



City of Santa Barbara California

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: March 29, 2007

AGENDA DATE: April 5, 2007

TO: Planning Commission
Transportation and Circulation Committee

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Parking Workshop

Transportation and Parking: Making the Connection

Transportation Planning has held a series of workshops with the Planning Commission concerning relevant issues that arise in the course of the land development review process. Previously, we held a workshop on traffic congestion and how staff calculates level of service. We have also discussed trip generation and how staff reviews land development projects to determine traffic effects. This third workshop is about parking policy. Because this will be a transportation policy discussion, the Transportation and Circulation Committee (TCC) is also included.

Several issues make this workshop on parking policy timely. Most imminent are the community discussions, staff recommendations, and potential near-term actions concerning Upper State Street. Additionally, the Planning Commission and the public, in recent times, have been more critical about the number of spaces provided by projects, especially projects that request a parking modification (fewer spaces than required by ordinance). And finally, most of the priority policy implementation work to be completed by the TCC deals with parking policy in the Circulation Element. Each of our perspectives on the functional value of parking will shape how we approach each of these issues.

The purpose of this workshop is to open a discussion about how parking influences transportation decisions and behavior. We have attached a paper entitled Transportation and Parking Policy: Making the Connection to provide information and background on parking

policy. The paper includes an overview of transportation history in the context of Santa Barbara, what is in the General Plan Circulation Element (CE) on the subject, and some ideas for how these policies can be implemented.

Staff has purposely avoided getting into the technical aspects of measuring parking demand. Although the technical aspects of parking demand are important and should be more thoroughly discussed, we thought it was too much to add at this time. Additionally, the technical aspects of parking are somewhat dependent on one's parking policy (or philosophy), meaning that calculations can either be conservative or less so. One's philosophy in this regard will determine the appropriate technical approach. We believe that this subject should probably be a Part II of the parking workshop, similar to how the Traffic/Transportation discussions were handled.

If you have any questions on the subject or paper, please feel free to call Rob Dayton at 564-5390. Or via email at rdayton@santabarbaraca.gov.

Exhibit A: Transportation and Parking Policy: Making the Connection

Transportation and Parking Policy: Making the Connection

Introduction

The Planning Commission and the Transportation and Circulation Committee, as well as the public, have recently raised questions and concerns about parking issues in Santa Barbara. There have been concerns that too many parking modifications have been granted. Some point to existing locations where the on-site parking supplies seem too low. Others cite neighborhoods that are impacted from the overflow parking of commercial districts. The need to inform decision-makers and the public on parking and parking policy's role in transportation planning is important to understanding current conditions and for implementing the City's parking. The past two transportation planning workshops have dealt with traffic congestion and project trip generation. We hope to show how the provision of parking relates directly to transportation.

Our goal is to emphasize how parking influences transportation decisions and behavior. This document examines the relationship between transportation and parking and is divided into three main sections. The first section focuses on the history of Santa Barbara's transportation and how parking needs and policy have developed over time. The second section discusses the parking policy direction of the Circulation Element of the General Plan. And, finally, the third section discusses implementation of the parking policy we have and entertains possible future implementation strategies for further discussion.

Santa Barbara's Transportation History

Santa Barbara's transportation history has been influenced by changing demographics, technological innovations, an evolving social scene, the political climate, as well as, economic and environmental events.

Although Santa Barbara's stewards have, over time, acknowledged the automobile as the favored form of transportation, there has been significant effort to save the City from it. This section is about how Santa Barbarans have understood transportation and parking relationships in the past.

Introduction of the Automobile

Eighteen-ninety-eight brought the first automobile to Santa Barbara and by 1905 there were about a dozen private cars in town.¹ They were much larger than bicycles and needed fixed storage. At this time, livery stables began converting to garages to make room for these automobiles.

