

5.5 PARKING

INTRODUCTION

Oregon's Transportation Planning Rule (TPR), (OAR 660-012-0000), requires that metropolitan area jurisdictions reduce their overall parking capacity (OAR 660-012-0045 (5) (c)). A reduction in parking is part of an overall strategy to reduce reliance on automobiles as the principal mode of travel and to help achieve a reduction in per capita vehicle miles traveled. The challenge of this goal is to reduce the amount of parking in ways that help achieve the travel-reduction goal and are equitable for all parties involved.

Parking reduction strategies are proposed to help the metropolitan area meet the TPR requirements. Strategies include changes to parking codes and policies, redesignation of existing parking, and management of roadway space. Next, some potential results are discussed (limited by data availability). Finally, some parking optimization techniques are presented, which may make it easier for motorists, employers, and employees to make use of available parking.

PARKING STANDARDS

The TPR requires implementation of a parking plan that achieves a 10 percent reduction in the number of parking spaces per capita in the MPO area over the planning period. This may be accomplished through a combination of restrictions on development of new parking spaces and requirements that existing parking spaces be redeveloped to other uses.

Ultimately, the parking plan must aid in achieving the overall requirement to reduce vehicle miles traveled per capita (VMT) in the MPO area. In MPO areas of less than 1 million population, including the RVMPO, a 5 percent VMT reduction is required.

It is anticipated that metropolitan areas will accomplish reduced reliance by changing land use patterns and transportation systems so that walking, cycling, and use of transit are highly convenient and so that, on balance, people need to and are likely to drive less than they do today.

The requirement to reduce VMT as it relates to parking offers some options. Local jurisdictions may set minimum and maximum parking standards in appropriate locations, such as downtowns, designated regional or



community centers and transit centers.

PARKING CODE AND POLICY CHANGES

Older parking regulations specified only minimum standards, leading some developments, such as retail stores, to provide an excess of parking. Most RVMPO cities now include maximum standards. Ashland and Talent limit spaces to 10 percent above the minimum; Phoenix limits the surplus to 5 percent. Medford's limit depends on uses, and Central Point's minimum standards are also its maximum standards. Codes also sometimes leave little flexibility to allow parking reduction strategies such as shared parking or on-street parking. Other recommended parking code and policy changes include parking fees and decreased building setbacks.

LOWER MINIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Lower parking minimums could have an impact on the total parking inventory, but there is no guarantee that developers would choose fewer parking spaces for their developments. Lower minimum parking requirements, however, might encourage some in-fill development. In-fill development can be encouraged to increase densities and remove land from its temporary status as parking lots. Both the reduction of existing parking and increasing building densities will help lead to a more pedestrian friendly environment and encourage transit ridership – a primary goal of the TPR.

PARKING FEES

Establishment of parking fees is not a policy of the RVMPO, but fees can be useful in some jurisdictions. Fees imposed on developers for each parking space are an indirect way of reducing the amount of parking provided by new developments. Fees can be levied on the developer, the tenant, or the end-user. These are fees for either the use or provision of each parking space. Fees levied on the developer may lead to smaller parking lots due to monetary considerations when building the project. Fees on the tenant may encourage them to seek out retail or office space in areas with smaller lots, thus putting market pressure on developers to build with less parking. Fees on end-users may result in different modal choices, bringing down parking demand and leaving land open for in-fill development or smaller parking facilities. Fees are an indirect strategy and may be difficult or impossible to implement as a stand-alone TPR-compliance parking reduction measure.

REDESIGNATION OF EXISTING PARKING

Changing existing general-use parking spaces to special-use parking can be used to promote the use of alternative modes and meet the requirements of the TPR. General parking provided on-street or in lots could be reclassified as preferential parking for carpools, or the handicapped. Preferential parking, especially close to building entrances, for carpooling or vanpooling is a common way of helping to promote these as alternatives to driving alone. Carpool parking need not be limited to parking lots. On-street parking spaces, including metered spaces, may be restricted to carpools. Typically, monthly permits are obtained and displayed when parked in a reserved carpool space in a lot or on the street.

As a side benefit, reclassification from general parking to carpool parking may help meet TPR requirements. Under TPR definitions, park and ride lots, handicapped parking and parking spaces for carpools and vanpools are not considered parking spaces for purposes of the TPR. The reclassification of a portion of the parking supply as permanent high occupancy vehicle (HOV) space may satisfy the TPR's parking reduction requirement.

In areas where easy access to free or low-cost parking has always been readily available, restrictions on parking may be poorly received by the public. Widespread conversion of general-use parking spaces to reserved parking for carpools or other restricted uses may lead to a high level of parking violations. This may place an undue burden on agencies for the enforcement of parking regulations at the expense of other activities.

