

Parking Management Programs as Effective TDM Land Use Strategies

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Background

With land values reaching unbelievable heights, (especially here in California) more and more jurisdictions and developers are looking for ways to maximize on-site parking capacity and to address access issues when new or in-fill development is planned. This is especially difficult with in-fill projects in older neighborhoods, or where the existing transportation infrastructure doesn't allow for traditional land use design requirements. Transportation Demand Management strategies can be implemented to successfully assist with this otherwise costly or prohibitive dilemma.

Jurisdictions have historically required a minimum parking standard for all types of development, which vary depending upon the zoning, the type of use, the intensity of the use, and the local parking standards of the jurisdiction. Since all California cities need revenue generated from development to support general fund needs, the pressure to mitigate parking and access issues from new development has increased. The range of options available to planners and land owners in the development of parking management programs is limited almost only by one's imagination. Strategies which would have been unthinkable only a few years ago are now being incorporated into Conditions of Approval on a wide range of project types.

The benefits of parking management strategies include: meeting the economic needs of the community by allowing higher density than would otherwise be accommodated by traditional land use parking requirements or land use strategies; meeting the financial needs of the development community to make a project viable; developing a more aesthetic and holistic approach to parking allocation; supporting the transportation infrastructure by spreading out the types of access trips to include more transit, walk/bicycle and carpool/vanpool access; providing opportunities for better streetscape design, thereby making it a more aesthetically pleasing addition to the community.

The best Parking Management Programs are customized for a specific worksite in order to maximize the potential to reduce onsite parking needs. Listed below is a menu of options and strategies which can be used to address parking and access issues in an effective Parking Management Program. These include:

Bus Shelters

To increase the use of transit accessing the site, working with the local transit agency to arrange for a bus shelter and local stop is desirable, where feasible.

Bicycle Infrastructure

Installing bicycle lockers is a good way to get employees to bicycle by providing safe and protected storage for their bicycles, while racks are a way to encourage some visitors or customers to bicycle to the site.

Carsharing

Carshare programs are increasing in popularity for those who don't need a car daily and then usually only need a car to get to and/or from home or work. Some employers are now forming carshare programs for their employees to access transit or for work-related business. This allows for a reduction in parking needs because several people can share one vehicle. It is less costly for a business than maintaining a fleet vehicle which may not be used daily.

Casual Carpooling is usually a grass roots method of commuters forming new carpools on a daily basis, usually with strangers. Casual carpool locations are often located near freeway on-ramps, or near transit hubs (e.g. train or ferry locations). Some locations have become more formalized by signage where commuters line up waiting for rides.

Commuter Choice is a program which offers an employee pre-tax benefits of up to \$100 per month in passes or vouchers for taking public transit, trains, ferries or vanpools. (Legislatively enacted by TEA 21 in 1998). It also allows for a parking subsidy of up to \$175 per month (restrictions apply) to employees who give up their parking space. (see Parking Cash-Out). Several companies offer variations in the administrative set-up of this type of program for employers. There are many versions of employee benefit programs including Employee-Paid pre tax, Shared Benefit Plans, etc.

Compressed Work Week schedule is usually one where an employee works four ten-hour days per week (known as a 4/40 schedule) or works eighty hours in nine business days, (known as a 9/80 schedule). These schedules not only spread out the commute times, but also eliminate one or two days of reporting to work by consolidating the work hours into fewer days.

ECO Pass is a term often used to describe employer-subsidized transit pass programs.

Flex Pass Program is one where employees are offered incentives usually, but not always linked to off-set parking charges. These incentives include free parking days for those who rideshare (if free parking isn't offered to ridesharers every day).

Flex-time can be offered whereby the employer and the employee agree to an alternative work schedule. Arrival time can be delayed for instance, to arrive after the morning peak period and leave after the p.m. peak.

Parking Cash-out permits employees to have the choice of a parking space or to receive the cash equivalent and to use an alternative commute mode instead. The cash option is taxable. The amount of the subsidy is usually the same as the cost of parking.

Parking Debit Card is when employees use a debit card to access parking. The card can also be used to access transit in some programs. This is similar to the Transportation Allowance, in that whatever remains on the debit card can be turned in for cash at the end of the month.

Parking In-lieu Fees

Some jurisdictions will offer an opportunity for a developer to pay a parking in-lieu fee instead of providing all of the parking spaces which would otherwise be required. These fees are usually negotiated based on a standard fee and vary depending upon the number of spaces reduced.

