



Information Item

Date: August 24, 2011

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Carol Swindell, Director of Finance
Subject: Walker Parking Study & Interim Parking Plan Implementation Update

Introduction

Since 2009, the City has embarked on two significant efforts to address parking in the downtown. In 2009, Walker Parking Consultants conducted a study ([Walker Study](#)) that evaluated current parking operations in downtown, reevaluated those relative to the 2006 Downtown Parking Program, and developed recommendations to manage parking in downtown. On [February 23, 2010](#), Council supported the Implementation Plan priorities, which are based on a phased approach to implementing specific actions to further the goals and recommendations set forth in the Walker Parking Study. On [March 8, 2011](#), Council approved an Interim Parking Plan that builds on the recommendations of the Walker Parking Study and adds additional initiatives to address parking needs during a period of heavy construction activity in the downtown between 2012 and 2014, which will begin with the demolition of Parking Structure 6 in early 2012. This Information Item provides an update on the progress to date with the various Downtown Santa Monica parking initiatives.

This Information Item also provides updates on two recent parking operations efforts; outreach related to the end of the yellow hybrid decal program and a pilot project to address school parking needs during events.

Discussion

Interim Parking Plan Update

On [March 8, 2011](#), Council directed staff to proceed with implementation of an Interim Parking Plan to better manage downtown parking needs during the reconstruction of Parking Structure 6 and the demolition of Parking Structure 3. Below is an update on the various components of that plan.

Outreach & Incentives

Staff has partnered with Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. (DTSM) to develop and produce outreach material to promote the Interim Parking Plan and to encourage monthly pass holders to voluntarily relocate to the Civic Center. To date, two postcards promoting a savings of 50% off the current downtown monthly pass prices have been sent to existing pass holders. Additionally, the City and DTSM sent out a joint letter to companies that are located in downtown and have monthly parking passes for Structures 1 – 6. This effort has resulted in the relocation of 90 parkers as of August 23, 2011. All relocated parkers have received a special pass that also provides access to any Big Blue Bus (BBB) line at any time and will be used as the fare media to board the shuttle service described below.

Shuttle

The BBB has included implementation of the Downtown Ride in the summer/fall 2011 service changes. Beginning August 29, the specially branded Downtown Ride will operate in a loop between the Civic Center and Downtown, providing convenient access between the Civic Center parking and downtown locations every 8-10 minutes during peak periods. Civic Center monthly parkers who take advantage of the incentive package to relocate from Downtown structures will also be able to ride any other BBB line, including routes 2, 3, 4 and 9 on Fourth St. to reach their downtown destination.

Additional Parking Spaces

The Interim Parking Plan also anticipated the addition of new public parking spaces in the downtown. To date, the City has successfully negotiated a modification to the agreement with 100 Wilshire, opening up 100 previously reserved spaces in Parking Structure 2. The City also now operates 100 new parking spaces at 5th and Arizona, which park an average of 550 cars per day. When operated as a valet, this location could park up to 130 vehicles at a time. With the demolition of Parking Structure 6, there will be a net loss of 200 spaces in the downtown. When Structure 6 is rebuilt and Structure 3 is demolished, there will be a net gain of seven spaces in the downtown.

Next Steps in Implementation of the Interim Parking Plan

- For the 2011 holiday season, the large lot at 1320 5th St. will be converted to the annual holiday ice skating rink and staff will operate a valet service utilizing the smaller lot at 1320 5th Street for car storage. This will be a pilot project for a proposed valet operation that will commence when Structure 3 is demolished.
- Parking Structure 4 - Staff has initiated conversations with the lease holder regarding a modification to an agreement for reserved spaces in Parking Structure No. 4 with the intent that the lease modification will result in the elimination of a reserved parking area.
- Wayfinding Improvements – The Beach Parking Wayfinding system, which includes dynamic changeable message signs at the 4th/5th Street freeway exit and other key downtown gateway locations is under design, with installation expected in 2012. Additionally, the 2011 Capital Improvement Budget includes funding for new changeable message and parking availability signage at all downtown structures that will inform customers where parking is available in the downtown area in addition to listing the current number of spaces in a particular structure.
- Parking Meter Pilot Project – Staff has concluded the new single-space parking meter demonstration project and will present recommendation to Council in October to purchase new parking meters that accept credit cards, require all customers to pay for parking they use, and prevent feeding of the meters once the maximum time limit is reached. Staff is also currently testing a pay-by-phone option at the meters on Ocean Avenue and in the various Main Street lots.
- Bike Transit Center – The City of Santa Monica Bike Centers in Parking Structures 7 and 8 will offer services and facilities for people who walk bike or use transit to get downtown beginning in October 2011. The Bike Center will provide 260 secure bike parking spaces, bike repair facilities, showers, lockers, and bike rentals. It will also offer programs including bike share for local employees, bicycle education, maintenance workshops, and supporting retail.