By the 1920's, Santa Barbara's streets that were originally paved for bicyclists, pedestrians and street cars were now filled with automobiles. The automobile provided the link between Downtown and outlying areas. First the wealthy and later the middle class fled the crowded Downtown. Many left for a quieter lifestyle outside the noisy core but they could maintain access to employment, shopping and cultural events simply by

The Invention of the Bicycle

The bicycle has a history deeply rooted in early Santa Barbara times. The first high-wheeled velocipede bicycle appeared on State Street in 1869, although, bicycles were rare sight until the mid 1880's. It quickly became a popular form of travel as it provided an affordable and simple way of moving about the city independently. A local newspaper in the mid-1880's even reported, "Bicycle riding has become more than a fad or a popular pastime; it is a craze. Everybody rides, grandmothers, children, businessmen, ministers, society women" (Bicycle Master Plan, 1998).

It was not long until bicyclists were causing traffic problems on the streets of Santa Barbara. The City had to pass two ordinances in 1894, one to require cowbells on bicycles to warn pedestrians and the other imposed a speed limit of 7 miles per hour. In 1895, the first bike racks were installed on horse pulled trolleys, creating the nation's first multi-modal application of the bicycle (Bicycle Master Plan, 1998). Bicycling was so popular that infrastructure was needed to support it; in fact, bicyclists were the first to advocate for paved roads.

¹ "Downtown History," < <http://www.sblifestyle.com/4-neighborhoods/downtown.html>>

traveling in their car.

Increased Auto Transportation Effects on Early Parking Demands

At the beginning of the 20th century, only the rich owned cars. These drivers parked at the curb where they used to tether their horses and carriages. When car ownership grew rapidly in the 1910s and 1920s, the parking problem began. Curb parking remained free, but there was no longer enough space for everyone to park wherever and whenever they wanted. Drivers circled for vacant curb spaces and their cars congested traffic, much as they do today in places deemed to have a “parking problem.”

The advent of the automobile and subsequent changes to infrastructure to improve the mobility and accessibility of destinations by vehicle was also impacted by population growth in Santa Barbara. From the 1920's on, Santa Barbara continued to grow fairly steadily in population (with the exception of a slump in the 1930's and a jump in the 1950's and 60's) as the region became more accessible with highway improvements and the growing popularity of the automobile as the travel mode of choice.

Although the city grid worked well for moving cars, the somewhat built out Downtown had to be retrofitted to add parking; whereas, vacant land was developed with parking lots. As a result, land use development patterns began to favor the automobile because newer developments outside the city center could readily provide enough parking to match the desired mode choice.

Even then, City leaders could see the negative impact the car was having on land use patterns. The 1964 Land Use Element includes the following on the subject:

“There is a growing awareness in most communities that the automobile is getting out of hand, that its influence on the urban scene is becoming dictatorial rather than beneficent. It is the instrument whereby free rein was given to urban sprawl and, now that cities have sprawled all over that landscape, it has become that indispensable element essential to holding that whole loosely-knit package together. With the increase in population and prosperity, the automobile is demanding more and more land for its exclusive use. In places like Los Angeles, it is demanding a lion's share of the very air, polluting it and rendering it unfit to breathe. The quirk of nature that allows the automobile to steal the air in Los Angeles is called a "temperature inversion." All the City needs is a few more cars to attain the unhappy distinction of becoming like Los Angeles.”²

The Commercial Growth and Parking Wars of the 1960's and 1970's

Lake Cachuma was formed with the damming of the Santa Ynez River in 1956. With the water came growth. Goleta Valley tripled in population to equal Santa Barbara. This rapid growth brought changes to the rural landscape. During this time Upper State Street, Montecito, Carpinteria and Goleta Valley became bedroom communities with Santa Barbara as the largest employment destination. Five shopping centers were built on Upper State Street, with La Cumbre Plaza opening its doors in 1967. This new commercial area with ample parking lots siphoned away so much business that La Cumbre Plaza's revenues equaled all of the shops in Downtown combined.