Parking Maximums/Minimums

Jurisdictions can establish maximum or reduced minimum parking standards for developments which reduces the number of spaces required. Usually developers must agree to pay a mitigation fee to the jurisdiction and/or establish a parking management program or on-site TDM program.

Parking Pass is a program which provides several free or discounted SOV days per month for those who usually rideshare or take transit. It's an added inducement for those employees who can be convinced to try an alternative most of the time, while offering them an opportunity to have a vehicle on occasion for errands.

Parking Permits can be used to restrict employee parking. This can be used as an enforcement tool in restricted areas.

Parking Pricing plans charge for parking at specific times of the day, either on a limited basis, during select hours, or at all times.

Pedestrian Access

Ensuring that there is sidewalk access to the site is important, and in some cases a pedestrian bridge might be necessary, either to assist in crossing over a major arterial or to cross small creeks or waterways which might lead to the sight from local neighborhoods.

Preferential Parking

These are designated spaces, often closer to the building than other parking. Usually this parking is designated either by signage or colored markings on the pavement or curb.

Rideshare Clubs

By enrolling in a rideshare club, employees are eligible for discounts at local merchants and can receive other free or discounted incentives.

Satellite Parking can be off-site where parking is more available (for instance Park and Ride lots). If used in conjunction with shuttles, transit, or carpooling, it can be an effective way to augment on-site parking capacity.

Shared Use Parking

By designing mixed development, it provides an opportunity for a reduction in on-site parking and shared use of parking spaces. Mixed use development allows for the parking demand to be spread out over the period of an entire day, not just at the traditional a.m. and p.m. peak periods. Common types of mixed uses include residential housing (on the second story) over retail (on the ground floor), for instance.

Shuttles

Formation of employer shuttles, or working with local transit agencies to provide shuttles can provide direct access to the site without the need for additional parking. Shuttles to/from rail stations or ferries can be especially effective, especially if there is no direct or quick bus service.

Tandem/Stacked Parking

Tandem or stacked parking is most often seen in valet lots. It is effective if there is a system established so that there is either communication between the users, or some method for accessing cars which would otherwise be stuck by a car parked behind it. (The Contra Costa County Administration building has a Stacked Parking lot which works effectively).

TDM Programs

Employers can offer a wide range of incentives and disincentives to encourage the use of commute alternatives among employees. To assist in the development of a TDM Program, a worksite should: have an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC), within the development to distribute commute alternative information to employees and/or visitors; conduct annual employee transportation surveys to assist in determining the success of the TDM strategies being implemented; sell transit tickets on-site or provide transit subsidies; distribute transportation information to all new employees; promote rideshare campaigns (Bike to Work Day, Spare the Air Campaign, California Rideshare Week, etc.); provide a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program; provide on-site ridematching to encourage and facilitate carpool and vanpool formation; provide incentives or contests for those employees who take a commute alternative (transit passes, carpool gas cards, gift certificates, etc.), charge for parking or charge only for drive alones, allowing carpoolers to park free; provide vacation leave, based on the use of commute alternatives; offer commute alternative travel reimbursement (per mile, or per day) for riding a bicycle or carpooling, or walking to work.

Telcommuting/Telework offers an employee the opportunity to work from home or at a telework center which is usually close to home.

Time Restrictions limit the amount of time a car can be parked either in a lot, or for on- street parking. Having posted signs which designate spaces for limited, or visitor parking only can be effective to ensure customers can access the worksite. Long term employee parking can then be either limited, or restricted farther away from the building to allow better access for visitors. This raises an enforcement issue however.

Transportation Allowance offers employees a credit towards transportation goods and services. The credit is usually used by the employee to pay for parking, purchase transit tickets, or receive discounts for transportation needs or local merchant or vendor discounts. This is often instituted with parking pricing programs to encourage commute alternative use.

Unbundled Parking Leases separate the parking availability from the leased space. By having the parking separate from the cost of the office space, employers can reduce the need for the parking in a number of ways, including parking pricing, offering incentives, etc. to encourage employees to use commute alternatives.

Worksite Amenities include access to a wide range of conveniences which reduce the need for employees to drive alone to work. Examples include onsite showers and clothes lockers, dry cleaners, childcare facilities, ATM machines, restaurants, etc.

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