

Cheater meter readers

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The city says you have a right to use unexpired muni-meter time at another spot – but try telling that to meter maids and judges.

The city Department of Transportation says drivers can purchase “time” from a muni-meter on a street anywhere in the city, keep the receipt, and then continue to use any remaining amount on another street.

So, for example, a driver should be able to purchase three hours at a Bay Parkway muni-meter in Brooklyn, stay a half-hour there and then drive to another part of the borough – or even Manhattan, where meters are higher – and use up the remaining time at another muni-meter, according to the DOT.

“If motorists do have some time remaining on the muni-meter receipts, they can use them elsewhere,” a DOT official confirmed.

But Assemblyman William Colton (D-Brooklyn) and Glen Bolofsky, of the ticket-fighting group parkingticket.com, fume that the public is being ripped off in parking fines because traffic agents, city Finance Department judges and others are not following that policy.

Drivers are routinely slapped with tickets if they move to a different street and try to use remaining time – and if they try to fight the summonses in court, the Finance Department’s administrative law judges typically side with the agents, the two advocates say.

Operators for the city’s 311 help line have even been contradicting the DOT and telling callers that they can’t use their remaining time elsewhere, Colton said.

“This is a shell game for the city to make money that borders on consumer fraud,” said Colton, who is considering introducing legislation to resolve the matter.

“The city has no rules to address these cases and is cashing in big time by purposely being vague – whether it’s motorists paying extra fees to avoid tickets or being given tickets when they shouldn’t be.”

The Department of Finance said that while its judges are aware of the “DOT policy,” each judge decides summonses on a “case-by-case” basis because some streets have different parking rules than others.

But Bolofsky showed The Post a September 2009 memo sent to him by Vincent Susi, the Department of Transportation’s director of special operations, that seems to clearly state that the time is transferable in all cases.

Susi said, “There are no [city] regulations that mandate a vehicle must display a receipt specifically from the location or muni-meter it was purchased from.”

Nor does it state anywhere on the receipt or on muni-meters themselves that the parking privilege is or is not transferable to another spot.

“Therefore, it is possible to purchase [parking] time . . . at one location and use [it somewhere else if] there is still time left on the receipt,” Susi said.

But Bolofsky said his clients have still lost hundreds of these cases.

“You would think showing [Susi’s letter] would be enough, but the judges are telling us the DOT policy carries no weight with the Department of Finance,” he said.

Muni-meter fees usually run \$1 an hour in much of the city except Manhattan, where fees run \$3 below 96th Street. Parts of Park Slope, Brooklyn, charge \$1.50.

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