

So maybe all USDOT Secretary Mary Peters really sought was more spaces for her agency and other federal folks to park on our city streets?

Seriously, for the Federal government to inject itself in New York City and State transportation and transit financing policies without its own house in clean order smacks of hypocrisy at its worst. How unclogged might our streets (and sidewalks at that!) be if federal cars respected the same rules New Yorkers must follow?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/nyregion/24scofflaw.html?ref=nyregioni>

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Report Finds Government Top Violator on Parking

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WASHINGTON — Want to park free on the streets of Manhattan, without fear of having to pay tickets? Go to work for the federal government.

In fact, according to the House Transportation Committee, if you have a federal car, you do not have to confine yourself to the streets; you can even park on the sidewalks.

“Essentially, all of Lower Manhattan is a free parking lot for government vehicles,” said a report by the committee staff, which also found that the city’s Police Department and various city and state agencies are among the top parking-ticket scofflaws.

The habitual violators used to be [United Nations](#) consulates, whose drivers claimed diplomatic immunity. New York mostly solved that problem in 2002, when Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) persuaded the State Department to yank the plates of the worst violators. Consulates still owe about \$18 million, according to Owen Stone, a spokesman for the city’s Department of Finance, but now they usually pay their tickets, or park legally, he said.

But the Department of State, once so helpful, itself ran up \$28,333 in tickets in 2007, according to data through Dec. 9, the committee says in the report, to be released on Friday. In that period, federal cars collected at least 669 tickets that went unpaid, according to the report, which lists the [F.B.I.](#) as the worst of the federal agencies, with \$34,908.

Mr. Stone said the city had worked hard to collect money for tickets issued to federal cars, and by the beginning of this month had cut the total down to about \$70,000, from \$578,000 at the end of last year.

The Marine Corps, whose recruiters regularly park on the sidewalk at the recruiting booth in Times Square, had nearly \$20,000 in unpaid tickets, the committee staff found. But the Police Department was the champion, running up \$193,000 in unpaid tickets, they found.

Under federal rules, tickets accumulated on federal government cars must be paid by the driver and not by the agency that owns the cars. But the agencies say they cannot always track down who the driver was.

Companies that own fleets of cars also seek payment from drivers; Hertz and Avis, for example, warn that renters are liable. Those companies generally must pay up for fear that the plates will be canceled or renewal denied. But the federal government makes its own plates.

The committee also found that in Washington, illegal parking was practiced by even more federal agencies, some of which would not seem to have a lot of urgent business. As of last month, the [Smithsonian Institution](#) had 15 outstanding tickets in the District of Columbia. The Postal Service had seven.

In Washington, many streets have meters allowing parking in the middle of the day, in the evening and at night, but not during the morning and afternoon rushes. But most of the violations were during rush periods. Few were for simple expired meters.

Even the [General Services Administration](#), the government agency that handles day-to-day bureaucratic details like leasing office space for other agencies and making sure supply cabinets have enough paper clips, could not keep track of who was driving when one of its cars got a ticket, the report said, raising questions about how the agency determined that the cars were being used appropriately.

The committee chairman, Representative [James L. Oberstar](#) of Minnesota, said in a statement that illegal parking blocks traffic and creates unsafe conditions.

A spokeswoman for the F.B.I., Monica McLean, said that the agency follows government policy and makes drivers pay. She added, "Parking in New York City is a huge challenge. Parking facilities do not exist for the majority of F.B.I. vehicles assigned to the New York division."

A spokeswoman for the State Department had no comment.

Mr. Stone said that while foreign consulates are no longer incurring big numbers of tickets, they are still big debtors; Egypt is No. 1 with \$1.9 million, and Kuwait second with \$1.3 million.

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