

Ann Arbor Downtown Parking Study, Phase II Recommendations Accomplishments to Date (current December 2009)

Nelson/Nygaard Toolbox Recommendations:

Establish a Dedicated Downtown Transportation Funding Source

Done

The DDA has dedicated funding for downtown transportation using two funding streams - its parking revenues and its tax increment finance (TIF) revenues.

In recognition of its belief that parking is one part of a multi-modal transportation system, the DDA uses its parking revenues to fund a number of important downtown transportation programs. It increased its annual transportation funding to more than \$600,000/year, which includes go!Pass subsidies for 6,800 downtown employees (a 15% increase over previous years), increased funds for the getDowntown program, funding for a transit Connector study, and a sponsorship for 6 downtown Zipcars.

Other 2009 DDA transportation grants included the following:

- \$100,000 for enhancements to downtown transportation programs
- \$25,000 to getDowntown for the 2009 Commuter Challenge
- \$12,000 to getDowntown for a study to determine awareness of getDowntown and its programs
- \$80,000 for a Connector Study in partnership with the AATA, UM & City

The DDA has also earmarked TIF funds for pedestrian improvements and planning aimed at making downtown more walkable and bikeable. Recent commitments include its:

- Fifth/Division bicycle/pedestrian improvements project \$7,100,000
- Downtown ADA curb ramp replacements \$1,860,000
- Wayfinding project \$1,650,000
- 300+/- new bike parking racks/spaces \$75,000
- GFCI installation on Main Street Area street lights \$50,000

Create a Supportive Context/Parking/Transportation Oversight Committee

Done

There are now several intertwined groups that meet regularly to coordinate parking and transportation efforts, and there is effective overlap between these committees to ensure that information is shared and projects are undertaken in partnership with others.

The UM/City/DDA/AATA Parking & Transportation Consortium works to coordinate AATA/UM bus systems and UM/City road/sidewalk enhancements. This group meets monthly and also shares information on UM/DDA parking systems and pedestrian improvement projects, such as wayfinding.

The City Alternative Transportation Program Manager convenes a monthly "Alt" Committee meeting that pulls together representatives of WATS, City, UM, DDA, Washtenaw Walking/Biking Coalition, and others for project updates and information sharing on alternative transportation initiatives.

The getDowntown advisory board has DDA, City, and AATA representatives meeting monthly. Several projects have been developed from this collaboration, including the City's Lead by Example initiative sponsored by the City, and the downtown Zipcar program sponsored by the DDA.

The DDA has established a DDA Transportation Committee to coordinate the various DDA transportation initiatives. The DDA's Transportation and Operations Committees have both taken responsibility to continue the DDA's pursuit of transportation/parking demand management strategies and programs.

Maintain on-Going Parking and Transportation Conditions Review

Ongoing

The DDA is regularly tracking utilization data for the public parking system, and downtown transportation system. As recommended by Nelson/Nygaard, it receives occupancy data by parking facility, by day, week, and calendar month. As part of this assessment, the DDA monitors usage assessing variables such as number of business days per month. Its parking operator has provided a report on off-street parking facilities that were incurring regular occupancy above 85%. The DDA also tracks go!pass use and LINK ridership on a monthly basis and will now begin to receive Zipcar usage data. These reports are provided for the public on the DDA website as part of the DDA's Benchmark Project.

City Lead by Example

Done

The Nelson/Nygaard report pointed out that the City administration, as one of Downtown's largest employers, can play a crucial role by Leading by Example. To this end, the City contracted with the getDowntown Program to coordinate a comprehensive commute trip reduction program for City employees. With the support of getDowntown, the City surveyed employee commuting behavior, conducted employee focus group meetings, amassed zip codes for employees who work in the downtown, created a centralized display unit for commuting options, and recruited commuting Ambassadors at the City.

Immediate Actions

Maximize Downtown's Accessibility through Non-Motorized Modes - Maintain All-Season Sidewalk Access.

Ongoing

The City enforces shoveling/sidewalk clearance laws for all city sidewalks, including those in the downtown and near downtown. If a sidewalk or bike lane maintenance problem is discovered, community members are urged to call or use the City's online service to report it. A Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) effort is underway for S. Main Street and will be coming to the City for approval in spring 2010; sidewalk snow removal is a key component of this BIZ effort.