Walker Parking Implementation Update

To date, staff has made progress on several of the priority areas of Walker Parking Study:

1. Complete a study of overall pricing and hours of operation changes for both the parking structures and on-street parking meters.
 - a. Adjust meter and structure prices throughout the downtown and adjacent areas as identified through the study and by City staff.
 - b. Adjust meter and structure hours of operation, as identified through the study and by City staff.

At the [May 11, 2010](#) Council meeting, staff presented recommended rate changes for Downtown Parking Structures 1 through 9, the Main Library, Civic Center Parking Structure, and the Civic Auditorium Lot as a first phase of broader parking rate changes proposed in the Walker Study. Council unanimously approved the recommended rate changes, which also included changes to hours of parking structure operation in terms of evening flat rates for the Main Library and Civic Center area parking facilities.

Staff has an RFP seeking proposals from qualified firms to update rate recommendations and assist in the development of a strategy to adjust on and off street rates city-wide as part of a comprehensive look at parking beyond the downtown, such as in the Civic Center and Beach areas.

2. Develop agreements and new signage for public use of private parking facilities.

Since July 1, 2010, private parking facilities in the downtown have had access to approved signs that can be placed in the public right of way promoting public parking. Currently seven locations have approved signs.

3. Identify and secure employee parking options.

- a. Re-negotiate 100 Wilshire parking agreement in Structure 2

The Fourth Amendment of the Lease providing for removal of nested parking in Parking Structure 2 was executed on May 18, 2011, and has allowed for the public use of an additional 100 spaces in Parking Structure 2.

- b. Identify locations (including private lots and peripheral locations) and short-headway transportation options to/from the identified location(s).

The current rate study will also look at the potential to create different types of monthly passes for different times of the day and days of the week. The RFP also requests that the selected consultant review all parking locations, including perimeter locations, to recommend pricing and operational changes (i.e. hours of operation) in order to identify options to maximize the effective use of existing parking and to potentially help address challenges related to retail employee parking.

4. Expand transportation demand management programs.

The City's Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Ordinance regulates a total of 690 employers, accounting for 37,784 employees in the City. The current Average Vehicle Ridership (AVR) for the City in FY10/11 is 1.70, down slightly from 1.74 last year. This in part is due to the addition of 18 larger employers (more than 50 employees) from Santa Monica Place and other areas in the City who are submitting their employee trip reduction plans for the first time and as a result, have lower AVR statistics. In an effort to increase City-wide AVR and alternative commute participation by area employees, the Transportation Management Office has initiated a comprehensive outreach program which includes:

- *TMO staff is currently working with VPSI (a vanpool provider) and Metro to bring a vanpooling to Santa Monica employers. Before the joint effort, there was one vanpool serving Santa Monica. Currently there are eight, with plans to expand those numbers to 12 by the end of the fiscal year.*
- *TMO staff works with Big Blue Bus to improve outreach to employers. Staff also created a "Try Big Blue for Lunch" program that encourages groups of employees to take a trip on the bus for lunch so they learn how to ride the bus. To date eight employers have participated in the program.*
- *Fifteen outreach presentations have been made at meetings organized and publicized by Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. (formerly Bayside District Corporation), as well as at employer training seminars and to individual employers throughout the year.*

5. Identify and expand alternative payment mechanisms.

- a. Replace current parking meters with ones that accept credit cards.
- b. Expand or develop new smart card system.

As stated above, staff has completed the meter pilot project and will bring Council recommendations in October. Staff is also exploring options for a new smart card system that could potentially result in one card that would allow holders to pay for/access many services.

6. Review parking operations staffing, policies and procedures.

- a. Review parking operations staffing.
- b. Review revenue control, cashiering and close out procedures.

The Walker Parking Study recommendations were further supplemented by the completion of an Internal Audit of Parking Operations in 2010. Both the study and audit identified included various recommendations to more efficiently manage parking operations. Proposed staffing recommendations were approved as part of the fiscal midyear 2010/11 budget and as part of the 2011-13 budget. Other recommendations, such as expanding automated pay machines were fully implemented in June 2011.

