

Chapter 4. Public Outreach Week #2

The preceding sections, summarizing initial public outreach feedback and outlining preliminary recommendations, formed the basis of discussion during the second and final week of public outreach for Phase II. A summary of this information was distributed prior to meetings, while handouts and displays of the same helped to facilitate and frame discussion during the meetings. The focus and purpose of these final meetings with key Downtown stakeholders was to help identify a final set of recommendations. In doing so, the Project Team relied upon feedback during this week on any “fatal flaws” related to the preliminary set of recommendations.

The second week of public outreach was convened from May 7 – May 10, 2007, and consisted of three components, as described below.

A second series of meetings with the first week’s focus groups:

- Alternative Mode advocates;
- City residents;
- Downtown commuters; and
- Representatives from the Downtown business community.

Another meeting with key policy board representatives from:

- The Ann Arbor City Council;
- The Downtown Development Authority;
- The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority; and
- The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission.

In addition, a second public open house was held at Community High School. Notes from each of these events are summarized below.

Notes from Focus Group Meetings

Alternative Modes Focus Group

Figure 4-1 Alternative Modes Focus Group Attendees

Name	Representing
Dave Askins	Self
Pete Hines	Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition
Kris Talley	Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition
Phil Farber	Washtenaw Bicycling and Walking Coalition
Shannon Tubb	Self
Joan French	Self
Ray Fullerton	Self

Participant Questions & Comments

Parking Principles, Policies, and Miscellaneous

- Who attended the Commuter Focus Group?
- What are the topics covered by the rating system?
- One participant had an issue with the wording of #5 of the Proposed Parking Principles – If everyone knows they can get a parking permit, will that result in continued building until there is no longer a waitlist? Another participant questioned what the measure of “sufficient” would be within this principle. A participant commented that if #5 tells us when parking supply isn’t sufficient; it should also be able to tell when there is an oversupply. Someone questioned how the supply is being monitored if permits are eventually going away.

Biking

- Regarding the ratio of one bike space for every car spaces – would those be covered inside the structure? A participant noted that bike hoops should be right in front of business, and added that that’s why they bike. Another participant noted that if they were regularly commuting by bike they would like some to be covered.
- A participant noted that biking is cost-effective, so they should be given the best access. (There was a resulting discussion regarding why it is not possible to say definitively that one mode of access is (versus seems) more cost-effective than another, because the scale slides as people shift between modes.)
- One participant shared that there is sometimes an objection to bike lockers if people are able to pay at it (versus renting the locker on a monthly basis) as there is a concern that homeless individuals could use them as a sleeping space
- Cyclists should be rewarded for biking, as an issue of fairness – hoops should be located every 30-40 ft. One option is to remove on-street metered parking spaces

(possibly out one per block), and put bike hoops in the parking space, as the symbolic impact would be huge! (One observer responded that this idea would be terrible, and would have a bad impact on merchants).

- No place to park your bike on Main St between William and Liberty when the chairs and tables are out.
- Places where meters are close enough to the street that bike racks are parallel (like on Washington) put the bikes at risk of being wiped out when a big SUV backs up into a space.
- Principle #4 should say “Support and respect modes of access...”

Parking and Signage

- How would on-site shared parking be facilitated (would this work because some people are gone during the day)?
- Does the idea of using debit cards at meters mean that permits won't be switched over to debit cards?
- Regarding wayfinding, could pricing be posted? Such as on-street versus structured, so you know before you get there and can make an informed decision – as well as posting that covered bike-parking is available free of charge inside the structure.
- The wayfinding signs should show where stores are too, not just transit info – example of sign that showed the cost of driving versus taking the bus
- Regarding pricing for on-street parking – is the program at the point of looking at what price point is necessary to get to 85% occupancy? How does setting the rate for parking in the structures work?
- Is there a vision for how daytime parking structures should be priced in order to avoid building new parking?
- Have you talked with restaurant owners on Main St. to see how they feel about extending hours on the meters at night?
- During discussion of pricing and managing the percentage of student users, regarding balancing a strict market approach and leaving it up to the DDA, one participant commented that even if a ceiling price is set that businesses are still comfortable with, students would still be comfortable with that price too, so how will the number of student users be controlled?
- One participant commented that the group he works form refuses to locate downtown because they don't want to pay for parking.
- Questions regarding the multi-meter system – how it would work and be enforced?
- Would there be any value to keeping some amount of the “luxury permits” so some people can pay a huge amount for a guaranteed space?
- Where does the parking in-lieu fee go?