Over the past two years, the DDA has replaced the majority of non-compliant curb ramps in the DDA District with ADA-compliant ramps and has committed funds to complete many others in the next two years. In addition, MDOT and the City have also been replacing non-compliant downtown curb ramps as part of their road resurfacing projects.

Establish A Policy in Support of Prohibiting "Right Turns on Red"

Done

City transportation engineers reviewed this recommendation have concluded that determinations regarding this prohibition should be made based on the conditions in each location.

Establish a Policy in Support of Leading Pedestrian Intervals

Done

City transportation engineers reviewed this recommendation have concluded that determinations regarding this prohibition should be made based on the conditions in each location.

Increase Non-Motorized Transportation Funding

Done

The DDA has dramatically increased its non-motorized transportation funding. Most significantly, the DDA is underway with a \$7.1 million pedestrian/bike improvement project on Fifth & Division that will include bike

lanes, sidewalk bump outs, many more trees and seating, and LED pedestrian-scale lighting to help reshape these very car-centric corridors into “complete streets.” The installation of a new wayfinding sign system (estimated total cost \$1 million) is nearly complete including “you are here” maps encouraging downtown visitors to walk to points of interest. The DDA has spent 80% of a total \$1.86 million commitment to replace downtown sidewalk curb ramps. Nearly all downtown alleys have been repaired and resurfaced with attractive stamped concrete to encourage pedestrians to use the alleys as a means to traverse downtown. In addition, the City used a Safety Grant for countdown pedestrian signals in the downtown.

Formalize a Downtown Travel Choice Coordinator Office

Done

The Nelson/Nygaard report recommended that the getDowntown program be provided additional funding to help raise its profile. The DDA has expanded its funding for the getDowntown office by providing a grant to pay for a second full time staff member, more publicity and promotions, studies and incentives for downtown workers to try transportation alternatives.

Expand Car-Sharing

Done

The UM Zipcar program was expanded off campus and into the downtown in March 2009 with a grant from the DDA to subsidize four vehicles plus extra funds for marketing and promotions and this fall the DDA expanded its sponsorship to a total of six downtown Zipcars. In addition to its sponsorship grant, the DDA has also provided free parking spaces for these vehicles in what had been popular metered parking spaces.

Provide Free or Discounted Rideshare Parking

Underway

DDA has reserved two of the most convenient parking spaces in each parking structure for registered car- and vanpool vehicles. The getDowntown program is working with MichiVan and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority to match interested van/car pool riders and is actively promoting this option with employers and at transportation events.

Offer “Limited Use” Passes for Employers with Evening Operations

Done

The DDA is offering overnight/offpeak monthly parking structure permits during the offpeak hours of 3pm and 9am at the very discounted rate of \$30/month (regular monthly parking permits cost \$130/month).

Further, the DDA is subsidizing Night Rides for employees working at night; rides are free to employees who live in Ann Arbor and present their go!pass.

Implement a Valet Parking Pilot Project at Maynard Structure

Done

Valet service began at the Maynard structure in December 2008 based on a recommendation from the Nelson/Nygaard report that this program would 1) increase daytime capacity at a facility that is popular among visitors and commuters, and 2) increase efficiency of space at Maynard, especially at top floors. Unfortunately patron demand for this service was not strong and the program was discontinued.

Operate Evening LINK Circulator Service

Done

In 2008 the DDA increased its LINK subsidy to extend service until 11pm; oddly LINK ridership didn’t increase but rather decreased with expanded hours. The DDA Transportation Committee spent months discussing issues related to the LINK, and opted not to support another grant this year but instead the DDA formally asked the AATA board for a partnership to reshape the program so it best meets downtown needs.

Establish a State Street Area Parking Benefit District Pilot Project

Done

Nelson/Nygaard recommended that the DDA establish a pilot Parking Benefit District (PBD) in the State Street area to demonstrate the benefits of using on-street pricing to manage availability and generate funds for public improvements (a concept taken from Pasadena, CA, where parking meters were installed in 1993 and the revenues were used to fund sidewalk improvements). Unlike Pasadena, downtown Ann Arbor has a DDA with a TIF capture to be spent on sidewalk improvements.

Complete the Information and Wayfinding Campaign

Nearly Done

The DDA is nearly complete with its wayfinding sign installation which was designed to make downtown easier to navigate by visitors and new residents. Also included in this effort, the DDA now has its parking vacancy data available via the web and through use of PDAs.