7. Review/formalize maintenance program.

The City is currently near completion of an upgrade to all elevators in the downtown parking structures to extend their useful lives. Staff is working with Public Works to review and formalize a comprehensive maintenance program for the structures.

8. Review Walker in-lieu fee recommendations.

The City entered into a professional services agreement with Nelson\Nygaard on July 22, 2011. Nelson\Nygaard, working with AECOM, will be evaluating the City's current parking in-lieu fee structure and making recommendations for modifications as appropriate. Issues to be evaluated include: the geographic area where in-lieu fees should be applicable, whether the fee should be structured differently based on use of the development, the manner that the fee may be paid, and whether some portion of the fees generated may be available for transportation demand measures.

9. Research and develop centralized valet program.

Staff examined centralized valet systems currently in operation in Old Pasadena, Manhattan Beach and Culver City to better understand best practices that are needed to ensure success, and presented its finding, recommendations and draft RFP to the Downtown Santa Monica, Inc.'s (formerly Bayside District Corporation) Parking and Circulation Committee on April 13 and May 11, 2010. Due to the findings of that study that point to the difficulty with vehicle storage and retrieval times, staff has focused on developing a targeted valet on Fourth Street utilizing the lot at 1324 Fifth Street for car storage. This pilot valet will be operational for the 2011 holiday season.

10. Establish mechanism for ongoing review of pricing; parking supply and demand; and operations.

Parking Operations staff is working on developing new reports that will provide a dashboard summary of parking usage.

11. Develop a proactive program to disseminate parking information.

Each action listed above includes a public information component and Parking Operations staff has begun a redesign and update of parking information on the City's website. In addition, new dynamic messaging signs will be installed at Parking Structures and at key downtown gateways, as described previously.

Other Parking Operations Updates

Yellow Hybrid Decal Parking Exemption Ends July 1, 2011

The exemption from payment at Santa Monica parking meters for vehicles with yellow hybrid decals ended July 1, 2011 with the expiration of the permits. Owners of vehicles with the affected decals received communication from the State's Department of Motor Vehicles regarding the end of the program for vehicles with yellow decals. Since staff does not have access to a database of yellow hybrid decal owners who live in or frequent Santa Monica, an extensive outreach effort was launched throughout June and early July 2011. The outreach effort to communicate the end of free parking for vehicles displaying yellow hybrid decals included:

- At the beginning of June and continuing to today, staff placed information on the parking home page. It was also featured on the City's home page for the weeks leading up to and including the first week of July 2011.
- On June 15, a press release was issued that resulted in news briefs in local papers.
- Ads were placed in the *Santa Monica Daily Press* for several days at the end of June and on July 1, 2011.
- Police Department Traffic Services Officers were provided copies of the ad to place on vehicles observed parking at meters without paying for a few days at the end of June/beginning of July.

These outreach efforts resulted in numerous public inquiries during the end of June and first week of July. Since mid-July, only a limited number of inquiries regarding the status of the decals have been received. However, since staff still receives a limited number of inquiries, a second round of outreach will publicize the program via the next edition of *Seascope*.

Pursuant to the municipal code, the City will continue to offer free meter parking for the latest hybrid technology as an additional incentive for early adopters of the latest technology. White hybrid decals that were issued by the State to vehicles that meet California's super ultra-low emission vehicle (SULEV) standard for exhaust emissions and the Federal inherently low-emission vehicle (ILEV) evaporative emission standard are valid until January 1, 2015. The new green decals, which will be issued to the latest hybrid technology, will be honored once they are issued beginning in January 2012.

School Parking

Parking at locations surrounding schools continues to be challenging, especially during back-to-school and other events that attract large attendance to elementary and middle school campuses. Staff has been working with Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District (District) representatives to identify possible solutions to handle occasional high parking demand. During June 2011 graduation ceremonies, staff implemented a pilot program that allowed for school event attendees to park in adjacent preferential parking areas. This pilot project required the local school to provide notices to all residents within two blocks of the school regarding the date and time of the event and that during those hours event attendees could park in the preferential parking zone. The pilot project was successful in providing schools additional parking resources and, with the added notification, reduced inquiries from preferential parking customers. The pilot program will continue in September during back to school events. Following evaluation of the pilot program, staff will bring recommendations to formalize school parking policies in the fall.

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