Commuter Focus Group

Figure 4-2 Commuter Focus Group Attendees

Name	Representing
Sharon Stanley	Permit Holders
Gale Redding	Commuters

Participant Questions & Comments

Parking Principles, Policies, and Miscellaneous

- Clarification on “TDM” and a discussion followed on the use of a new term like “Transportation Options.”
- Need to make transportation options available to more than just employers, need to bring more visibility to the general public, via newspaper articles, etc.

Alternative Modes

- Question on the U-M Zip Car program regarding who supplies the cars.
- Thought a lot of people use the AATA ride-match program.
- Saw a bike chained to a bus stop and thought that was clever. Since some bike racks were removed from Main Street, more people are chaining to street furniture.
- Regarding a possible commuter bus from Brighton, would they go in on the cost? If it started and actually happened, people would use it.

Parking & Signage

- Concerned about extending meter hours, know that a lot of businesses on Main Street that are very against it, they think it’ll be very unfriendly to visitors, and visitors are worried about getting tickets – there are no numbers to show that it’s the employees that are using the meters at night.
- Good that Ann Ashley has a sign out front that say \$2 for the rest of the night, the problem is that people think they can’t walk, and think they need to be right out in front, the valet service should help this problem too.
- The valet service will be good for weekends. One attendee comments that they come down for dinner and go to 4th & Washington first to park; if no parking is available, they’ll go out to the suburbs to eat.
- What would the charge for valet be? They’ve tried a small program and charged \$10, it didn’t seem to work well, and it wasn’t well advertised .
- Would there still be a monthly permit or just debit cards? So you could come and go as you please? Would there be no guarantee that you could get a spot?
- How do you regulate a time limit with the in-vehicle meters – can you stay as long as you want?

- How do out-of-town visitors know what the demand pricing is? If someone is paying with change and keeps coming back to the meter, would the demand pricing still work?
- The idea of retro-fitting structures is a dream – right now no one leaves Main Street, no one ventures off, so people are having a hard time starting (and keeping open) new businesses.
- It’s hard for new businesses to locate here because there’s no parking for employees.

Residents Focus Group

Figure 4-3 Resident Focus Group Attendees

Name	Representing
Richard Shackson	Downtown CAC
Nancy Stokes	Downtown Residents
Susan Nenadic	Downtown CAC
Lindsey Jean-Hard	Downtown Residents
Peter Pollack	Downtown Residents
Sonia Schmerl	Old West Side
Margaret Wong	Downtown Residents
Herb & Jane Kaufer	DDA
Ray Detter	Downtown CAC
Constance Crump	Downtown Residents

Immediate Steps

- There is a basic perception that parking structures pose greater hazard to users than on-street parking. Is there any data that shows that to be the case, other than anecdotal evidence?
- General support with extending the service time of “The Link” later into the evening.
- General support for expanding (or improving) express bus service into downtown from surrounding communities.
- Regarding valet parking, would the cost of service cover the space and valet tenant? Is there a market to pay for the service? Attendees were satisfied with staff assurance of a niche market.
- Regarding on-street parking, and meter fees, a suggestion was made to raise meter fees but make garage parking free (later at night – past 6:00pm.). This suggestion was offered as a solution to business owner’s concern that higher meter fees would be troublesome for minimum wage employees.
- Regarding extending meter hours, general consensus was that meters should be activated throughout the DDA district rather than just one or two sub-areas.

- There was strong backing for the “smart” meter parking elements, specifically demand pricing, and ability to be charged only the time used rather than blocks of time.
- A concern over convenience of multi-space meters to the user. Particularly with meters that require a receipt to be placed into the car. There was support for these types of machines; they just wanted to ensure they were convenient and easy to understand for users.
- General support for car sharing, interest to expand program into areas of downtown that may benefit residents as well as students.
- Major concern regarding winter maintenance of sidewalks, snow build-up makes it very difficult for residents to use walking as a primary mode of transportation. Particularly handicapped as the ramps are typically covered with snow banks from street plows.
- Zoning changes – some remaining apprehension with retaining the parking exemption, seemed that most attendees wanted new development to provide parking, but provide it only underground. Attendees were supportive of having the two options, with Site/Urban Design treatments used to “hide” parking access, and retaining retail or more active uses at the ground level helping calm apprehension with a centralized approach to providing parking. The In-Lieu fee also seemed to assuage some concern with the “as is” option as the fees could provide funding to programs and projects that many of the attendees seemed to support (transit, non-motorized transportation, etc.).
- One concern arose concerning parking entrances sited on secondary streets, would this cause negative impacts on these streets that may be more typically characterized as residential?
- Wanted to have the report recommend all new parking be put below-grade.
- Suggestion that all new development downtown should be required to provide a minimum number of bicycle parking spaces. Exact amount could be addressed through the concurrent zoning study.

