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## **New York, True to Mayor's Promise, Slashes City Parking Permits**

By WILLIAM NEUMAN

The Police Department gave up about 20,000 of the city's coveted parking placards. The Fire Department lost more than 2,000. The mayor's office gave up 163.

Those were some of the most striking numbers in a long-awaited inventory that the city released on Wednesday, showing that it has reduced the number of free-parking placards distributed to law enforcement agencies and other city departments by nearly a third. The permits give city employees free street parking privileges at their workplace or around the city while on official business.

The cuts are likely to please drivers who see the placards as an easily abused perk that makes the already daunting task of finding a parking spot that much harder, especially in neighborhoods like Lower Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn, where city offices are concentrated.

The Police Department began eliminating placards in March, and most other city agencies are now following suit. When officials finish handing out new placards in the coming days, they will have cut the number of permits to 54,891 from 80,770, according to Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler. The reduction exceeds a pledge by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg to trim the number of placards by at least 20 percent.

In September, an additional 63,390 placards used by the Education Department, primarily to allow teachers to park on streets around schools, will also be subject to similar cuts, Mr. Skyler said.

At that point, Mr. Skyler said, a total of 144,160 placards identified in the city inventory will have been reduced to about 105,000, although the number could go even lower.

"We did an analysis of every agency, looked at how many they have, looked at how many they needed, found that these were cases where it's part of their operation and that they were justified," Mr. Skyler said.

“Our job has been, since we want to reduce congestion in the city, we want to increase the availability of parking, reduce congestion in areas like Lower Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn, to take the number and to reduce it by a significant amount, which we’ve done.”

The largest cuts were made in the number of permits issued to police officers and other Police Department employees that allow them to park their personal cars on the streets around precinct houses and other police buildings. Those cuts, the first to go into effect, occurred in March.

There had been 49,876 of those permits, but the number was slashed to 32,419. The department employs about 37,000 officers and 16,500 civilian workers, and it was not clear on Wednesday who had been forced to give up their permits.

Mr. Skyler was unable to say how the cuts were apportioned among civilian employees and uniformed officers.

“We’re not banning employees from driving to work,” he said. “We are trying to increase parking opportunities for residents and people frequenting businesses and also decrease the amount of abuse.”

In the past, many city agencies have issued their own parking permits, but Mr. Skyler said that from now on, only the Police Department and the Transportation Department will issue placards. That will help traffic enforcement agents spot fraudulent placards and improve enforcement, by eliminating what had been a confusing array of permits.

As part of the inventory, Mr. Skyler said, the Transportation Department conducted an exhaustive review of placards held by city agencies other than the Police Department to ensure that every new placard that was issued was needed.

City officials said that, for instance, some of the 80 placards (down from 99) issued to the City University of New York were used by security workers who patrol campuses and administrators who attend meetings in the city. Some correction officers, they said, used placards while investigating claims of abuse of sick leave.

Some agencies fared better than others. The Civilian Complaint Review Board, which handles accusations of improper conduct by police officers, was allowed to keep all 10 of its permits. And the New York City Housing Development Corporation did not lose any of its 6.

But the Correction Department’s placards were cut nearly in half, to 583 from 1,099. Most of those cuts were for worksite parking permits. And the Department of Juvenile Justice, which had 407 placards, now has just 84, but Mr. Skyler said that many of those permits had been used for off-street parking at sites used by the agency, so the reduction did not appear to have a significant impact on on-street parking.

Paul Steely White, the executive director of Transportation Alternatives, an advocacy group that has campaigned for deep cuts in the placards, called the reduction “a good first step.”

But he said that the Police Department must act aggressively to make sure the new placards are used properly.

“We have to bear in mind that this cut, while significant, is only going to be as good as the enforcement that backs it up,” he said. “The final analysis will be weeks and months from now, when we see how actively these plaques are enforced.”

Mr. Skyler said that residents should call the city’s 311 telephone line to report improper use of the placards. Each new placard will have a number, and in many cases will show the license plate number of the car it can be used in.