

# MEMO

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
*Jonathan Sage-Martinson, Director*



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**  
*Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor*

*25 West Fourth Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

*Telephone: 651-266-6655  
Facsimile: 651-266-6559*

TO: Transportation Committee; Planning Commission

FROM: Hilary Holmes, Project Manager, PED

RE: Downtown Parking Management Strategy Update and Recommendations

DATE: October 5, 2015

## **Background**

Based on Comprehensive Plan policies, PED contracted with Nelson\Nygaard to conduct a study (September 2014-March 2015) to address downtown parking management with the following objectives:

- Develop a market-based parking management system.
- Integrate parking with pedestrians, light rail, busses, and inter-city rail.
- Define existing parking utilization of all downtown stakeholders.
- Quantify anticipated future demand for parking.
- Identify national best practices.
- Suggest ways in which the City can integrate its parking management functions.

## **Study Findings**

Downtown (as defined in the study area map) has a current parking supply of 28,000 on-street and off-street spaces. Parking utilization counts were conducted on a typical weekday and weekend day. Counts were taken at 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. The weekend counts were conducted on a Saturday that captured a 5k event near the Xcel Energy Center in the morning, the farmers market and Minnesota Wild game related activity at 6 p.m. The completed study documents can be accessed and downloaded from the City's project webpage at [www.stpaul.gov/downtownparkingstrategy](http://www.stpaul.gov/downtownparkingstrategy). Findings from the study include:

- Downtown parking supply includes 1,644 on-street spaces and 26,994 off-street spaces.
- 93% of off-street spaces are publicly accessible.
- Peak occupancy of downtown's parking supply is 73% at 10 am during the week. Observed demand counts actual spaces used and does not address the *availability* of those empty spaces, i.e. spaces not occupied but locked in by a monthly contract are generally not available to a daily/transient parker. Each ramp/lot manager determines how many daily parkers they can accommodate on a given day.

- Monthly contract parking is a popular option for employers and employees. Of the ramps surveyed, an average ramp has 56% monthly contract parkers, whereas some ramps do the majority of their business through monthly contracts and rely heavily on blocks of contract parking as their main M-F operation.
- Monday through Saturday on-street parking fills up in the evening when meters are turned off at 5:00 p.m.
- On the weekends off-street parking is never more than 30% full.
- There is considerable capacity in off-street parking to handle an increase in evening and weekend activity.

### **Strategy Recommendations**

Based on the utilization study, current and future demand analysis and stakeholder feedback, Nelson\Nygaard recommended an extensive list of targeted strategies (over sixty) for the City to implement to fulfill the objectives stated at the beginning of the study. Overall themes of the strategies include:

- Use information and technology to create smart policies and effectively manage parking.
- Coordinate and integrate city parking management with overall economic development and transportation goals.
- Manage on-street parking using a market-based approach to better utilize parking supply.
- Create off-street parking policies in the context of a multimodal system.
- Integrate access and transportation demand management to become a downtown with attractive travel options.
- Invest in placemaking to support downtown growth.
- Update the parking related zoning code to support responsible economic development downtown.

### **Outreach**

An advisory group was the main point of contact for the consulting team and PED project manager. This group included representation from St. Paul Smart Trips, SPACC, BOMA, CapitolRiver Council, Visit St. Paul, PED, Saint Paul Department of Public Works, Saint Paul Police Department, and the Mayor's Office. Throughout the study, the consulting team from Nelson\Nygaard and SRF conducted one-on-one interviews and met with focus groups convened by their respective organizations: Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce (SPACC Transportation Committee), Greater Saint Paul Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), CapitolRiver Council (Parking Committee), and HRA owned parking ramp managers and operators (convened by Gary Grabko, PED.)

### **Next Steps**

PED staff is recommending that the City Council acknowledge the work of the consultants by accepting the study as a whole, with short-term, high impact action strategies identified. PED and Public Works will continue to work on the prioritized strategies and continue to coordinate with the private sector to take the lead or partner on strategies as appropriate.

PED and Public Works directors and staff have prepared their 2016 budgets to include the resources needed to implement priority parking management strategies.

## **DOWNTOWN PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY:**

### **SHORT-TERM AND HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES**

Below are the strategies that can be implemented in the short-term that are also high impact, meaning that they have the potential to have a substantial effect on parking in downtown Saint Paul. After each of these strategies is a performance metric, so the City and its partners can measure implementation progress.

- 1.1 Have a centralized and integrated transportation website and app (METRIC: Have at least 12 major destinations link to site; set a realistic goal for app downloads)
- 1.2 Coordinate and contract with a single vendor for pay-by-cell for on- and off-street public parking facilities (METRIC: Have all HRA/City ramps and all metered parking accept pay by cell)
- 1.3 Work with private ramps/lots to also use the same pay-by-cell vendor (METRIC: Have at least five ramps sign on)
- 1.4 Coordinate real-time information for off-street public and private parking facilities and display via website and app. Consider bulk purchase of real-time information signage for facilities (METRIC: Have at least ten private ramps sign on)
- 2.2 Work with parking ramp managers to obtain comprehensive utilization reporting for City, HRA, and private lots and ramps (METRIC: Regularly receive 70% reporting rate)
- 2.3 Support City/parking management staff to manage rates and time limits administratively based on occupancy goals. (METRIC: Report back to City Council annually on trends/changes)
- 2.4 Agree on and document a single set of parking goals (METRIC: Document and adopt goals)
- 3.1 Reassess city employee placard use (METRIC: Document locations and card use)
- 3.2 Better coordinate on-street parking pricing to first hour off-street rates. (METRIC: Measure through on-street occupancy goal)
- 3.3 Create City “optimum occupancy” or availability goal for on-street parking (METRIC: Document and adopt goals)
- 3.4 Adjust parking meter rates, time limits, and spans to achieve optimum occupancy (METRIC: Adjust time span and enforcement hours)
- 3.7 Establish event rates for on-street parking (METRIC: Pilot event rates near major destinations)
- 4.3 Create city “optimum occupancy” or availability goal for off-street (METRIC: Document and adopt goal)
- 6.1 Encourage an 18/7 downtown with a mix of daytime and evening uses (METRIC: Five off-peak businesses open or extend hours)
- 6.3 Prioritize investment at street-level along key corridors. (METRIC: Pilot projects to increase activity, evaluate business activity on 4<sup>th</sup> Street)
- 7.1 Strengthen the Travel Demand Management (TDM) ordinance by working more directly with St. Paul Smart Trips, employers and developers. (METRIC: Amend the Zoning Code with an updated TDM section)
- 7.2 Prohibit new free-standing single-use parking structures (ramps must be wrapped with active uses and/or have active ground floor uses) (METRIC: Amend the Zoning Code)