

PARTIAL SUMMARY OF ISSUES RELATED TO DOWNTOWN PARKING RATES AND ENFORCEMENT TIMES

For 2/20/09 Parking Task Force meeting consideration

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What we have now:

- On-Street Meters
 - 9-hour meters on Sellen St.
 - 5-hour meters on Boltwood Ave. (southern third, to College St.;) Main, by the Evergreens and Dickinson Homestead and one block of Hallock (by Kendrick Park)
 - 2-hour meters on North Pleasant (to McClellan;) South Pleasant (to north of College St.;) Main (to Churchill;) Amity (to North & South Prospect, and first block of each) and Boltwood (until it changes to 5-hour meters)
- Garage/Lots
 - 8-hour pay-and-display in CVS lot
 - 4-hour pay-and-display in Boltwood Garage
 - 3-hour meters in Amity Street lot
 - 2-hour meters in the lots at Pray Street; front of Town Hall; Spring Street and both on Kellogg Ave.
- Enforcement Hours/Hourly Fees
 - Pay and Display: Garage – 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. / fifty cents per hour
 - Pay and Display: CVS – 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. (?) / fifty cents per hour (?)
 - Parking Meters: 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. / forty cents per hour
- Permit Parking
 - \$35 annual permits for downtown workers
 - Permit parking: McClellan to Boston; North Pleasant from McClellan to Triangle; North Prospect, including Hallock and Cowles; Amity, west of North & South Prospect, to Lincoln; South Prospect; Spring, including Churchill and Seelye; Smith

What we want to encourage:

- Easy customer access to downtown businesses
 - Frequent turnover of prime spaces for easiest accessibility
 - People staying long enough to use the library, shop, eat, see a movie, etc.
- Permit parking among downtown workers

What we want to discourage

- UMass students/faculty parking downtown to avoid expensive campus rates
- Downtown workers using prime customer spots
- Customers/visitors being ticketed and having a bad impression of the downtown

Realities and Complications

- People want to park as close to their destinations as possible
 - Permits are underutilized even at their bargain price, because the permit parking is farther away from work places → most downtown workers are paying a premium for convenience
 - On-street and prime lot spaces are often full when the garage and CVS lot have vacancy, because the latter are, or are perceived as, less convenient
- Enforcement requires resources, and the shorter the limit, the more enforcement is required in order to be effective (i.e., scattered 15-minute “free” spots would require significant enforcement)
- There is a tension between allowing enough time for leisurely downtown visits without allowing enough time for student parking
- There is a tension between encouraging space turnover without aggravating customers with tickets or the need to move their cars
- There is a tension between parking and public transportation, because parking fees and fines fund “free” bus routes
 - Buses decrease traffic and the need for parking downtown
 - Amherst is a progressive community and wants to encourage public transportation and its many societal benefits
 - Public transportation is not yet convenient/accessible enough to wean most people from their cars
 - Encouraging public transit use by discouraging parking is perceived positively or negatively, depending on one’s viewpoint/primary interest
 - Collecting money on buses has always been deemed not feasible (can’t bond student drivers, no interest thus far from PVRTA in fare card investment, etc.)
 - Some parking system improvements would be expensive, requiring significant Transportation Enterprise Fund investment
- The cinema has altered downtown parking needs, and that has to be addressed
 - The Amity lot is most convenient, but often full; except for the garage and CVS lot, the main alternatives are 2-hour meters
 - Parking enforcement hours affect the impact on movie-goers (i.e., if enforcement ends at 6:00 p.m., time limits cease to be an issue for movies starting/ending after that)
 - There is a tension between encouraging space turnover and encouraging movie-goers and their pre-/post-movie plans
- People can’t park in places they aren’t aware of
 - Need better signage generally
 - Need better info re: alternative locations in case lots are full
 - Need better communication/outreach re: permits
- Some towns have free parking; malls have free parking
 - If parking fees weren’t a discouragement to shoppers, Wal-Mart would have them too
 - These places don’t share Amherst’s risk of non-shoppers filling the spaces

Some Questions to Consider

Do the current fee rates best serve our goals?

