



## Seattle Parking Sounding Board Minutes

**Date/Time:** November 14, 2013, 1:30-3:00 pm

**Location:** Seattle Municipal Tower, 4080

**Members Present:** Don Blakeney (Chinatown-International District Business Improvement Area), Doug Campbell (University District Business Improvement Area) Nick Hawley (Downtown Seattle Association), Rick Johnston (Roosevelt Neighborhood Association), Josh McDonald (Washington Restaurant Association), Susan Ranf (Mariners), Leslie Smith (Alliance for Pioneer Square), Jessica Vets (Fremont Chamber of Commerce)

**SDOT Staff Present:** Becky Edmonds, Mike Estey, Tracy Krawczyk, Mary Rutherford, Mary Catherine Snyder, Cristina VanValkenburgh

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Presentation – 2014 Parking Adjustments

Mary Catherine Snyder presented a synopsis of Seattle's Performance-Based Parking Pricing Program since 2010. Seattle has been recognized nationally and internationally for innovation and the Sounding Board has been instrumental in implementing this program.

Questions and comments from the group about current and past parking management included:

- Q: How is occupancy data for rate-setting purposes collected? A: People count cars. SDOT has access to paid occupancy data from pay stations but because there are a variety of vehicles (e.g. disabled permit holders, car2go vehicles) that do not pay at pay stations, this is not the data that SDOT uses for setting rates.
- Q: How can measured parking occupancy be over 100%? A: SDOT estimates the number of parking spaces on each block using a standard length for vehicles and maneuver space between them. In reality, where parking demand is especially high, people find ways to park more vehicles on blocks, including use of some illegal areas such as driveway returns or approaches to crosswalks.
- Q: What do we know about vehicle turnover, given that anecdotal evidence suggests meter-feeding does occur? A: SDOT has primarily focused on occupancy, though duration data has been collected in some neighborhoods (e.g. related to construction on the Alaskan Way Viaduct), mostly on Sundays.
- Q: How does SDOT account for parking changes over time as neighborhood characteristics change? A: SDOT collects data annually and makes adjustments accordingly. In some areas, such as South Lake Union, time limits (2-hours or 10-hours)



have been established by looking at neighboring land uses, and spot changes on blocks have been made as development is completed and changes are requested.

- In small business districts (e.g. Roosevelt) business-related parking spills over onto neighboring streets with free parking.
- Q: Would the city consider making it easier to build parking garages in neighborhood business districts? A: While out of the bounds of SDOT's authority, generally neighborhood public stand-alone garages are costly to build. In addition to financial considerations, the City Department of Planning and Development has regulations for the types of parking that can be built depending on zoning conditions.
- Pioneer Square has a mix of business and residential parking demands. Leslie Smith has been working with private garage operators to find solutions to allow more use of those facilities for Pioneer Square residents, in an effort to free up more on-street parking for business customers and visitors.
- Q: Portland has a program that offers free parking for the first 90 minutes downtown. Would SDOT consider a similar program, such as the first 15 minutes free? A: A "first hour free" concept was discussed conceptually during the Performance-Based Parking Pricing Study conducted in 2011, but not pursued. SDOT will explore what other cities offer similar programs/discounts. Portland's program is no longer in effect – it was previously only for their off-street SmartPark garages.
- There is a conflict between potential different uses of the right of way; the needs met by local customers may not be the same as the needs of those coming from out of town. This is also a question of priorities: for example, should customers of Pioneer Square businesses be prioritized over people attending sports games?

The presentation then discussed the proposal for moving to differential pricing by time of day. Questions and comments on this subject included:

- Since businesses often are not open before 10 a.m., lowering rates in the morning may not result in higher parking occupancy during those hours.
- Demand is "directional" – i.e. people tend to link trips that are in the direction they are already travelling.
- If there is not adequate parking supply in neighborhood business districts or parking is too costly, people will travel to shop in other places with more parking.
- Neighborhoods need to create business areas that attract people.
- Over time, people may start to change their habits (for example, going to the gym before work instead of after).

