

PARKING MANAGEMENT

The perceived demand for unlimited free parking is so great that developers, city staff, employers, and retailers often underestimate the potential impact of parking management strategies. Implemented well, these strategies can control the supply and pricing of parking, help reduce congestion, and increase local transit use.

...the most effective programs utilize a combination of supply and pricing strategies



Although parking is costly to build, maintain, and manage, almost all parking in the United States is provided free to the user. Even in major urban areas where market-rate parking is expensive, employers often provide free or discounted parking for their employees. The free parking subsidy means

that developers, employers, and municipalities must provide and manage extensive “free” parking. This subsidy also makes driving more attractive than transit, since the maximum benefit comes from driving alone. People who rideshare, use transit, bike, or walk get no benefit from a free parking space. The free parking subsidy not only adds to the burden of supplying and managing parking but also encourages car use and increases congestion and air pollution.

Implementation of one of the following parking management strategies can address many of these problems. Developers and municipalities may be able to provide less parking, while employers may be able to lease or manage less parking or make better use of the existing supply.

The strategies described below are divided into two categories, supply strategies and pricing strategies. Nationwide experience shows that the most effective programs utilize a combination of both. All of these parking management strategies need to be considered in terms of current local conditions. Step-by-step implementation, monitoring, enforcement, and evaluation are critical to success.

Supply Strategies

Preferential Parking for Carpools and Vanpools: Reservation of close-in, secure, covered, or otherwise preferable parking spaces encourages the shared-ride mode. Designated parking can be either zoned on-street or provided off-street. This strategy is most effective where transit options are minimal and parking demand meets or exceeds supply.

Peripheral Parking with Shuttles: Under this strategy municipalities, employers, or transportation management associations establish or lease peripheral parking outside the main core area of an activity center. Shuttle service, operated by either a developer, employer, or transit district connects the facility to the core area. This strategy is effective when parking in the core is heavily utilized and expensive and a peripheral facility can be created at minimal expense, but it does not necessarily reduce the volume of traffic headed to the core or increase transit use.

On-Street Controls: This strategy employs signs and enforcement to limit the amount of time that on-street parking spaces may be occupied. It is used in commercial areas to encourage turnover of shoppers and to discourage long-term commuter parking. It is also applied in residential areas to discourage commuter parking and spillover from commercial/retail



This proposal for San Diego adds a main street with shops and housing on the extensive surface parking lots of a 1970s era mall

PARKING MANAGEMENT (Cont'd)

areas. Curb parking management is an effective strategy for demand management aimed at reducing auto use.

Reduced Minimum Parking Requirements: Through zoning, municipalities control the supply of parking that developers must provide. Reductions in the minimum requirements are sometimes allowed in exchange for developer commitments to support transit, carpooling, cycling, or payment into a municipal parking or traffic mitigation fund.

Parking Maximums: Through zoning, municipalities can establish parking maximums (the most parking that developers can provide) in order to ensure that there is not an excess supply of parking.

Areawide Parking Caps: Where parking is over-supplied, strategies such as setting maximum parking ratios, placing a moratorium on new structured or surface parking, permitting construction of new buildings without parking, or revising pricing in public parking facilities can correct imbalances in the supply of and demand for parking.

Parking Pricing Strategies

Time-Based Pricing: Parking fees are set at rates that discourage long-term parking. This strategy has the greatest effect on commuters in major employment centers. It can be implemented by either the private or public sector in off-street lots and garages.

Vehicle Occupancy Pricing: Under this strategy, rates for parking are set at or above the market rate for solo drivers, while carpool and vanpool rates are discounted or free. This strategy can be best implemented by either the private or public sector in dense urban areas with an existing market for parking in off-street lots and garages.

Revise/Initiate Parking Taxes: Taxes on parking influence the rates for parking and encourage the use of transit, ridesharing, and other alternatives to solo driving. Parking taxes can be levied on both public and private facilities.

Modify/Cash Out Employer Parking Subsidies: Employers subsidize parking either by providing free on-site parking or subsidizing off-street spaces for employees. This practice encourages auto use, while those who use transit, rideshare, bike, or walk receive little or no benefit. This disparity can be corrected either by reducing or eliminating the parking subsidy or by offering all employees the subsidy in cash. Under this option, employees may use the cash to pay for parking or choose some other mode and pocket the difference.

On-Street Pricing: Under this strategy, meters or permits are required for on-street parking. Meter rates can be set to increase over time to variable rates that can become progressively more expensive for each additional hour. This can be especially effective in areas with a high density of retail operations, where businesses want spaces to be for customers rather than employees or commuters.

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Signs clearly show drivers looking for downtown parking the location of remote lots



Transit operators can reserve close-in parking for mid-day riders and carpools with permits