

# Collier County to install real-time beach parking app to help beachgoers find spaces

Collier County beachgoers may soon be able to get real-time beach parking updates on smartphones and websites.

County commissioners hired T-2 Parking Solutions to provide an automatic counting system to keep track of parking spaces filled at the Vanderbilt Beach garage and in Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park.

The system should be up and running by the end of April, said Steve Carnell, administrator of public services.

While county officials couldn't say which app beachgoers will need to download on their phones, the new technology will be able to show how many parking spaces are available at Vanderbilt and Delnor-Wiggins and where exactly to find the empty spaces.

"The idea is you can check your phone or the website at 8:30 in the morning and see that, oh there's a few spaces left if you hurry over," Carnell said.

The app could help cut down on the number of beachgoers that circle the beaches hoping to find a spot.

The real-time information will also help booth operators shuffle in cars more quickly during season, when lots in the state park and at the Vanderbilt garage hit capacity.

Counting is done by hand now, and once the lots are filled, attendants can sometimes leave the "full" signs up even as a few cars have trickled out. The new technology will make it easier for attendants to let in a vehicle as soon as a spot is free, Carnell said.

It will cost \$85,000 to install the systems at the two beaches. The money will come from the county's tourist tax on hotel stays and short-term rentals.

County officials said they hope to eventually expand the system to other county beaches, as commissioners and parks managers continue to look for ways to make their most important natural amenity and tourism attraction more accessible to a growing population.

For example, commissioners have ordered a cost and feasibility study of building a three-story parking garage at Clam Pass Park.

The county started a free beach trolley this season that runs between Vanderbilt and Delnor-Wiggins beaches.