

# Nassau County's Traffic and Parking Violations Agency: Where Do We Go From Here?



A Report by the Republican Caucus of the  
Nassau County Legislature  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

On December 11, 2000, Nassau County Legislator and Minority Leader Peter J. Schmitt (R-Massapequa) requested the Legislative Budget Review Office (Office) to undertake an analysis of the Nassau County Traffic and Parking Violations Agency (TPVA).

In his memorandum to the Office, Legislator Schmitt requested the following:

- ◆ An analysis regarding the impact of adding additional staff to TPVA as to whether it would increase collections to the point where revenues would exceed costs. In addition, any comparisons with respect to the number of employees of similar operations in municipalities the size of Nassau County.
- ◆ Data from the City of New York with respect to the volume of tickets and revenues collected via the City's web site ([www.ci.nyc.ny.us](http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us)) which permits persons to pay for their parking tickets using either a debit card or credit card.
- ◆ TPVA currently only allows individuals to pay for their tickets either by cash or certified check. Many times residents who bring a personal check with them find out that they need to locate a ATM machine to withdraw cash to pay for their tickets. Determining what revenues the County could earn by placing an ATM machine in the TPVA building allowing for greater convenience for residents to pay their tickets. In addition, what costs would be associated with allowing residents to pay via a credit or debit card for their tickets.

## **FINDINGS**

In response to Legislator Schmitt's request, the Office made the following findings regarding TPVA:

- ◆ It has been determined that by increasing the staff by 5 positions at an annual cost of \$200,000 (salary and fringe) and the addition of a third courtroom, TPVA would increase revenue collections by \$1.9 million on an annual basis. The backlog of 35,000 tickets could be drastically reduced and even eliminated.
- ◆ Staff level requests could be lowered if an automated phone system was installed eliminating the need for manned phones and enabling personnel to tackle the backlog problem.
- ◆ New York City collects on average \$900,000 a month via payments by phone and \$450,000 per month over the Internet.
- ◆ TPVA would require State legislation to be permitted to receive payments via credit card or debit card for moving violations.
- ◆ TPVA is permitted under State law to receive payments for parking tickets via credit card or debit card with no need for State legislation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Hire additional employees. The number of employees to be determined after the Office undertakes a field audit of TPVA to ensure that work processes are in place so that the additional employees are utilized in a fashion to generate the projected revenues.
2. Move forward with establishment of third courtroom.
3. Begin steps to secure a vendor to provide the appropriate guidance, hardware and software to upgrade the County's web site to permit for the payment of parking tickets via the County's web site.
4. Begin steps to secure a vendor to provide the appropriate guidance, hardware and software to upgrade TPVA's phone system to allow for the payment of parking tickets over the telephone.
5. Explore the establishment of Neighborhood Payment Centers to allow residents convenience in paying for their tickets.
6. Change the address on the back of County issued parking tickets so that the monies are mailed directly to the lockbox insuring the quick deposit of checks sent to pay for parking tickets. Many checks for parking tickets are still sent to TPVA directly causing a backlog of tickets and uncashed checks.

7. Issue an RFP for the installation of an ATM machine in the TPVA offices so as to generate additional income for the County while at the same time offering residents the convenience of obtaining funds to pay their fines without having to leave the TPVA premises.
8. Issue an RFP for the solicitation of bids from the banking and financial service industries for the acceptance of credit and debit cards as a means to make payments to TPVA.
9. Seek state legislation permitting TPVA to be able to receive payment by credit card and debit card for moving violations.
10. Explore privatization opportunities at TPVA.
11. Undertake legal research with respect to converting violations of State law into County ordinances, thereby increasing the number of fines that the revenue received remains with the County and not forwarded to the State.
12. Examine the establishment of a program to permit those persons with no or limited ability to pay for parking tickets to undertake volunteer duties on County property e.g. litter removal for a set period of time.

## **CONCLUSION**

By implementing these recommendations TPVA could increase the revenues it achieves by more than \$2 million annually. TPVA has provided a steady stream of revenue to the County of Nassau. In fact, in the past five years TPVA has contributed \$24,724,194 in revenues to Nassau County's budget.

<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
\$2,924,977	\$4,791,826	\$5,090,440	\$5,129,787	\$6,787,164

By enhancing staff allocations, improving technology and customer service TPVA has the potential of increasing its annual income by more than 30% over 1999 levels. Furthermore, State legislation should be sought to allow residents to pay for their moving violations via credit and or debit card as a convenient method of payment. All of the efforts outlined should be explored and implemented immediately where possible.

These and all other alternative avenues of increased and improved revenue collection must and should be explored as an alternative to a property tax increase.