Near-Term Steps/Long-Term Steps

- There was general support for expanding commuter, express bus service. However, could expected ridership could be quantified?
- There was a concern that information on meter pricing, options, and technology needed to be communicated to users, as many people still pay into meters after 6pm – even when hours of operation are placed on the meter.
- Concern expressed over “right-turn on red” intersections, which is not safe for the pedestrian.
- Concern expressed over any motorized object being operated on a sidewalk – question of safety for pedestrians
- Noted that the pedestrian countdown signage at intersections is very helpful for pedestrians, especially those who move a little slower.

Business Community Focus Group

Figure 4-4 Business Community Focus Group Attendees

Name	Representing
Mike Giraud	Colliers
Bob Gates	First Martin
Karen Farmer	Kerrytown Shops
Mary Stasiak	AATA
Tom Heywood	State Street
Ron Dankert	Swisher

Participant Questions & Comments

Parking Principles, Policies, and Miscellaneous

- Who are the suggested “funding sources”?

Alternative Modes

- Running the Link later at night and during the summer would be a substantial cost.
- Whenever you ask someone “Would you do this?” you get a big response, but when it actually happens, you get a much smaller percentage of people that do.
- Can AATA legally run outside of the county? – Could have an inter-agency relationship.
- Regarding AATA’s real-time technology being used at park and ride lots – The technology is available downtown because there is a tower, uncertain if the range would go that far out.
- Would the Travel Choices Coordinator expand beyond downtown? There are pockets throughout the City that could benefit from reduced traffic congestion.
- Whatever is done to benefit the pedestrian experience will benefit the bus.
- Need to more clearly define who will meet with the Travel Choice Coordinator to bring back the information to the employees, can’t just leave it to the office manager.
- AATA was looking at a cashless fare card – but have been holding back, because they didn’t want to go ahead if U-M is doing something different and the DDA uses something else – multiple systems should work together – should be able to just use a credit card, and if you didn’t want to use a credit card, then could use a DDA card or AATA card or whatever. AATA needs new fare boxes, current ones are over 10 years old, but don’t want to buy them and miss out on potential to coordinate.

Metered Parking

- Since the main group opposed to lengthening meter hours was Main Street, why not tailor the pilot project to State Street – if it’s billed as a test then we’re the only

neighborhood association for it, Main Street will put forth violent opposition to it, and still haven't heard anything from the City regarding enforcement.

- Each area has distinctly different character: Main Street has more dining, State Street has less dining and more retail, so would be careful about just using State Street as a model.
- Have to sell it to the customers, not the merchants – Kerrytown is smaller, there is less foot traffic, will those people really want to feed the meter for 2 more hours? Thinks people will just drive out to Zingerman's Roadhouse, still supporting a local business, but they have free parking.
- One attendee states that he heard from the Mayor that City Council wouldn't adopt a plan for meter hours to be extended, they won't change union contracts for people to work later, right now they're done at 5:15, everyone knows you can park after that with no enforcement.
- If the issue with meters is that the employees are using it, why wouldn't they just feed the meters for 2 hours longer?
- Need to do more than just increase the meter hours, need multiple approaches.
- If Kerrytown spaces are never full, don't need to use demand pricing.
- Love the idea of charging more for longer stays.
- Even though the current meter system is subsidizing employee parking, Main Street will fight evening extensions.

Valet & Other Parking

- Small controversy about the parking list – needs more refined list or more investigative process – will that process be improved? Understand that now the wait times are up to 3 to 4 years for a permit?!
- How many valets do you need to park a whole structure? Obviously in any structure 100% of it couldn't be filled with valet. Would meters have to come out on Main Street?
- With the valet service, how do you avoid clogging up Main Street, or any other street in the downtown?
- Don't want there to be an issue of getting your car back after dinner – it can't take 30 minutes.
- Cards should work at any structure, flat lot, or meter and at the end of the month, the employers get a bill for usage, businesses want a fixed system, something that is recognized everywhere, and adds to the current system of a permit only working at one location, (which the DDA is currently not charging enough for) – need flexibility.
- Great idea to go to a system that is all hourly.
- Permit system isn't flexible enough for people now – know some people that would take the bus 2 or 3 days a week, but just drive everyday because they are paying the full cost of the permit anyway.

