office, found in

the Stadium Drive Parking Garage.

Zoe Olson, public relations coordinator for the college of business, said the increased prices could be cheaper in the long run.

"Parking is a tight situation, so it makes sense to raise prices a little. My job sometimes requires me to leave during business hours, and finding parking when I come back is a real problem," she said. "I'd like to use the bus more

often, but I need my car at work."

Mark Rathjen, a 20-year-old pre-med student, said he had mixed feelings about the new changes.

"It kinda sucks that the meters went up," he said. "But I understand that they need money for the new garages. So I think it's a good idea."

"I guess you have to pay for convenience. Finding a space at all is impossible, and you're lucky if it's close. Any little bit helps."

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