

August 28, 2014

To | Ashland Downtown Parking Advisory Committee
CC | Mike Faught and Bill Molnar, City of Ashland
From | Robert Parker, Nick Meltzer, and Amanda D'Souza
SUBJECT | ASHLAND DOWNTOWN PARKING AND MULTI-MODAL CIRCULATION PLAN

Note to Committee members: This is a working document, and the maps discussed in the text will be provided at the September 3 meeting. Please read through this document, come ready to discuss any changes you think should be made, and remember the discussion will be focused on whether or not these policies will be effective. Prompting questions have been included throughout in highlighted text.

INTRODUCTION

Community Planning Workshop (CPW) is working with the City of Ashland to conduct a downtown parking and multimodal circulation study. The study is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of existing downtown parking management, truck loading zones, and travel demand management strategies to improve the overall accessibility of downtown for visitor, employees, business owners and residents.

The following memorandum outlines the Parking Management Plan CPW has developed for Ashland. Using nearly nine months of research and public engagement, the following strategies strike a balance between the needs of visitors, residents, employees and business owners. Adhering to the guiding principles and Committee discussion thus far, the nine strategies address the issues initially identified in the scope of work. Within this memorandum you will find an overview of the plan, the nine strategies CPW is proposing, and supporting documentation. Additionally, a proposed monitoring strategy is included, and steps to take for evaluating the effectiveness of Phase I Strategies.

PLAN OVERVIEW

At the August 13th meeting, the Committee passed a motion to separate the parking management strategies into two phases, with the second phase being deployed if/when the first phase was found to no longer be effective. Shown in Figure 1, a key component of the overall program is the monitoring phase after Phase I strategies have been implemented.

The following sections outline the two phases. Phase I is fairly specific—these are the short-term, low-cost, “low hanging fruit” strategies, which have the potential to have significant impacts on the issues previously identified. Enough detail has been provided to aid the committee in making recommendations to City Council. Phase II strategies are broader, and decisions regarding their implementation were tabled to a later time, once the Phase I

strategies had been implemented and monitored. As such, there is also discussion regarding the monitoring of Phase I strategies, with metrics to help ascertain their effectiveness.

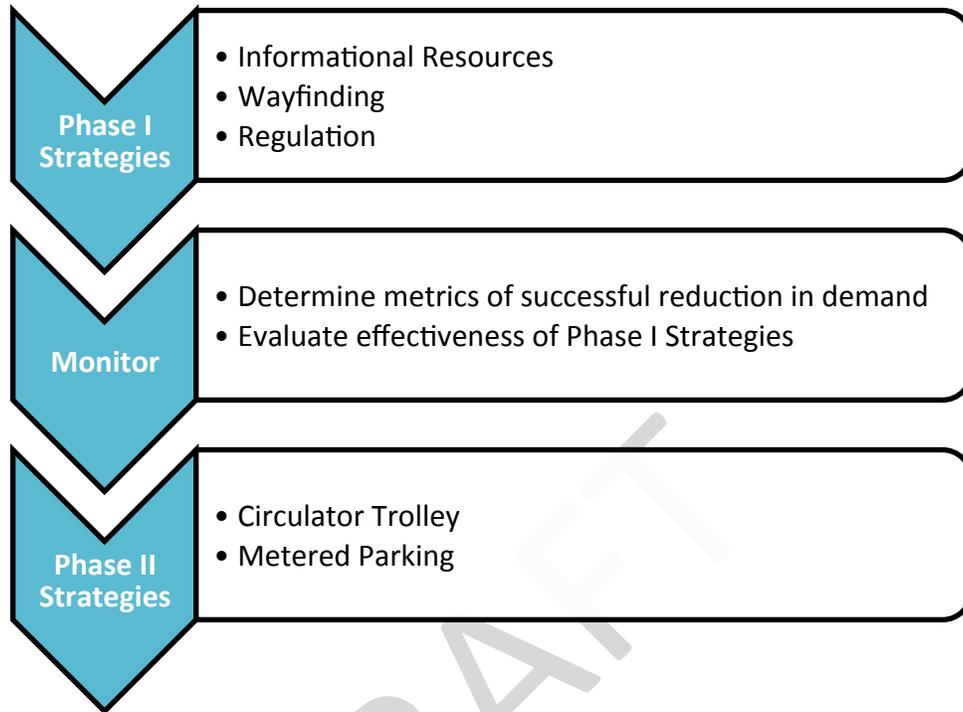


Figure 1. Overview of Parking Management Plan

Phase I Parking Management Strategies

The following nine strategies attempt to address Ashland’s parking and circulation issues in a low-cost, short-term manner. The strategies have been sorted by overall management category and roughly organized from lower cost/effectiveness to higher cost/effectiveness.