Implement Express Commuter Bus Service

Done

AATA has implemented new express service between Chelsea/Ann Arbor and between Canton/Ann Arbor with a \$125 monthly cost. The DDA has provided a grant to the getDowntown program to subsidize half this cost to make this express service even more attractive to downtown commuters using their go!passes.

Track Technology Investment Opportunities

Underway

The DDA has implemented pay-by-credit card service at all cashiered off-street parking facilities, and this has proven to be popular. A pilot project utilizing completely self-serve parking equipment is in place at the 5th & William lot. The DDA is also underway with a pilot using an AVI system that would provide hand-free hourly parking payment at the parking structures using a debit system. Stored value cards are available for use at the on-street parking meters and are growing in popularity. New accounts receivable software, computers and other technologies have been purchased for the DDA's parking operator with the goal of making more parking data and policy initiatives available in the coming months. 25 on street parking pay stations were installed on high-demand downtown streets in July, and the program will eventually be expanded elsewhere in downtown.

Expand the Guaranteed Ride Home Program

Done

Participants in Michigan Rideshare (a program of Ann Arbor Transportation Authority) are not only able to find car and van pool partners quickly and securely, they are also able to take advantage of a free Guaranteed Ride Home program which provides reimbursement for taxi trips if participants need to leave work unexpectedly or work unplanned overtime.

Coordinate Park and Ride Improvements

Underway

AATA is currently working on options for improving existing Park and Ride service. A new lot is under development at M-23/Plymouth Road. At peak hours there is service every 10-15 minutes from the ride lots. Real time information about bus location is available for PDA users at Park and Ride lots and other locations.

Leave Parking Exemptions in the Zoning Code

Done

City Council recently voted to approve A2D2 zoning changes for the downtown and as part of this, have lessened the amount of parking required for future downtown projects and have replaced negotiated agreements for off-site monthly permits with the option of providing a contribution in lieu of constructing required parking on site. This contribution would be used for public parking and transportation improvements in the downtown.

Facilitate Shared On-Site Parking

Done

As part of its A2D2 zoning approval, City Council created the opportunity for shared parking through zoning. One proposal would count each private parking space reserved, signed and enforced for a car-sharing

service (e.g. Zipcar) as four required motor vehicle parking spaces. Another approach for the core downtown area is a proposal to exempt the floor area of above-grade parking structures that house parking in excess of the requirement from the building's floor area limitation, up to a maximum of 200% of the lot area, if the excess parking spaces are made available to the general public. To qualify for this zoning premium, the design of the parking structure must meet standards for public parking, and the property owner must sign a development agreement outlining the operating conditions for the parking.

Pursue Existing Joint-Development Opportunities

Done

The Nelson/Nygaard report recommended that the City and DDA should coordinate with the District Library to expand the Library on top of the City's S. Fifth Avenue surface parking lot adjacent to the Library. The AADL board reviewed this opportunity and opted not to pursue this. In August 2009 the City distributed an RFP asking for proposals from the private sector community to construct on top of the S. Fifth Avenue underground parking structure; six proposals are currently under review by an Advisory Committee.

The report also stated that the city-owned site at 1st & Washington presented another "ideal opportunity for Joint-Development expansion of the off-street inventory." The City used an RFP to select Village Green Companies to redevelop the 1st & Washington site with a mixed use project that includes a public parking component. The DDA voted to provide funding for this project and Village Green's site plan was approved by City Council last year and the developer is actively seeking bank financing for their venture.

Continue Seeking Joint Development Opportunities

Underway

In addition to 1st & Washington, recently the DDA and City have also worked to encourage redevelopment of the former YMCA site at 5th & William, and the former car rental lot at Division & Washington. Information on the S. Ashley (Kline) parking lot has been shared with several local and regional developers interested in future downtown projects. Further, the City's 4th & Catherine parking lot is under consideration for redevelopment with 100 units of very affordable housing.

Short-Term Actions

Implement Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Recommendations

* Install crossing islands for Huron Street crosswalks: **Done**

The DDA developed and approved an improvement plan for Huron but resolved not to pursue this immediately. In fall 2009 MDOT, UM, DDA, and the City explored an alternate idea which is to see if it would be feasible to convert the four lanes of traffic on Huron to three lanes to facilitate pedestrian crossings and found this to be infeasible.

