
MEMORANDUM

To: City Planning Commission, Committee of the Whole

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Subject: Proposed Zoning Code Text Amendment: Off-Street Parking and Loading, and Travel Demand Management Reform

Background

Council Member Gordon and Council Member Fletcher introduced an ordinance on June 26, 2020, to amend regulations for off-street parking and loading and travel demand management practices. The intent of these amendments is to implement policy guidance in Minneapolis 2040 to eliminate off-street parking minimums throughout the city, and re-evaluate parking maximums to better align with City goals. Even with proposed reforms to parking regulations, staff expects that parking will still be built in many developments, so these amendments are also intended to address how developments can otherwise help to achieve the City's transportation goals. Staff will study and recommend how to encourage and at times require that developments employ travel demand management best practices to achieve mode split goals, greenhouse gas reduction goals, and equity and prosperity in the City.

History of parking ordinance changes

Minneapolis has amended parking regulations regularly in the past twenty years, incrementally changing the amount of parking required for various types of development and in varying locations throughout the city. Below is a summarized timeline of those changes.

1999 – Downtown Parking Overlay District is adopted, prohibited new commercial parking lots and introduced restrictions on new surface lots downtown

2004 – Transit Station Area Pedestrian Oriented Overlay Districts are adopted, prohibited new commercial parking lots near light rail stations

2009 – Parking reform package that included

- Reduced parking requirements for commercial uses, requiring zero spaces for smaller establishments
- Maximum parking standards adopted citywide
- Minimum bicycle parking requirements established for most uses

- Eliminated minimum parking requirements in the downtown zoning districts

2015 – Parking reform package that included

- Elimination of parking requirement for residential buildings with 3 – 50 units located near high frequency transit, 50 percent reduction for larger residential buildings
- Ten percent reduction in parking requirements for residential buildings in proximity to standard transit service

2016 – On select corridors, nonresidential uses no longer required to provide off-street parking

2017 – New limits on the amount of parking frontage allowed on any floor facing public streets, applies primarily to parking garages in larger buildings

2019 – Minneapolis 2040 is adopted, signaling the City’s intent to eliminate parking minimums, evaluate and institute parking maximums, and revamp the travel demand management ordinance.

Policy Support

Amendments to parking regulations will help the city achieve the Minneapolis 2040 goals of...

- Climate change resilience through reduction on the reliance of automobiles, and acknowledgement of changing transportation technology.
- Clean environment through improvements in air quality by reducing reliance on automobile use, and through improvements to design and maintenance of parking areas.
- Affordable and accessible housing and Complete neighborhoods by improving the financial feasibility of development at varying scales in locations throughout Minneapolis.
- High-quality physical environment through parking design standards that support a variety of transportation modes.
- More residents and jobs by regulating the efficient use of land.
- Eliminate disparities by ensuring access to a variety of transportation options and destinations through new development.

Specific policies from Minneapolis 2040 and the Draft Transportation Action Plan that will influence this work are noted below. This is not intended to serve as a comprehensive summary of the guidance from these two documents on managing parking and loading, but does offer a sense of the support and direction given by policy documents.

- Minneapolis 2040 Policy 6 – Pedestrian-Oriented Building and Site Design: Regulate land uses, building design, and site design of new development consistent with a transportation system that prioritizes walking first, followed by bicycling and transit use, and lastly motor vehicle use.

