

Post-concert traffic halts car thief in Reading garage

An opportunistic 18-year-old briefly commandeered a car that was idling on the fourth floor of the a downtown Reading garage but the owner stayed with the slow-moving car as the suspect tried to drive off, police said.



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With the help of a Reading Parking Authority employee, city police arrested a man they said briefly commandeered an idling car from a downtown public garage while its owner stood next to the vehicle amid post-concert traffic.

Gerson A. Berrera-Vega of the 200 block of Miller Street was committed to Berks County Prison in lieu of \$5,000 bail to await a hearing following arraignment Saturday before District Judge Steve M. Chief in Reading Central Court.

Police said the incident occurred on the fourth level of Reading Parking Authority's garage in the 600 block of Franklin Street just before 10 p.m. Friday. Nearby Santander Arena was hosting the K-pop group Dreamcatcher on Friday night, so a substantial number of vehicles were exiting the garage around that time, they said.

According to police:

The victim was standing outside his Honda Fit, which was idling with the driver's door open, apparently while he waited for bumper-to-bumper traffic to ease.

A man later identified as Berrera-Vega entered the car, locked the doors and proceeded to drive away. The owner ran up to the car and tried without success to open the door as it was moving. The victim remained with the car as it was driven slowly by Berrera-Vega.

Eventually the the car stopped completely behind a slog of vehicles,

Parking authority employees who were directing traffic nearby responded. The first employee to arrive on the fourth floor saw Berrera-Vega step out of the car and begin yelling at people in Spanish. The victim used that opportunity to dash into the car and locked the door.

Berrera-Vega charged at the parking authority worker, who in turn got into a low defensive posture and took the charging man down, laying on top of him until an officer arrived.

He faces charges of robbery of a motor vehicle, theft by unlawful taking of movable property and disorderly conduct.