

D.C. set to break parking fines record

Issued 1.6 million tickets in 2011

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By [Meredith Somers](#) - The Washington Times

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The District raked in \$31 million in parking ticket fines from October to January, putting the city on track to break its previous annual revenue collection records for at least the second fiscal year in a row, according to a report issued Monday by AAA Mid-Atlantic.

If the city continues to collect ticket fines at the rate it has for the first four months of fiscal 2012, AAA spokesman John Townsend said, D.C. coffers could end up with at least \$93 million by autumn.

"It's highway robbery," he said. "It used to be brigands and highway men were the ones doing it. This is highway robbery being done by a city."

The projection came as AAA released final revenue figures from parking tickets collected by the city for fiscal 2011: \$92.6 million for 1.6 million issued tickets.

The city's fiscal calendar runs Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.

Lucinda M. Babers, director of the D.C. Department of Motor Vehicles, said Monday the revenue figures are not exact because of outstanding tickets being paid off through the city's ticket amnesty program, which has ended but still has motorists making installments through July.

Ms. Babers said the program has already collected about \$5 million.

According to numbers from AAA, which were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, parking enforcers issued tickets at a rate of six a minute in fiscal 2011.

One reason for the high number of parking tickets issued, Mr. Townsend said, is the roughly 17,000 metered parking spaces expected to support thousands of daily commuters to the District, and millions of visitors annually who don't know any better.

This "finite resource" might be a way to snag disobeying drivers, but it's also a deterrent, Mr. Townsend said, because people will think twice about going to the District for a night out knowing they face a parking fine or a \$15-to-\$20 fee to park underground.

"People come here because they love the country, and they leave with a bad impression — not of the nation, but of the knuckleheads that run this city."

Seth Price, an attorney and founding partner with Price Benowitz LLP, said his firm employs an attorney for DMV cases. But motorists rarely hire a lawyer to contest a parking ticket because it usually costs more to pay the legal fees than it does the ticket.

Of the 1.1 million parking tickets issued from Oct. 1, 2010, through May 2011, about 89,000 were adjudicated, and the city dismissed a little less than half of those tickets.

The "relatively modest" price of tickets does pose an interesting situation, Mr. Price said, especially when considering the steep parking rates in downtown area garages.

A \$25 ticket is sometimes only a few dollars more than what it would cost to park in a garage. At the same time, Mr. Price said, while there's the option of fighting the ticket, sometimes "it's not worth the time and effort to fight."

Source: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/mar/5/dc-set-to-break-parking-fines-record/>