- 1. Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and select businesses to develop navigation tools with a consistent branding strategy to inform visitors about downtown parking and destinations in Ashland. (Informational Resources)**

Development of navigation tools is essential to improving communication about parking to downtown visitors. These tools can be utilized by residents, employees, and tourists to successfully and efficiently navigate the downtown Ashland area. Since the City of Ashland does not monitor parking locations in real time, a mobile app would not serve any additional purposes than a mobile version of a parking website would. Additionally making a website mobile compatible versus developing an app is much less expensive.

- a. Develop a downtown Ashland parking and transportation map that:
 - i. Highlights key Ashland destinations (OSF facilities, Lithia Park, Railroad District, SOU).
 - ii. Includes information about parking options (public off-street lots, time-limited areas, parking fines, etc.).
 - iii. Offers advertising opportunities for local businesses.
Similar to placemat maps, and cartoon tourist maps seen in other cities
- b. Create an easy-to-access, mobile-friendly, centralized website with parking and visitor information. Direct businesses to link to this site for visitors inquiring about parking.
- c. Coordinate outreach efforts with organizations and businesses that regularly interface with visitors (e.g. OSF, Film Festival, Hotels, Restaurants). Include pamphlets and larger scale maps businesses can give to patrons.

Should other major locations be included? The goal is not to highlight individual businesses, but areas of town.

2. Work with downtown businesses to educate employees about the value of parking, the implications of their parking habits, and alternative modes of transportation. (Informational Resources)

This strategy aims to alleviate some of the parking pressures created by employees parking in the downtown area. It is rooted in the idea that increasing the convenience of accessing alternatives modes of transportation and informing employees about the value of parking will incentivize them to reduce their reliance on driving and parking downtown. It works in combination with strategies #8 and #9.

- a. The City should work with the Chamber of Commerce to conduct outreach with business owners and engage in discussions about developing incentives to encourage employees to use other modes of transportation. These discussions can take place as a group meeting, or through targeted conversations with specific business owners. This low-cost strategy can begin soon after the adoption of the Parking Management Plan, and should be timed with the implementation of the zoned-permit system. It should be intensive within the first year, and can be maintained regularly through regular communication between the Chamber of Commerce and its member businesses.
- b. In conjunction with the implementation of the zoned-permit system, the City should develop written material (brochures) providing context for the strategy. This document would explain the details and objectives of the permit system, as well as information on alternative transportation options including:
 - i. Carpool resources
 - ii. Bicycling
 - iii. Public transit

Do you think this strategy will be effective? Does the committee need more information for this recommendation? Should the city engage in more intensive education strategies with employees and businesses?

3. Increase wayfinding signage directing visitors to parking and key destinations in downtown Ashland. (Wayfinding)

Wayfinding signage is a cost-effective approach to alleviating issues such as traffic congestion or the underutilization of parking supply while creating a welcoming environment in downtown Ashland. Informational resources will help drivers prior to arriving, but the goal of wayfinding is to easily direct visitors while entering the city, improving their visitor experience.

- a. Assess current inventory of wayfinding signage in downtown Ashland to minimize signage clutter and ensure signage is efficiently placed at key decision points.

Current and proposed wayfinding map to be provided

- b. Draw upon the style currently used on Ashland's streetlamp banners to develop a unique wayfinding style. Wayfinding signage should be clear, readable, and use consistent colors and destination names throughout the downtown area.

Need committee input on how this design process should work.

- c. Install wayfinding signage for key destinations at the major entry points (I-5 exits) for Ashland and at both ends of entrances to the downtown couplet.
- d. Create clear, continuous signage routes guiding vehicles to areas with higher parking availability. These parking areas should include:
 - i. Hargadine parking garage
 - ii. Railroad District in the evening
 - iii. Neighborhoods east of Downtown
- e. Install large map kiosks that provides information on key destinations, parks, and walking distances. Maps should be strategically placed at areas of high pedestrian traffic, including:
 - i. Informational Kiosk in Downtown Plaza
 - ii. Outside the Hargadine Parking Garage
 - iii. Surface parking lot at N. Pioneer and Lithia Way
 - iv. Next to the Co-Op in the Railroad District
 - v. Southern Oregon University campus

CPW will include map that outlines where wayfinding signage will be placed. Do you think this strategy will be effective? Does the committee need more information for this recommendation?