Merchants organized a “Downtown Organization” to develop strategies to compete with the shopping centers. They knew that parking would need to be added if they were going to compete with La Cumbre Plaza (and shopping malls in general). They voted to tax themselves to create a parking district. Ironically, the merchants also removed the most convenient parking in front of the stores right on State Street to create the “Downtown Plaza” or outdoor pedestrian mall. They emphasized customer parking lots and garages with access from Chapala and

² Land Use Element of the General Plan, 1964, pp 33

Anacapa Streets. The look and feel of State Street was transformed by reducing the number of lanes from four to two, with colorful sidewalks, palm trees, benches, and historical architectural facades. The result was a spectacular rise in business and a Downtown that has been undergoing refurbishment steadily since the 1970's.

One lesson learned from the Downtown Organization's success was that the quality of the State Street pedestrian experience became just as important as the provision of parking. State Street's sense of place and destination has become an important element that has shaped and defined Santa Barbara, locally, regionally, and abroad.

Another event that helped focus retail within Santa Barbara's urban core and not the decentralized suburban Goleta was the lack of water. Although the market forces of an auto-oriented suburban pattern were still a factor, a water moratorium imposed by the County prevented further decentralization of commercial uses through the late 70's and 80's until State water arrived in the early 1990's. As a result of stunted commercial growth elsewhere and the timely strategy of the merchants to create a parking district and pedestrian mall, Downtown was preserved as the regional retail center.³

1974 Impacts of Growth

By the 1970's, population growth had become a major concern. There were concerns about what impact growth would have on jobs, retail businesses, air quality, water supply, taxes, income, traffic, land uses and parks.⁴ The Santa Barbara Planning Task Force, a group of local citizens, was asked by the City Council to provide an analytic base to help them determine an optimum level of population. The City provided

³ Interview, Dave Davis, former Community Development Director

⁴ Santa Barbara- How many people should there be? Help your City Council Decide. December 6, 1974

funding and members of the Task Force enlisted dozens of citizens both professional and amateur, in a series of projects and related studies. The resulting publication was the Santa Barbara *Impacts of Growth* (1974). In the report, they make no recommendation of the optimum population size but rather, as a result of research, presented an informed preference for what the future of Santa Barbara should be.⁵

The report recognized, with the assumption of continued dispersed land use patterns and automobile use patterns, that the existing city road and parking system would be inadequate to accommodate future traffic demands as the population grows.

“More than any other single factor, it has been the automobile that has created the modern land use patterns of Southern California. Low-density, exclusively residential neighborhoods miles distant from the nearest shopping or employment depend on automotive transport for almost all activities.

The ability of any area to absorb continually increasing numbers of automobiles is not infinite.

[Limiting factors include]

- the capacity of the road network to carry increased automotive traffic without congestion and delay
- the availability of parking in areas attracting increasing amounts of traffic
- the availability and utilization of mass transit and other alternative forms of transportation
- noise and other adverse impacts associated with moving increasing volumes of traffic through an area”⁶

The report discusses the ultimate lack of capacity of the road network and how increases in vehicle travel will restrict mobility. In the report, circulation issues are considered to have a social impact as well. Individual motorists would be impacted by way of delay, inconvenience, and increased gas consumption. Shop owners, residents and pedestrians

⁵ Santa Barbara The Impacts of Growth: City wide Effects, pp.1.2

⁶ Santa Barbara The Impacts of Growth: City Wide Effects, pp 4.13

would be impacted by increased noise and car emissions and increased spillover of non-residential traffic to residential neighborhoods.

The report suggests a number of programs aimed at increasing the use of alternative modes of transportation from the 5% mode share of the day (auto use was estimated at 95% or more of all trips). The programs included parking policy strategies to limit auto growth and promote transit use. The list of parking policies included the following:

- “Elimination of on-street parking (this is assumed for most central areas to provide road space for vehicle movement). The Bikeway Master Plan, while considering some new construction of new bicycle right-of-ways, also calls for the use of what is presently on-street parking space.
- Increase in fees in existing off-street parking.
- Zoning or other regulation or prohibition of commercial parking facilities
- “Sticker” parking in residential neighborhoods abutting high parking demand districts, giving residents exclusive on-street parking privileges.
- Creation of “park and ride” lots served by bus or other transportation outside principal trip destination areas.
- Elimination of free parking in off-street facilities.”⁷