The proposed time-of-day pricing would mean three time periods, which would be the same in every neighborhood. The proposed time periods are: 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (in areas with evening paid parking) or 6 p.m. (in areas without evening paid parking), and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. (in areas with evening paid parking) Comments and questions were:

- In many areas retail and lunch lines began at 11 a.m.

- The trade-off for having the same time periods for every area is losing the granularity of having a system tailored to unique neighborhood characteristics.
- People may not care if parking in the morning is inexpensive if stores are not open.
- Displays and graphics need to be readable and help educate the public.
- People who only park occasionally may not notice different prices.
- Consider the unanticipated consequences of adjustments. For example, would cheap morning parking incent construction workers to occupy all the parking supply?
- Q: Once a time-of-day pricing system is in place, how easy or difficult is it to make incremental changes? A: Programming new rates with new technology will be relatively straightforward; the challenge will be to any changes needed to graphics and signs to keep up with changes.

In the past, the city has used different target occupancy ranges for each neighborhood to approximate 1-2 open spaces per block. SDOT is proposing moving to one target range of 70%-85% in all areas. This simplifies the rate-setting process and clarifies communication. Questions and comments were:

- Q: How is this measured, if some blocks only have two spaces and some have more? A: Occupancy is measured by area and subarea, so some blocks may be more full than others. One to two spaces per block should be open throughout the day throughout the area.
- Q: Are spaces that are out for construction taken out of the measurement of supply? A: Yes, and SDOT has been improving its ability to account for fluctuations in supply due to construction.
- The citywide target range would be easier to explain to people.

General questions and comments at the conclusion of the presentation were:

- Q: Is it possible for load zones to convert to general parking after a certain time? A: Yes, load zones can be tailored to meet specific loading purposes of adjacent businesses. Jonathan Williams of SDOT has been working on analyzing parking supply and modifying load zones and other exempt spaces in Pioneer Square already.
- Q: Would the city consider having paid parking past 8:00 p.m.? A: To date, SDOT has not considered this. Part of the issue would be the lack of enforcement resources later in the evening.
- Perhaps in some areas paid parking hours could start later in the morning.
- In Pioneer Square and other areas where paid parking hours end at 6:00 p.m., parking spaces quickly fill with residents who do not have off-street parking. In other areas (notably the U-District) adding evening paid parking has helped mitigate this issue.
- Q: Is it possible to see the parking revenue per neighborhood compared to transportation improvement expenditures? A: We have the numbers for revenue by area, but measuring SDOT transportation expenditures is more difficult. We will look into how to get these figures.

- The *Only In Seattle* program provides funding for which neighborhoods may apply. The program is administered by the Office of Economic Development and funds may be used for a variety of projects to promote business districts. State statutes prevent direct designation of parking revenues generated in a specific area for use in that area. *Only In Seattle* funding for “City Infrastructure” uses Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) funds for business districts that have paid on-street parking. More information is available here: <https://www.seattle.gov/economicdevelopment/OISI/grants.htm#programInfo>
- Q: Does SDOT know which areas are proposed for added evening paid parking in 2014?  
A: This will be discussed at the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, though SDOT will try to provide additional information in advance.

### **3. Pay Station Replacement Process**

Mike Estey reported that today was the due date for responses to SDOT’s Request for Proposals (RFP) for replacing pay stations throughout the city, the oldest of which are now nearing 10 years old. All pay stations would be replaced over the course of three years – 2014, 2015, and 2016. The RFP evaluation process will include one month of on-street trials from late January through late February. At that time, SDOT would like to have Sounding Board participation in evaluating how the pay stations look and feel and how well they communicate information to customers. SDOT would like at least five Sounding Board members to participate in testing new equipment.

Comments:

- It is very important to have the new equipment be graffiti resistant, and it would be desirable if graffiti removal could be done without having to call the city for special equipment.

### **4. Open Forum**

There was a request to move the January 9, 2014 meeting from its currently scheduled 8:30 a.m. start time to 1:30-3:00 p.m. There were no other comments.

### **5. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.