Other options include:

- Free or reduced-rates for on-street parking
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased business and increased customer-friendly perception
 - Decreased revenue from the meters
 - Increased enforcement needs
 - Decreased space turnover if enforcement inadequate
 - Increased space turnover with adequate enforcement
 - Increased ticketing revenue with adequate enforcement
 - Increased customer annoyance from increased enforcement
 - Decreased usage/increased availability of pay-and-display lots
 - No change in customer use or perception
- Higher rates for on-street parking/Lower rates for pay-and-display lots
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased use/decreased availability of pay-and-display parking areas
 - Increased on-street availability/space turnover
 - Increased revenue from the meters
 - Increased costs to those who continue to skirt meter-feeding
 - Increased cost/annoyance to those “just running in” for quick errand
 - No change in customer use or perception
- Scattered free short-term spaces
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased convenience and customer satisfaction
 - Increased enforcement needs
 - Increased ticketing revenue
 - Increased customer annoyance from being ticketed
 - Increased space turnover/availability of other spaces
 - Decreased meter revenue from loss of these meters
- Varying rates in different meter and lot locations
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased satisfaction among customers who find optimal spaces for their needs
 - Increased confusion/annoyance among other customers
 - Increased annoyance among businesses with higher nearby rates
 - Increased enforcement needs if more people are needed to cover more areas at different intervals
 - Increased revenue/space availability if changes are well-located
 - Decreased or unchanged revenue/space availability if changes poorly-located or inadequately-enforced
- Uniform rate at all locations
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased revenue, if all brought up to fifty cent rate
 - Decreased revenue if all brought down to forty cent rate

- Happier/less-happy customers who are particularly price-sensitive
- No incentive toward meter or garage might result in little usage change

Do the current meter and lot parking limits best serve our goals?

Other options include:

- Reducing on-street meter limits
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased space turnover: good for quick errands, bad for longer stays
 - Increased use of longer-term lots
 - Increased enforcement needs
 - Increased ticket revenue/customer annoyance
- Increasing on-street meter limits
 - Possible results include:
 - Decreased space turnover: good if you get a space to meet your needs, but fewer opportunities to do so
 - Decreased or unaffected garage/lot usage
 - Decreased meter revenue
- Increasing some limits, depending on location
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased usage/convenience
 - Increased customer confusion
 - Increased annoyance among businesses preferring higher or lower nearby limits
 - Decreased turnover/increased use by non-shoppers (workers/UMass people)

Do the current hours of enforcement best serve our goals?

Other options include:

- Increasing meter enforcement hours
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased meter revenue
 - Increased ticketing revenue from people overstaying limit
 - Increased annoyance among customers
 - Increased enforcement costs
- Decreasing all enforcement hours
 - Possible results include
 - Decreased space turnover and availability
 - Decreased enforcement needs
 - Less revenue from meters/lots
 - Happy customers who find parking/unhappy ones who don't
- Altering enforcement hours per location
 - Possible results include:
 - Same as with varying rates per location, above

- Making enforcement hours consistent across all locations
 - Possible results include:
 - Increased or decreased meter revenue, depending if hours standardized up or down
 - Increased or decreased ticket revenue, depending if hours standardized up or down
 - Increased or decreased enforcement cost, depending if hours standardized up or down
 - Increased or decreased availability of customer parking in relation to downtown resident parking in the evenings, depending if hours standardized up or down
 - Decreased confusion among customers

How much price sensitivity is there at sub-dollar hourly rates?

What would be the cost of equipment changes/upgrades we might propose, and can we fund those?

What would be the cost of additional enforcement officers needed for any change we might propose, and can we fund those?

Do we have the capacity to accommodate significant increases in permit parking?