MANAGEMENT OF ROADWAY SPACE

There is considerable competition for use of the paved roadway space: through lanes and turn lanes for motor vehicles, bicycle lanes, on-street parking spaces, loading zones, and bus stops. Management of the roadway space and the allocation for these uses can have a measurable impact on the amount of parking in the region. Changing parking spaces to travel lanes can help improve traffic flow, promote use of alternative modes, and meet the TPR requirements.



PARKING AND BIKE LANES

Bike lanes on arterial and major collector streets are required under the provisions of the TPR. In many locations throughout the Rogue Valley region, this will be accomplished by parking removal and re-striping of the street, rather than by widening the roadway.

PARKING AND TURN LANES

Re-striping for turn lanes is a transportation system management strategy that can be used to increase the capacity of intersections. In many cases, queuing distances at stop signs or traffic signals will require that no-parking zones be extended for more than 100 feet from the intersection. This could require removal of parking, which is sometimes permitted as close as 20 feet from a crosswalk at an intersection.

NO-PARKING ZONES

Designating larger no-parking zones to increase sight distances at intersections is already implied in the vehicle code. Parking is not permitted within 50 feet of a stop sign, yield sign, or other traffic control device where such parking hides it from view.

A blanket prohibition on parking within 50 feet of a corner would have a measurable impact on the number of parking spaces and would have other benefits related to sight distance.

STREET STANDARDS

Adopting new street standards for residential streets could include reducing street width to the extent that on-street parking would be permitted only on one side or eliminated.

PARKING OPTIMIZATION

There are techniques that can be used to make better use of parking, which may make it easier for residents, businesses, and employees to “live with” the parking reduction requirements of the TPR. However, optimizing the use of parking may defeat the other goal of the TPR, namely the reduction in per capita vehicle miles of travel. This is because the easy availability of free or low cost parking remains a significant factor in the individual’s choice of mode for trips to work, shopping, etc.

SHARED PARKING

Shared parking is the use of one or more parking facilities between developments with similar or different land uses. Each land use experiences varying parking demand depending on the time of day and the month of the year. It is possible for different land uses to pool their parking resources to take advantage of different peak use times.

Traditionally, parking lots have been sized to accommodate at least 90 percent of peak hour and peak month usage and serve a single development. For the most part, these lots are operating at a level considerably less than this amount. Shared parking schemes allow these uses to share parking facilities by taking advantage of different business peak parking times.

For example, a series of buildings may include such land uses as restaurants, theaters, offices, and retail – all of which have varying peak use times. A restaurant generally experiences parking peaks from 6 to 8 p.m., while offices typically peak around 10 a.m. and again around 2 p.m. on weekdays. Some retail establishments have their peak usage on weekends. Theaters often peak from 8 to 10 p.m. Without a shared parking plan, these uses would develop parking to serve each of their individual peaks. This generally results in each lot being heavily used while the other lots operate at far less than capacity. Depending upon the combination of uses, a shared parking plan may allow some developments to realize a parking reduction of 10-15 percent without a significant reduction in the availability of parking at any one time. This is possible due to the different peak periods for parking.

Some of the major obstacles to implementing shared parking schemes are the codes of local jurisdictions themselves. Quite often, parking codes are written to express parking minimums as opposed to maximums. Although Medford does allow shared parking, not all agencies do. In some cases, the implementation of shared parking

strategies may require changes to the minimum parking requirements contained in the parking policies of the metropolitan area jurisdictions.

Other issues surrounding shared parking are liability, insurance and the need for reciprocal access agreements allowing patrons of one establishment to cross land owned by another.

PARKING MANAGEMENT

Parking management and parking management associations (PMAs) are mechanisms that can facilitate shared parking among non-adjacent land uses by providing off-site central parking facilities. These facilities can be large parking structures or surface lots. Parking management can employ a wide range of techniques that will result in the efficient use of existing parking facilities. These include facilities like short-term on-street parking, medium-term nearby lot parking, High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) priority parking, and long-term parking.

PMAs are entities responsible for conducting this management and providing access to resources that will ease the burden on the parking supply. Often PMAs are non-profit groups supported by retail or business district associations. PMAs can incorporate such programs as providing bus passes or tokens in lieu of parking validation, delivery services, shuttle buses from remote lots, clear and consistent signage for parking facilities, etc.

An effective PMA benefits its members and its district by functionally increasing the parking supply for all uses and creating a parking plan that provides adequate parking for the area in a compact and coherent way. A PMA increases the efficiency of the use of land for parking, which helps reduce wasted space previously dedicated to underutilized parking. This, in turn, frees up land for further development. In the end, a successful PMA can create an area where parking is easier and more convenient, while using less land.



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