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PHS Data Solutions

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The argument for Automated Parking Systems is stacking up!

Jason Petsch, Director of Skyline Parking discusses the urgent need for APS in our urban environments.

For those employed within the public sector whose job it is to consider urban planning, it is likely that parking will be pretty high up on your list of priorities.

Whether looking at smarter solutions to parking in residential or urban areas, hospitals, train stations or leisure facilities, the issue of too many cars and not enough space is a constant challenge.

It's a challenge that is not going to get any easier as the population, particularly in urban areas, continues to swell. Indeed, it is predicted that the population living in UK cities is set to continue to rise to over 92% by 2030. This increase in people will naturally bring an increase in the number of cars and traffic.

With such great demands placed upon relatively limited space, it is unsurprising that urban developers and planners are continually exploring new and innovative ways in which to maximise every last square inch of space. The necessity to do more with less with regards urban regeneration is vital to achieving sustainable communities.

Many countries across the world, including the UK, are now beginning to embrace Automated Parking Systems (APS) as they offer a robust solution to these modern day challenges.

With much less land space required compared with traditional car parks, Automated Parking Systems offer a host of environmental benefits as they require 50% less build volume, yet offer more than twice the capacity for cars. This is compounded by the additional environmental benefits including a reduction of up to 85% in CO2 emissions by eliminating the need for cars to drive and idle while searching for parking spaces.

Perhaps an even more powerful driver is profitability, as an APS offers developers the ability to offer more parking, in less space. Construction of an APS typically requires less building materials, much less excavation volume, a shorter construction time and reduced construction disruption.

APS offers huge flexibility with the potential to be amalgamated into or under existing or new schemes. They can be designed as an integral (even internal) part of the overall structural design, which also eradicates the unsightly traditional multi-storey and open plan car parks – you could even argue that innovative robotic parking developments enhance the aesthetics a project.

APS also offers ancillary benefits such as security, which is an attractive offering for drivers in urban environments. Home Office statistics show that around 20% of all car crimes take place in car parks. With APS offering the equivalent of an automated valet parking experience, there is an added assurance that you and your car remain in safe hands.

Indeed, a whole range of factors make a compelling case for alternative parking schemes such as APS, and those responsible for urban planning and design should ignore it at their peril.

There's no denying that capital outlay costs can be high when compared to other more traditional parking solutions. However, when you consider that less space taken on car parking allows for greater returns elsewhere, for example, more residential units – then the higher initial costs can be easily offset or even used to drive a higher overall return.

It is also important to consider the technology behind APS, as there are a range of approaches and differing design philosophies currently available. Designs for APS do differ, but most consist of a combination of automated ramps, slabs, lifts and shelves, using a computerised system that parks and delivers a car like a high-tech vending machine.

Yet beyond this approach is an alternative option, pioneered by Skyline, which offers real cause for excitement that APS is more than fit to help take on the challenges of today's urban environments.

Skyline takes a very different approach to the technology behind its APS and uses a conveyor belt system, which has already proved hugely successful across Europe and is now being specified in a number of high profile UK projects. Combining world-class engineering with cutting edge software Skyline's conveyor belt APS is market proven, available in the UK and actually works.

While other transport systems might use fancy robotics and be more intriguing and fun to watch, the conveyor belt system offers unsurpassed reliability, durability and performance. To steal from Apple, this is APS "that just works".

APS isn't there yet in terms of mainstream acceptance, but as several projects in the UK have been greenlit with an APS at their heart, I think we've reached a tipping point. It's a technology that's time has come and has an important part to play in the regeneration of our urban environments.

For more information on Automated Parking Systems contact Jason Petsch at Skyline Parking on **0203 282 7889** email **jason@skylineparking.co.uk** or visit **www.skyline-parking.co.uk**