Nearly all of these policies have been implemented in one form or another. Some on-street parking was eliminated for bike lanes, the Downtown parking lots began hourly charges, the Residential Parking Permit program was born, and the Commuter Parking Lots were developed. In 1980, when the required on-site parking rates were doubled, for most of the city, the Downtown requirement was left at the older parking rate as part of the policy to encourage the use of alternate transportation for employees and to encourage business participation in consolidated parking for customers. Working in conjunction with lower parking requirements, the parking district has been expanded and includes zones of benefit whereby developments can further reduce parking requirements. The parking district provides ample customer parking, while discouraging employee use because of its hourly cost. As

⁷ Santa Barbara The Impacts of Growth: City Wide Effects, pp 4.31

indicated in the *Impacts of Growth* report, these strategies were done to limit congestion and encourage transit use. As a result, Downtown travel has increase in the use of alternative modes by 10 to 15%.

The *Impacts of Growth* report acknowledged the challenges of implementing innovative parking policy in as much as it predicts the inevitability of the automobile's role in our future:

“Some of these alternatives are economically discriminatory, falling more heavily on poorer car operators. Others imply what is for most people a very different lifestyle than has become customary in Santa Barbara. To the extent that measures such as those discussed are necessary, are implemented, and are perceived as onerous, growth has exacted a cost.

And, finally, while the value of various city actions attempting to limit and make more efficient private automobile use cannot be questioned, it should be borne in mind that, while there are many cities both in the United States and abroad with efficient public transportation and widespread use of bicycles (mostly in cities abroad), there are no cities where cars are available to any sizeable segment of the population without severe and worsening automobile traffic problems. Automobile congestion, despite all known measures to counteract it, seems an inescapable consequence of population growth in present-day American society.”⁸

Parking Policy within the Circulation Element

The Circulation Element (CE) of the General Plan, 1998, carries on the tradition of innovative approaches to dealing with traffic congestion through parking policy. The document continues to underscore the relationship of transportation to quality of life and economic vitality issues and distinguishes between types of parking users.

“Space to store vehicles is costly, sometimes visually adverse, and limited. By increasing the use of alternative modes of transportation and reducing reliance on the automobile for commuting to work, business areas will be able to improve access and availability of parking for customers, thereby enhancing economic vitality. This direction clearly

⁸ Santa Barbara The Impacts of Growth: City Wide Effects, pp 4.32

shows how one aspect of transportation can be closely related to, or affect, another. A key to economic vitality is maintaining and enhancing the connection between the businesses and their customers. Further development of the transportation system should increase access and the mobility of people throughout the community and strengthen this relationship.”⁹

Parking policy and strategies are represented throughout the CE, but are the focus of three chapters, Goal 7: Increase Access by Optimizing Parking Citywide, Goal 8: Increase Parking Availability and Access for Downtown Customers, and Goal 9: Develop Special Policies Related to Transportation and Parking in the Coastal Zone. Chapter 7 points to the creation of a Parking Master Plan to coordinate and manage parking in the City.¹⁰ The Parking Master Plan would then outline strategies and implementation measures for addressing the City’s parking supply, residential parking permit program, and parking requirements and design standards. The guiding parking policy of the Parking Master Plan is to optimize parking resources and to encourage increased use of alternative modes.¹¹ Some suggested measures to be included in the Plan include:

- Innovative parking design, such as tandem or stacked parking
- Reduced on-site parking requirements that support alternative modes of transportation
- Reduced parking for delivery services
- Parking pricing as a way to discourage drive alone trips

Chapter 8 focuses on the Downtown. The parking policies contained in Chapter 8 include managing the public parking supply to support the area’s economic vitality while enhancing the Downtown’s historic and livable qualities, managing the parking supply to reduce the need for