- Need to think about how many spaces could be added to Ann Ashley and Tally Hall – think we may already be too late to keep Google downtown.

Notes from Policy Boards Meeting

Figure 4-5 Policy Board Meeting Attendees

Name	Representing
Art Wolfe	Citizen
Nancy Shore	AATA
Evan Pratt	CPC
Ethel Potts	CPC
Roger Hewitt	DDA
Bonnie Bona	CPC
Sonia Schmerl	Citizen
Dawn Gabay	AATA
Leah Gunn	DDA
David Nacht	AATA
Stephen Rapundalo	City Council
Jennifer Hall	DDA
Chris Crockett	Citizen
Ted Annis	AATA
Marcy Higgs	Council
John Splitt	DDA
Ray Detter	Citizen

Immediate Steps

- In expanding the transit opportunities to downtown, a question came up regarding “guaranteed ride home programs” – essentially, would they be available?
- Question on precedents of successful and unsuccessful strategies for dealing with parking. New Haven, CT in the 1970’s was offered as unsuccessful, Boulder, CO in the 1990’s as successful.
- There was significant discussion regarding ensuring neighborhood, on-street parking is changed to require a permit. This was a recurring issue, and one attendee felt that if park ‘n ride lots were initiated that all neighborhoods (adjacent to downtown) should have permit parking requirements.
- If Valet Service is initiated, it needs to pay for itself and maintain current revenue stream.
- It was noted that Kerrytown on-street parking, as well as parking meters at the Farmer’s Market are often used as “park ‘n ride” lots. One representative expressed interest in Kerrytown serving as pilot for extending meter hours.
- There was general agreement that extending parking meter hours was a good idea. Representatives noted that the Main Street Association was against the program, so this area may not be a strong candidate for a pilot program.

- Will success in one district translate to success in another?
- There was strong backing for the “smart” meter parking elements, specifically demand pricing, and ability to be charged only the time used rather than blocks of time.
- How did U of M factor in to the recommendations? There was a strong suggestion to include recommendations to the University even though the City has no authority over their actions. Some felt that the University would cooperate to some degree.
- One attendee noted that all the recommendations are interrelated and act as a whole to be effective. This was seen as a positive sign that city officials “get it.”
- One attendee asked about an excise tax on commuters or people driving into the downtown from elsewhere, a la London.
- Most attendees seemed to prefer to maintain existing zoning requirement (or lack of requirement) for minimum parking spaces. There was interest in an in-lieu fee to initiate the density premium in place of providing parking spaces.
- Funding was brought up as an issue.

Short- and Long-Term

- Instead of the mandatory meeting with TDM coordinator, there should be a carrot rather than a stick to get businesses there. Suggestion of money or free parking passes. Also mentioned that the coordinator should be available to meet at place of business.
- Several attendees didn’t think there would be much interest on part of businesses to take advantage of programs offered, or employees. Not enough congestion and Michigan’s car culture.
- Question on how to deal with North Quad and the additional 550 students it will bring into downtown – and subsequently their cars. Generally how to differentiate between downtown residents and students parking downtown.
- Interest in moving demand pricing to earlier stage of implementation (from long-term to short-term).

Notes from the Open House

On the evening of May 10th, the Project Team held a two-hour Open House to conclude the second series of public outreach meetings for Phase II of the study. All those interested in attending were invited through a series of announcements, a press release, and invitations made during the Focus Group and Policy Maker meetings. Figure 4-6 presents the names of the public attendees.

Figure 4-6 Open House Attendees

Name	Representing
Larry Horvath	Citizen
Grace Singleton	Zingerman's
W. Say	208 Group
Art Wolfe	Citizen
Ray Detter	Self
Robert Klinger	Self

Participants were guided through a series of three distinct stations, arranged sequentially to present feedback from the first series of public outreach meetings before introducing recommended strategic and policy options. The stations, in order, were:

- Feedback – What the Project Team heard from focus groups, policy makers, and the public during the first round of public outreach in March;
- Recommended Policy and Management Toolbox – The Project Team’s recommended Downtown Parking Policy, along with specific parking principles, and a set of recommended parking management tools for Downtown; and
- Recommended Actions – A detailed discussion of Immediate, Short-Term, and Long-Term parking management actions recommended by the Project Team.

Each attendee was guided through the three stations by a member of the Project Team. During this process a conversational exchange of ideas and feedback was encouraged.

Comments

- One participant encouraged more of an emphasis on alternative transportation in the Parking Policy.
- Another participant disagreed with the recommendation to keep Downtown’s minimum parking requirement exemption.