* Install pedestrian countdown signals

Done

* Install on-street parking 1 block south on west side of Main, south of William

Done

Establish A Pilot Valet Program in the Main St Area

Done

The DDA Operations Committee Members assessed the lack of success of the Maynard structure valet program and determined that it would not move forward with a valet parking project in the Main Street area.

Install Additional Multi-Space Meters

Done

The first 25 multi-space machines were installed in spring/summer 2009. As part of this project, space markers were designed and fabricated, and a branding/promotions effort was created to communicate to patrons how the equipment works. This information and equipment will be utilized when the remaining 150 pay stations are installed sometime in the next few years.

Investigate Additional Parking Benefit District Opportunities

Done

As mentioned earlier, unlike Pasadena, downtown Ann Arbor has a DDA with a TIF that is captured with the purpose of spending it on sidewalk improvements. Thus a decision has been made to continue using TIF funds for downtown improvements such as street lights, trees, seating, and more, and to use DDA parking revenues for parking operations and funding for sustainable transportation programs.

Quarterly Travel Choice Networking Sessions - Provide Parking Discount to Networking Session Participants

Done

The getDowntown Program Coordinator is meeting with and communicating with downtown employers more often than quarterly. The decision was made not to provide parking discounts to participants, as this was deemed to be counter productive to the goal of encouraging use of other transportation modes.

Offer Debit Account Alternative to Monthly Permit Holders

Under Development

As stated earlier, the DDA is a few months into a pilot project using AVI technology in the structures. Among the many valuable early lessons has been that there is a significant time delay as the equipment “reads” the card upon entry into the parking structure and that the technology is geared more to a system where patrons put stored value on their accounts which is then drawn down upon exiting. The DDA has also learned that eventually the current practice of lifting the parking facility gate arms at midnight on Sunday morning to provide free parking on Sundays will no longer work as the AVI system requires information at all times on who is in the facility and how long they have stayed. Thus a meeting was held with several representatives of the downtown churches to discuss how to best communicate about the future system which will require patrons parking on Sunday to pull a ticket upon entering and insert a ticket upon exiting.

Operate Summer LINK Service

Under Discussion

The Nelson/Nygaard report predicted that evening LINK service will greatly expand LINK ridership, and then summer service should be provided to maintain ridership gains. Instead, ridership lessened. The AATA board has been asked for a partnership with the DDA to develop a better system. There is currently some summer service, as the LINK is run during Art Fair on a modified route.

Expand Express Commuter Bus Service

Under Development

As described, AATA has recently launched its new Ann Arbor /Canton express service. Half the cost of this service will be subsidized by the DDA for downtown workers. AATA is evaluating opportunities for other future service.

Formalize an In Lieu Fee Option

Done

As noted above, the A2D2 rezoning included an in-lieu fee option for providing required parking on site.

Implement New Parking Requirements

Done

Nelson/Nygaard recommended that minimum bicycle parking requirements should be enhanced and rideshare vehicle parking be encouraged. As part of the A2D2 rezoning proposal, requirements for the type, location, and quantity of bicycle parking new developments has been added.

Implement Right Turn on Red Prohibitions and Leading Pedestrian Intervals

Done

Again, City staff determined that this needs to be addressed at intersections on a case-by-case basis.

Recommended Long-Term Actions

Manage All Parking Demand with Pricing

Under Development

The DDA is assembling additional information about its system with the goal of understanding where and when parking demand is at its greatest. This information includes retrieving and mapping on street metered areas with highest demand, on-street areas where more or fewer parking tickets are issued, and areas that have longer or shorter time limits at the meters. Information is also being researched about other communities that increase rates over time to understand how this information is communicated clearly to patrons.

Offer Debit Accounts for Hourly Parkers

Under Development

Debit accounts have been created for a pilot subgroup of parkers to determine if the Republic Parking accounts receivable software and computers are functioning accurately. This project has been underway for the past couple months. The DDA is also assessing the extent of its financial risk if monthly permits were no longer utilized. As part of this, it analyzed activity for 400 permits for 6 months and saw that there would be a great revenue loss if permits were eliminated and parking was paid by the hour instead. This is a significant issue to be resolved since the parking system must generate sufficient funds for debt repayment and operations. And increasing parking rates to make up this difference will be very painful to the downtown as parking rates are already high compared to similar-sized Michigan cities and the rates charged in the UM parking system.

Offer Off-Street Parking Discount Options

Underway

The DDA is actively discussing these recommendations. Discounted evening parking permits are already being provided, and the DDA is discussing the in-lieu parking concept for residents of developments.

