



# City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

## Department of Transportation

Goran Sparrman, Interim Director

### Seattle Parking Sounding Board Minutes

**Date/Time:** February 6, 2014, 1:30-3:00 PM

**Location:** Seattle Municipal Tower Room 3832

**Members Present:** Don Blakeney (Chinatown-ID Business Improvement Area), Doug Campbell (University District Business Improvement Area), Lisa Dixon (Alliance for Pioneer Square), Ben Grace (Chinatown-ID Business Improvement Area), Josh McDonald (Seattle Restaurant Alliance), Mike Stewart (Ballard Chamber of Commerce)

**Staff Present:** Becky Edmonds, Mike Estey, Ruth Harper, Tracy Krawczyk, Bill LaBorde, Mary Rutherford, Cristina VanValkenburgh, Jonathan Williams (All SDOT); Dan Eder (Council Central Staff); William Edwards (SPD)

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

#### 2. Presentation

Mary Catherine Snyder presented.

- a. Review of data-driven policy since 2010. The policy is to keep 1 to 2 spaces open per blockface throughout the day. SDOT collects data in all paid areas annually. SDOT has adjusted rates and time limits annually to meet City policy.
- b. The process to replace pay stations is underway. New equipment will allow rates to be set by time of day. The areas tentatively slated to have new equipment installed in 2014 are:
  - Commercial Core
  - Chinatown-International District
  - Denny Triangle South
  - Belltown South
  - Pioneer Square
  - Pike-Pine
- c. Watch List: SDOT proposes having a Watch List, 5 percentage points above and below the target range of 1-2 open spaces per blockface. If parking occupancy in an area is within this watch list, SDOT will hold off for one year before making changes. This will allow SDOT to be conscious of the fact that data is collected on one day per year.
- d. Responses to low and high parking occupancy: SDOT has several potential responses when occupancy is outside the target range. For areas with high occupancy, these include increasing the rate by 50 cents, extending paid parking to 8 PM (for high evening occupancy)

and splitting areas into subareas and adjusting rates separately. For areas with low occupancy, SDOT may lower the rate by 50 cents or extend time limits to 4 or 10 hours.

- e. Data analysis: Mary Catherine presented daytime parking data from Ballard Periphery, Belltown North, South Lake Union 10-hour spaces, U-District Periphery, Ballard Locks, and Pioneer Square Core and Periphery. (See presentation for data charts from these areas.)

Q: How does SDOT choose the day on which data is collected?

A: We collect data in the spring, on a typical Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. This is the industry standard for parking and traffic studies. We aim to pick a typical day, where occupancy is neither unusually high nor unusually low.

Q: Does the peak occupancy in the chart reflect evenings, or just daytime?

A: This analysis focuses on just daytime peak occupancy.

Q: Who collects the data?

A: SDOT hires a consultant.

Q: Does PayByPhone improve data collection efforts?

A: We track this data and are working on incorporating it with our general paid parking data. A major limitation of paid parking data is the prevalence of disabled parking placard use in downtown. Since these vehicles do not pay at the pay station, they do not show up in paid occupancy numbers but do show up in actual occupancy numbers. This is why it remains important to do manual data collection annually.

- i. Ballard Periphery: Includes everything in the Ballard business district outside of the core intersection of 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW and NW Market Street. This area continues to be below target, though occupancy has increased over time.

Q: Is SDOT adjusting rates?

A: Today we are focusing on data results and presenting this data to community members for ground-truthing.

- ii. Belltown North: Occupancy is continuing to increase, but is still below target.
- iii. South Lake Union 10-Hour: Includes approximately 1000 stalls. The daytime peak occupancy is 95%. The average stay is 4-5 hours.

Q: This area was all free parking in the recent past, and used to be full of one-story warehouses. Now, it's a major office center, which means it will soon need more turnover. How will this impact parking management?

A: SDOT gets requests from merchants to change 10-hour blocks to 2-hour blocks to facilitate turnover. SDOT will continue to monitor the area as land use changes.

- iv. University District Periphery: This area is still below target.

Comment: Sound Transit construction in the area will likely put pressure on the parking supply in the area.

Comment (Doug Campbell): We have not seen this impact yet.

- v. Pioneer Square: As SDOT installs new equipment, we will have the ability to charge different rates by time of day. Therefore, this chart shows occupancy over the course of the day. In the Core, occupancy is low in the morning and much higher in the afternoon. In the Periphery, occupancy is low in the morning and falls into the high watch list in the afternoon.

Q: What about evening paid parking in Pioneer Square?

A: Paid Parking ends at 6 PM in Pioneer Square. Occupancy in the evening has been within the target range, indicating that there is available parking.

Comment (Josh McDonald): It is interesting not to see an evening occupancy spike, as restaurants in this area are doing well.

- vi. Ballard Locks: The chart for this area looks at paid occupancy over the course of a year. SDOT proposes setting rates by season, corresponding to the Locks visitor center hours.

Q: Is parking demand in this area elastic? Will increasing the summer rate make a noticeable dent in demand?

A: That's a good question. The elasticity of demand for parking is still not well understood.

Q: When do consumers make the decision about when and where to park? People do not always realize what the cost of parking is until they are there, and then they just pay whatever it costs.

A: SDOT tries to get the word out about changes to parking rates. Still, some people may not know until they get there; it may take a while for people to learn about the new rates. We think that this might influence people to stay for less time, improving turnover.

Q: Would the rates be visible while people are driving, so they can make a decision before they park?