- Action step l. – Eliminate the requirement for off-street parking minimums throughout the city, acknowledging that demand for parking will still result in new supply being built, and re-evaluate established parking maximums to better align with City goals.
- Action step m. – Discourage access to and egress from parking ramps off major corridors, instead encouraging access at mid-block locations and at right angles to minimize disruptions to pedestrian flow at the street level.
- Action step p. – Discourage the establishment of and minimize the size of surface parking lots. Mitigate the negative effects of parking lots through screening, landscaping, minimizing curb cuts, sufficient number of down-cast, glare-free light fixture, and other measures.
- Minneapolis 2040 POLICY 16 – Environmental Impacts of Transportation: Reduce the energy, carbon, and health impacts of transportation through reduced single-occupancy vehicle trips and phasing out of fossil fuel vehicles.
 - Action step a. – Require creation and implementation of travel demand management strategies in new development such as facilities for bicycle commuters, transit passes, and market-priced parking.
- Minneapolis 2040 Action step 22.b. – Manage the supply and design of parking downtown in a manner consistent with objectives for climate protection, pedestrian activity, bicycling, and transit users.
- Draft TAP Strategy 7: Walking – Partner with developers, utilities and property owners to provide high-quality pedestrian and public realm improvements.
- Draft TAP Strategy 4: Street Operations – Leverage City resources and partnerships to promote, educate and encourage walking, biking and transit as alternatives to driving.
 - Draft TAP – Street Operation Action 4.2. Update Travel Demand Management Plan requirements in the Zoning Code to apply to more development projects than they do currently, to address mode split goals and traffic growth rates, Metropass participation and mandatory self-reporting audits that occur every two years as well as any additional monitoring needed to improve safety.
- Draft TAP Strategy 5: Street Operations – Price and manage use of the curb to encourage walking, biking and using transit, and to discourage driving alone.
 - Draft TAP – Street Operation Action 5.5. Employ on-street and off-street parking strategies to support transit corridors (parking maximums for new developments, facilitated shared parking incentives, dynamic pricing, expanded metered parking).
- Draft TAP Strategy 1: Freight – Utilize land use tools to improve the efficiency of deliveries.
 - Draft TAP – Freight 1.1. Work with the Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department to revise the Zoning Code to improve the efficiencies of onsite deliveries by updating onsite loading requirements for new developments.
- Draft TAP Strategy 5: Freight – Implement dynamic freight loading zones into citywide curbside management efforts.

Parking and Loading Rationale

Parking and Loading ordinance reform is aimed at achieving the aforementioned policy goals in Minneapolis 2040 and the Draft Transportation Action Plan, and is supported by the findings of a wide variety of publications and academic research. Ordinance reform also aligns with related efforts to generally improve the built environment in a manner that is supportive of alternative forms of transportation.

- The cost of producing parking is paid for by residential owners and renters, whether they use it or not. This results in inflated housing costs, particularly for lower income households. [citation]
- Providing an overabundance of parking incentivizes automobile use at the expense of more efficient and environmentally friendly forms of transportation. This ultimately results in greater demands being placed on roadways and an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. [citation 1, 2]
- Dedication of large portions of land to inactive uses such as parking reduces the efficiency with which land is used, reducing the ability of residents to satisfy their daily transportation needs within a small geographic footprint.
- Walkable urban design best practices are made less effective when they must accommodate parking, drive aisles, and curb cuts for automobiles.
- Parking reform has the added benefit of reducing the number of staff hours spent administering parking-related provisions in the zoning ordinance, with the intended trade-off of spending more time working with developers and businesses to meet the City's transportation goals.

Travel Demand Management Rationale

Before highlighting the effectiveness of various Travel Demand Management best practices, we need to ground our observations in some local context. Both Minneapolis 2040 and the Draft Transportation Action Plan highlight a series of goals; the following review will focus on the TDM practices that have the greatest impact on achieving those goals, particularly as they relate to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These goals can primarily be achieved through encouraging mode shift away from single occupancy vehicles to other forms of transportation.

A review by the Federal Highway Administration highlights the importance of acknowledging that most effects of TDM best practices are very local, and are difficult to evaluate at a citywide or even corridor level. [citation] Other actions and investments by government entities are needed to maximize the impacts of TDM plans. Thankfully Minneapolis 2040 and the Draft Transportation Action Plan addresses many of these other actions that are necessary such as provision of adequate bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure, and transit supportive development regulations.

Strategies to address travel demand brought on by new development typically fall into a small handful of categories.