⁹ Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 1-1

¹⁰ Policy 7.1, Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 7-2

¹¹ Policy 7.4, Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 7-3

employee parking and increasing the availability of customer parking, and increasing the public parking available Downtown to address existing needs.¹²

Chapter 9 focuses on the Coastal Zone. The policies in Chapter 9 support a more consolidated parking system in the Waterfront and explore new and expanded alternative transit opportunities. Views of the ocean are important and it is suggested that no further development of parking should occur on the ocean side of Cabrillo Boulevard.¹³ The “park once” philosophy should be implemented on the Waterfront by working with residents to consolidate existing parking resources and consider reducing requirements for non-residential uses that share parking facilities.¹⁴

The Land Use Chapter of the CE discusses the need to allow more compact, pedestrian-oriented development along major transit corridors. A parking strategy cited to implement this policy is to reduce parking requirements of properties near major transit corridors if a negative impact will not occur.¹⁵

Since the adoption of the CE, little has been done to implement the parking policies and the Parking Master Plan is still a forthcoming work product. While public parking supplies have been increased Downtown (Granada Garage), parking requirements have not yet been adjusted with the exception of the required parking for residential Downtown, which was reduced to one space per unit, with no required provision of guest parking. Even this reduced residential parking requirement has not

¹² Policies 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3, Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 8-5 through 8-7

¹³ Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 9-1

¹⁴ Policy 9.2, Circulation of the General Plan, 1998, pp 9-6

¹⁵ Policy 13.2, Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 13-4

been fully realized, as developers claim that market demands require a need for two parking spaces per unit.

Next Steps in Parking Policy

In the meantime, traffic congestion levels continue to rise on city streets as well as Highway 101. Upper State Street is once again reaching traffic levels worse than the City's standard. With congestion and increased use of the automobile, parking supplies have also been raised as an issue. Instead of reducing parking requirements, discussions in recent times have favored more with providing more parking in such a way that spaces should be conveniently accessible even at peak parking demand times.

As with the decision-makers of the past, it is important to make the connection between parking policy and traffic congestion. Instead of two separate issues, parking strategies can be used to increase or decrease traffic congestion and to promote or discourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. Unfortunately, the provision of ample parking will continue to feed auto dependence. While parking strategies that make parking less convenient or more costly can seem "onerous" as mentioned in the *Impacts of Growth* report of 1974, they are necessary to maintain or improve congestion levels.

A helpful way to understand how parking impacts transportation decisions is to differentiate between parking users. The following section discusses parking policy for employees, residents, and customers.

Employee Parking

As shown in the documents cited in this report, employee parking contributes primarily to peak hour travel. If employee parking is challenging, costly, or unavailable, employees will be more inclined to seek other forms of transportation to and from work. When parking policies that limit employee parking are implemented in conjunction with increased transit, better bicycle access, and a convenient/attractive walking environment, there will be more opportunity to shift higher percentages of the work trips to alternative modes of travel. This approach to parking works hand in hand with the City's transportation policy to reduce congestion levels and preserve the City's limited roadway capacity.

As employee parking is limited, the Residential Parking Program (RPP) should be expanded to protect neighborhoods from parking demand overflow into adjacent neighborhoods. Neighborhood parking mitigation was the original purpose of the RPP: to protect Downtown neighborhoods from the intentional limitation in the amount of employee parking.

Residential Parking

Residential land use differs greatly from commercial land use relative to transportation. Residential land uses produce trips and commercial land uses attract trips. As a result, parking policies that limit parking storage or separate parking's cost from housing's cost will also limit a development's vehicle trip producing capacity.

Parking for residential development is best limited when the unit is located adjacent to a major transit corridor as recommended by the CE. The transit corridors in Santa Barbara generally have good pedestrian and bicycle environments in addition to frequent bus service. The major transit corridors also tend to be commercially-oriented streets where

shopping and business transactions can be accomplished in close proximity to the residence.

