

MEMO: COVID-19 Emergency Ticketing, Boot, and Impound Recommendations

To: Mayor Lori Lightfoot
From: Eric Halvorson, Chicago Jobs Council & the Transit Table Coalition
Date: March 17, 2020
Re: We must prioritize vehicle access & financial stability during pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the critical need for social distancing, the increased public health risk of public transit use, the closure of many public offices (including the Secretary of State), the anticipated loss of employment and income due to mass business closure, and the resulting financial devastation for the most vulnerable people, we recommend the City take the following emergency measures for a minimum of 6 months:

- **Issue a moratorium on most parking, city sticker, and vehicle compliance ticketing.**

Unless a vehicle is causing an immediate public safety risk such as blocking a fire lane, all vehicle ticketing and collections enforcement must be paused. City workers and Chicago families all have more important priorities during the crisis. City workers should be home as much as possible. Police should not prioritize relatively trivial administrative violations. No one should fear major financial penalties if they haven't updated their city sticker during a global health crisis, or if they're bringing food to an immunocompromised relative and park in the wrong neighborhood zone.

- **Do not boot or impound vehicles to collect debts. All boots should be removed. Vehicles impounded for failure to pay should be released, and storage fees should be suspended.**

We must prioritize access to vehicles, which allow social distance while traveling. In any other situation, public transportation provides numerous benefits to society. With the federal government recommending no gatherings of 10 or more people, we must not force anyone to ride a bus when they might otherwise drive their perfectly functioning vehicle. It is far more important for individuals to protect themselves and our communities from unnecessary social contact.

Additionally, thousands of vehicles were impounded before the pandemic began. For the same reasons, Chicago should release any vehicles towed for failure to pay or other non-safety issues back to their owners with no money down. Storage fees for all vehicles should also be suspended.

We cannot allow ongoing booting and towing to reduce car access and community wellbeing at this time.

- **Cease enforcement of driving while suspended violations if the license suspension was for a failure to pay or other non-moving violation.**

It is critical to allow anyone who could drive instead of taking public transportation to do so. At this time, local governments should not penalize people for keeping a safe and appropriate distance from others while traveling.

- **Declare emergency grace periods on vehicle compliance, contesting tickets, and payments without late fees.**

Compliance with vehicle ticketing and collections cannot be a priority right now for families or for City workers. The City should offer extensions and forgiveness for individuals who are delayed paying tickets or payment plans, complying with vehicle requirements, or contesting tickets. No doubling of ticket fines should take place at this time, nor should interest or collections penalties be added to base fines. The road back to normal will be long and slow, and the City must treat individuals with extra care and flexibility even after official closures and slow-downs end.

Thank you for your diligent leadership. We look forward to continued collaboration to protect the health and wellbeing of everyone in Chicago.

Yours,
The Transit Table Coalition

ACLU of Illinois
Chicago Appleseed & Chicago Council of Lawyers
Chicago Jobs Council
Chicago Urban League
Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
Economic Security Illinois
Heartland Alliance
OAI
POWER-PAC Illinois
Revolution Workshop
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
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