- Support, promotion, or information related to alternative forms of transportation
- Direct provision of alternative form of transportation
- Financial incentives aimed at users to choose other forms of transportation

When paired with provision of a strong public transit system, supportive land uses, and streets designed to accommodate varied modes of transportation, these strategies become more effective. Conversely, when abundant and free parking is provided, these strategies become less effective. [citation]

This is important context to consider when evaluating the strategies that will be most effective in Minneapolis. Numerous studies and literature reviews highlight the primary importance of development occurring within an existing land use framework with a mix of uses and/or transit service. These conditions are present in Minneapolis to a greater extent than anywhere else in the metro area. Development within Minneapolis by its nature will produce fewer single occupancy vehicle trips and induce fewer greenhouse gas emissions than development elsewhere in the region. Travel demand management best practices should therefore be seen as existing in the greater context of a supportive land use and built form policy and transit investment framework. In that light, staff is working to develop TDM requirements that will supplement larger efforts to support the use of alternative forms of transportation – these regulations cannot be seen as working in a vacuum to achieve the city’s transportation and climate action goals.

Approach Moving Forward

Staff intends to explore in more detail the approaches highlighted below, and return with proposed ordinance solutions for the Planning Commission to consider this fall. We are looking for feedback on elements that are of particular interest to Commissioners, or items that may be missing from the summary below.

Potential Parking and Loading Ordinance Changes

- Eliminate Minimum Parking Requirements citywide for all uses
- Consider expanding residential parking maximums beyond downtown to apply citywide, particularly in areas more supportive of alternative modes of transportation and areas of high travel demand such as Downtown, the University of Minnesota, and near Transit Stations
- Consider requiring unbundling of parking costs from property costs
- Consider the impacts of parking and loading reform on ADA Accessibility to buildings
- Increase long-term bike parking requirements
- Increase requirements for locker and shower facilities in commercial development
- Require electric vehicle charging for a percentage of parking spaces provided, starting with a minimum static amount
- Evaluate and change loading requirements – particularly for those uses seen as essential to achieving Minneapolis 2040 goals (grocery stores for example)

Potential TDM Ordinance Changes

Currently, Travel Demand Management plans are required by ordinance for projects with 100,000 square feet or more of new or additional nonresidential gross floor area. Since this threshold is so high, most Travel Demand Management plans are submitted to the City at the request of the Public Works Department during the development review process. One of the driving forces behind amending the Travel Demand Management ordinance is to create more predictable outcomes for both the City and the development community. Staff intends to develop new thresholds that account for both proposed uses in a project and square footage that relate to the potential travel impact presented by a development. To be clearer about expectations around how to meet travel demand management goals, staff will explore

allowing developments to meet those goals through a series of investments in their property at the time of construction. For example, these selected strategies may have a score associated with them indicating their effectiveness to achieve both mode shift away from single occupancy vehicle use and their resulting impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Developments may be required to employ different strategies depending on the scale of the development, mix of uses, geographic location, and may have differing mode split goals consistent with goals identified in Minneapolis 2040 and the Draft Transportation Action Plan. For example, staff is considering employing different thresholds for meeting greenhouse gas emissions goals depending on the aforementioned development characteristics. Examples of potential Travel Demand Management Best Practices are listed below.

- Provide zero residential parking
- Implement pedestrian realm improvements on the public right of way
- Provide a transit fare subsidy – various mechanisms will be explored that consider financial feasibility and the issue of enforcement and long-term viability of the program
- Provision of shared vehicles
- Shower and locker facilities above and beyond what is otherwise required in the code

In addition to the above items that are largely physical improvements, staff is also analyzing a host of practices that have been commonly included in city approved TDMPs in recent years. On initial review, these strategies are shown by research to be less effective or have long-term enforcement concerns. They may still end up in a zoning ordinance, but staff is also exploring other mechanisms to encourage these practices as appropriate.

- Posting of real-time transit info on site
- Provide packet of transit info to new residents
- Commitment to an on-site TDM Liaison
- Surveys of building commuter habits
- Maintenance agreements (snow removal, etc)

CPED staff will also continue to work with colleagues in other city departments such as Public Works on strategies that may be considered outside the scope of the zoning ordinance amendment.

- Pricing of on-street parking
- Development impact fees for transit and other transportation infrastructure improvements
- Scheduled delivery during non-peak hours