As the CE points out, a big constraint to reaching the City's transportation vision is "the perception that the automobile will always be the most convenient mode of transportation."¹⁶ The market forces and perception that every residence needs space for two cars oftentimes prevents proposals or discussion of residential land development projects with reduced on-site parking. Most reduced parking proposals are attributed to affordable and senior housing projects. Consequently, the provision of parking is a real cost of the development which is paid by the occupant in rent or mortgage. The provision for two parking spaces per unit, therefore, gives the resident an opportunity to purchase and own two cars, creating the opposite of the desired effect.

If only one parking space per unit is permitted along transit corridors, the total cost of the unit is reduced because the developer is not required to devote land resources and construction costs to the extra parking space. This cost savings can make the unit more attractive to a renter or buyer. The resident chooses to live in the unit knowing about the parking limitation. The limitation of one space per unit creates opportunities for sharing a vehicle, reducing or eliminating vehicle trips, and choosing to use alternative modes of travel and destinations that are closer to the residential unit. The result is the preservation of the roadway for existing traffic and for those that do not have good access to alternative modes of travel.

Another alternative to two spaces per unit is to pool the parking and then charge separately for its use. When people are given a choice to pay for

¹⁶ Circulation Element of the General Plan, 1998, pp 2-1

parking or not, many will choose not to have an extra car or any car in return for the cost savings. Car sharing is also another strategy that can be used to support lower or eliminated residential parking supplies while maintaining the resident's ability to access an automobile. Car sharing is a membership subscription to a car. Far less expensive than owning a car, subscribers sign up of vehicle use and pay for time spent using it. Car sharing is successful in European countries and is a growing building steam in the some American cities.

Customer Parking

As in the past, protecting customer parking supplies is key to preserving the economic vitality of the City. By limiting employee parking and residential parking along major transit corridors, more parking is freed up for the customer. Additionally, parking strategies for employees and residences that increase the use of alternative modes will free up roadway capacity for customers.

While it is important to provide for customer parking, future parking policy measures should consider the drawbacks of providing for ample parking demands that coincide with peak congestion periods. Certain businesses, such as markets and other services, have peak parking demands that correspond with the peak travel times of the roadway (usually the evening peak hours between 4 and 6 PM). Limiting parking supplies at such businesses prevents all who want to shop at that time from going at the same time. In a sense, limited parking provides a way to meter peak hour traffic. If a person arrives enough times at a constrained parking situation, they will either find an alternative time to make the trip or choose a business that has less demand. Either way, the congestion benefit is the same. In these cases, the success of the business cannot be dependent on consistent availability of parking

during peak travel times. Instead, this strategy would work with businesses that are expected to succeed regardless.

Conclusion

The Circulation Element calls for a Parking Master Plan to be drafted to optimize parking resources and encourage increased use of alternative modes of travel. In the meantime, the existing parking policies and those that have been used in the past can be implemented now to reduce traffic congestion overall, to increase alternatives available, and to consolidate existing parking resources. The most viable locations for immediate impact are along the major transit corridors, where parking supply for employee, customer and residential parking need to be managed appropriately.

Instead of transportation and parking being two separate issues, parking strategies can be used to increase or decrease traffic congestion and to promote or discourage alternatives use of alternative modes of transit. Additionally, the strategic arrangement of land uses that relate well to each other can increase alternative modes of travel. If residents can easily reach their desired destination by walking, cycling or make the trip on a convenient transit line, they will be less likely to make the trip by car, thus decreasing automobile traffic. In turn, if reduced parking is required in residential developments and if trips are more accessible by other modes of travel, it provides an option for a more affordable and a more physically active lifestyle. One cannot talk about each issue of parking, transportation and land use separately; they must be discussed and addressed as a whole, as each impacts the other. A decision in one field will have a ripple effect into the others.

Transportation and parking policy plays a vital role in everyday community life and has an inextricable relationship with individual

freedom of movement, land use, resource protection, health and economics. The decisions we make now in regards to transportation, parking and land use will have a lasting impact on the physical design of the City and on how people choose get around. Until the Parking Master Plan is completed, or the zoning ordinance adjusted, parking modifications will likely be required to implement current and past parking policy.