Implement Seamless Payment Systems

Under Review

Nelson/Nygaard pointed to the idea of a “smartcard” technology that can be used to pay for on-street and off-street parking, as well as transit that has been under evaluation in Washington D.C. The DDA has determined that this is an emerging and evolving technology and for the short term will be focusing on expanding use of more traditional credit/debit card transactions.

Implement Pedestrian Improvements, including crosswalk striping, and midblock crossings

Underway

As part of a downtown road resurfacing project the DDA paid to install decorative crosswalk stamping at two intersections and a mid-block crossing on Maynard Street to emphasize the importance of pedestrian movements in the State Street area. The DDA, City, and MDOT have all approved the DDA’s 5th & Division project, which is now underway with construction on Division Street. When completed, this project will include stamped crosswalks, bulb outs, seating, tree planters, and other pedestrian amenities.

Retro-fit Existing Structures to allow street-oriented uses

Underway

As a first step, new Republic Parking offices are now operating at the Maynard and Forest Avenue parking structures facing onto the sidewalk with RPS staff members available to meet with members of the public to discuss maintenance concerns or meter questions.

Encourage Rental Property Owners to Unbundle Parking Costs from Rents

No Plans

As part of the A2D2 discussions, the concept of finding a way to encourage rental property owners to unbundle parking costs from rents was considered. Many property owners already practice this concept.

The DDA learned that some backyard parking spaces that are not being rented to tenants are instead being rented on the open market to commuters. Thus it is not clear that encouraging tenants not to use these parking spaces isn't creating an unintended consequence of encouraging commuter parking.

Contracted Permits – eliminated at the end of leases

Underway

Since receipt of the Nelson/Nygaard study one parking contract has expired and was not renewed. There are only a half dozen parking contracts remaining – some of which are tied to City site plan approvals.

Washtenaw County Courthouse Plans/no new permits to be made available at Ann Ashley

No Plans

Since issuance of the Nelson/Nygaard report Washtenaw County has not announced any plans to expand operation at the County Courthouse.

Premium Permits – maintain some quantity

Underway

The DDA is working with current premium permit holders to encourage use of transit and other transportation choices, while maintaining some quantity of premium permits.

Near Downtown Residential Parking Permits – increase awareness of program

Done

After considering this recommendation, the City opted instead to install parking meters in near downtown neighborhoods being used by commuters for parking.

Violation Forgiveness – establish a practice of “first time forgiveness”

Under Review

The DDA and City have each appointed committees to explore a “Mutually Beneficial” way to increase revenues to both the City and DDA. One idea that may be considered is how the DDA could play a bigger role with parking enforcement, including involvement in customer friendly ideas like first time forgiveness.

Increase Campaign to Get Bicycles Off of Sidewalks

Underway

A public meeting was held in early May 2009 to discuss new bike lanes in the downtown and the related issue of how to encourage bicycles to get off the sidewalks. The City has assembled funds to pay for the installation of signs communicating to drivers to respect the rights of bicyclists in the street and to bicyclists to be careful around pedestrians. And plans are underway to design and install banners over the streets later this year that will urge respectful behavior on the part of cars and bicycles so that bicyclists will feel more comfortable riding in the streets, rather than on the sidewalks.

Expand the Programs – e.g. night ride for evening workers, etc.

Underway

The DDA sponsored a free ride home for evening workers run by AATA using a van and unfortunately demand was very limited. AATA's Night Ride program is being used to serve this purpose and the DDA is providing a subsidy so use by downtown workers will be free.

Sharing Lessons Learned in Downtown Ann Arbor with Other Downtowns and Other Parking Systems

Implementation of the many recommendations contained within the Nelson/Nygaard Ann Arbor Downtown Parking Study report has been pursued aggressively by several agencies with a shared interest in downtown transportation. These agencies include the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority, the getDowntown program, the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, and the City of Ann Arbor. A tremendous number of accomplishments have come about in the past two years, and information on our efforts has been shared with representatives of other downtowns, parking systems, and cities in the following forums:

- Presentation at International Downtown Association (IDA) annual conference, New York City, September 2007
- Article in *Planning Magazine*, May 2008
- Presentation at American Planning Association (APA) annual conference, Minneapolis, April 2009
- (not yet published) article in *International Parking Institute (IPI) Magazine*