



People Moving, THE HIDDEN SUCCESS FACTOR For Events

By Jeffrey Shapiro

At every event, parking and shuttle systems are the first and last impression for the attendees. Most events forget this and, with a “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality, gloss over this aspect of their event and settle for implementing whatever was done in the past. Meanwhile, a golden opportunity to create a lasting memory with your event attendees is lost.

A simple way to start creating a parking, traffic, and shuttle plan is to follow the chronological path of an attendee from the time they approach your event until they leave. The parts of the plan are: Major Arteries, Secondary Arteries, Parking Areas, Shuttle System, and finally an Exit Plan.

Major Arteries

Signage should be posted a few days prior to the event along the roads most traveled. Also, on these major arteries, Variable Message Signs (VMS) help attract the attention of attendees while also having the ability to change the information given, such as road closures or the use of alternate lots, at a moment’s notice with just a phone call.

Secondary Roads

Secondary roads lead the attendees into the parking area. Again, VMS are helpful here to change traffic flow when lots are filled. This is also where supporting signs should be clearly posted and visible to all attendees. A few examples are signs that include information regarding parking fees, event hours, and prohibited items. A police presence should begin here. A detailed plan will designate where the police posts will be located, as well as a set of objectives for each post.

Parking Area

Many events do not have the luxury of paved lots with painted spaces. Very often, organized lots must be created from empty fields. To maximize the area that is available, well marked parking areas need to be created. This can be accomplished by using several different techniques, includ-

ing rope and stake, field paint, hay bales, or traffic cones. By marking off every 60 feet, cars can be directed to form double rows, leaving aisles of about 25 feet in width. The general rule is that approximately 140 cars will fit on an acre. Whatever techniques you choose, be sure to train the parking staff on the plan and how to use the parking markers you have put in place.

When the vehicles enter into the parking area, make sure that it is well marked with signs or traffic personnel to direct them where to go. This is usually the choke point at most events. If you decide to have either ticket or money collection at the parking area entrance, it is imperative that there are enough personnel to fill all of the collection lanes. In order to maintain a constant flow, you will also need personnel to assist vehicles with merging lanes as they exit the collections area.

Parking lot location signs, throughout the parking area, are very important. This allows the attendee to locate their vehicle at the end of the event. This will also allow attendees with reserved or handicap passes to know where they are supposed to park.

Shuttle System

When using shuttles, you must identify what type of shuttle service you are offering:

1. Convenience
2. Full Service
3. ADA

Convenience shuttle systems are used to handle the elderly and families with small children. A few shuttles are put into a loop to get this demographic to the front of the lot or to the event. This assumes that all others will walk.

Full service shuttle systems use a fleet of shuttles to transport the attendees to the event. This system can get very costly and provides crowd control in large events.

ADA shuttle systems allow spectators with special needs to get to and from the event. Ensure the lift gate is working on the shuttle and the driver is trained in operating and meeting the needs of the spectators.

Exit

Unfortunately, most events ignore the exit of the event and have all the parking staff leave somewhere in the middle of the event. To ensure a safe and orderly exit, a plan needs to be in place. Using multiple exits (think of a fan) when available and directing an even amount of vehicles out each exit works well. Having clearly visible exit signs directing attendees to major arteries is your best chance to make sure their last experience at the event is positive.

Summary

With an involved and trained team, your parking, traffic, and shuttle plan can be developed and implemented effectively. It will allow you to focus your attention on other aspects of the event. Most importantly, a proper parking and shuttle plan can leave such a positive impression, that attendees will look forward to coming back next year and promote your event to their friends and family!

Jeffrey Shapiro is the President of Solutions Event Services. Solutions Event Services is a traffic, parking and transportation company that works closely and proactively with festivals and events to ensure that their clients, guests and spectators arrive and depart from events and venues as easily, rapidly and safely as possible. Founded in 1999, Solutions Event Services has grown from a handful of staff, servicing New York area events, to a leading special events parking and transportation consulting company with the ability of servicing the entire country.

For more information on Solutions Event Services, they can be reached at: 866-444-PARK or www.solutionsevents.com. Jeffrey Shapiro can be reached at: Jeffrey@solutionsevents.com