A: No. Parking pay stations show rates, but they are not visible from a moving vehicle. We are not aware of any pay stations on the market that can display rates on the street side for drivers.

Q: In a place like the Ballard Locks, where would people park instead? There are no available garages.

A: There are several possible outcomes of a higher summer rate. People may choose to get there without a car, or park somewhere else (such as on the Magnolia side). We will study parking conditions at the Locks twice a year and make adjustments if needed.

- f. Evening parking areas: Mary Catherine showed two charts: One displaying areas that currently have evening paid parking with occupancy before and after implementation of evening hours, and one showing areas without evening paid parking (See presentation). Since 2011, paid parking has gone to 8 PM in eight areas. Occupancy remains high but access has improved. Many other cities also charge in the evenings. Occupancy has particularly dropped at 5 PM and 6 PM but stays high at 7 PM. This is likely because employees or residents who previously parked for free in the evenings have opened up spaces for customers. People are having a better parking experience in the neighborhood. Belltown North did fall below target.

Q: What do we do when areas have dropped below target?

A: Adjust rates. As SDOT upgrades pay stations, we will be able to set rates by time of day, therefore being able to fine-tune the rate to be appropriate for the level of demand. We will see how things go year over year and try new options as we collect more data.

- g. Areas without existing evening paid parking: Some areas do not have problems; for example, Cherry Hill and the Chinatown-International District Periphery have occupancy within the target range in the evening, without paid parking. Some areas do have challenges. These areas are full in ways similar to those areas that now have evening paid parking. The current areas

of focus are: 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ballard Core and Periphery, Fremont, and Green Lake. These business districts seem to have significant evening draws.

Q: Do any of these areas have residential or RPZ parking issues?

A: Some do. Fremont, for example, has an RPZ.

Comment: Green Lake has grown.

A: Yes, as has 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Green Lake will likely be getting busier over time, as well.

Q: There is a prescribed official number of spaces per block, correct? How will car2go impact that occupancy number?

A: We are not sure yet. We know that many more car2gos fit on a block than regular-sized vehicles. In this year's annual parking study, we will specifically note which vehicles are car2gos.

Comment: In Chinatown-International District, car2gos seem to come in in the morning, but leave by noon.

Q: Would extending paid parking to 9 or 10 PM ease pressure on 6 PM? When we went to 8 PM, did it ease parking at 5 or 6?

A: Yes, when paid parking was added until 8 PM, that seemed to ease the pressure on occupancy at 5 and 6 PM. We do not know what would happen if we went to 9 or 10 PM.

Comment: What do residents do? Maybe in the current setup some of them are willing to pay an hour now, and then park the rest of the evening for free; if paid parking went later maybe some of them would go off street.

Comment: The Liquor Sticker program is a good idea. Adding too much evening paid parking might keep people from using it. We want to encourage people to use alternative modes when they go out for dinner and drinks.

Q: We have seen lots of new development; for example, on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, they took out lots of parking for construction. We need to be cognizant of the removal of parking given that there is construction and development. How do we parking management together with permitting for development? We need to make sure people feel like they can still go downtown.

A: This is a good point. Commercial delivery is also very important and impacted by construction removals.

Q: When will SDOT share what its rate adjustment proposals are?

A: March. Then we will report to the Mayor and City Council. Sounding Board will meet again the first week of March. SDOT was also directed to get feedback from the Sounding Board about an outreach strategy for our proposals, which we will discuss more in March. Changes will be rolled out beginning in July or August.

Comment: Consider other concurrent work that is going on in neighborhoods when you plan rollout of new parking rates. For example, Ballard is currently working with Jonathan on overall parking issues, including the unmetered areas, as well as putting together a broad group of stakeholders. This same issue applies to Chinatown-ID and Pioneer Square.

Q: Does SDOT consider having meters pulled out or added? University Heights has talked about wanting paid parking in their area.

A: The issue of what neighborhoods have or do not have paid parking at this point is a little bit outside the scope of the rate-setting process but as we replace pay stations we may look at which areas do or do not need to have pay stations replaced. We will follow up with University Heights.

Q: Do you consider load zones and whether they are being utilized?

A: The annual parking study does not include 30 minute load zones or CVLZs.

Q: How does one get rid of load zones?

A: This is usually part of a broader community process but requires a request from the adjacent business.

Q: Can load zones be labelled more clearly to be available in the evening?

A: Mary Catherine is working on a separate project to look at innovative strategies for managing CVLZs. This will include looking at when they really need to be in effect.

Q: Do you have any updates on disabled parking placards?

A: At the request of the 2013 Senate Transportation Commission (SB 5024), the Washington Department of Licensing convened a working group last year and drafted a strategic plan to curb abuse of disabled parking permits. This report is available online at <http://www.dol.wa.gov/about/docs/2013DisabledParkingReport.pdf> and contained seven recommendations. The recommendations are:

- Establish a new payment exempt disabled permit for holders meeting certain qualifications - “two-tiered system”
- Change temporary placard validity period
- Clarify and increase penalties for fraudulent use
- Clarify language for citation dismissals
- Placard redesign
- Improve the disability certification process
- Require the use of prescription pad or letterhead for certification

In January 2014, House Bill 2463 (online at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2463>) was introduced that contained all of the workgroup recommendations with the exception of placard redesign. In February 2014, a substitute bill was passed by the House Committee on Transportation. The substitute bill removed the new payment exempt disabled placard permit and revised some of the penalty changes. This substitute bill passed the House on February 17 and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation.

### **3. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.