4. More clearly delineate parking time limited areas, loading zones, and short term parking. (Wayfinding/Regulation)

During monitoring sessions it was determined the location of loading zones was unclear and trying to determine which spaces were 2-hour versus 15 minute was confusing as a pedestrian on the same block, let alone as a driver. This strategy helps visitors and residents more easily find the spaces they desire, improving the visitor experience by avoiding unwanted tickets, and easing the burden for enforcement.

- a. Add signs that explicitly state which on-street spots are loading zones.
- b. Color code curbs to help differentiate short-term, loading and long-term (2-hour) parking.
- c. 4-hour spaces will not be painted (since these spaces are more widespread, and the proposal is to expand them in Strategy #8).

5. Increase evening parking supply by implementing shared parking strategies with businesses that have larger surface lots and are only open during daytime hours. (Supply Increase)

This strategy aims to increase supply during peak periods by utilizing already existing surface parking lots. Through agreements with local businesses, the City of Ashland can pay to “rent” spaces during hours when the businesses are closed (for example, 6-10 PM). An agreement would be required that set a nominal fee for the use of the spaces. This strategy avoids the construction of additional parking spaces but achieves the same outcome of increasing supply.

- a. Initially develop agreements with Wells Fargo, Ashland Elks Lodge, and the Ace Hardware Plaza, with secondary agreements including the businesses in the plazas located at 310 Oak Street and 340 A Street.

Map of locations will be provided, as well as sample agreements. Are there other locations that would work well?

6. Connect and enhance the bicycle facility network throughout downtown. (Multi-Modal)

This strategy aims to increase bicycling within and to downtown Ashland. According to the survey, bicyclists desire more connections of bike facilities (for example, bike infrastructure needs to be continuous to incentivize taking trips by bicycle). Additionally, the addition of more covered bike parking makes it more welcoming for would-be bicycle commuters and the additional wayfinding signage keeps bicycles off sidewalks by directing them to points around town via a bicycle-specific infrastructure.

- a. Implement a bike lane on E. Main Street.

While this discussion was started regarding bike lanes and some schematics were provided at the April meeting, more details are needed for layout and spacing. Regardless, CPW recommends adding a dedicated bike lane to better connect the overall network.

- b. Continue to implement bike facilities as outlined in Section 8 of the Transportation System Plan.
- c. Increase the amount of covered bike parking. Based on the parking perceptions survey and Labor Day monitoring session, we recommend a minimum of 10 more spots at the following locations: entrance to Lithia Park, in the Plaza, next to the library, in front of Bloomsbury Books, and in front of Ashland Springs Hotel. Some of these locations would be good candidates for bike corrals.
- d. Increase bicycle wayfinding signs to ensure bicyclists are using the appropriate infrastructure (i.e. bike lanes and not riding on the sidewalks).

Do you think this strategy will be effective? Does the committee need more information for this recommendation?

7. Adopt a new loading zone policy to increase available parking in the evening.

During the evening hours, cars were parking in loading zones regardless of signage. Based on the majority of deliveries occurring during the day, this policy caters to business needs while also increasing spaces for visitors and evening patrons at off peak times.

- a. “Loading zone only” would be in effect Monday through Saturday from 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM in all loading zone locations.
- b. After 6:00 PM, spaces would become no-limit, similar to current time-limited spaces in the downtown core.
- c. This strategy would implement a new city-wide policy, and therefore does not affect the currently undecided layout of East Main Street.

8. Modify downtown parking regulations to increase turnover and abuse of current time limits. (Regulation)

Currently, fines for parking violations are \$11. To aid in the enforcement of time-limited parking, fines should be increased to \$24. While the objective here is not revenue-generation, the increase is to disincentive abusive parking behaviors. Therefore, if the fine is paid within 48 hours, it is reduced by 50%, to \$12. This structure provides equity for both visitors, residents, and employees, in combination with Strategy #9.

- a. Increase all parking violation fines to \$24.
- b. If paid within 48 hours, fine is reduced by 50%.

Should the fine be increase more? Do you support the reduction if paid immediately?

9. Expand time limited parking and implement a zone based parking system. (Regulation)

This strategy aims to enable visitors to find downtown parking and give them enough time to visit, while giving options for downtown employees, as well as ensuring equity for downtown residents. Extending the 4-hour parking allows for more long term parking (via the survey it is the most commonly used time-limited parking), and eliminates the lesser used 1-hour spaces. In addition, it expands the 30-minute spaces, to give residents sufficient time and space to run downtown errands. The addition of employee paid permits balances the availability of downtown parking spaces, in addition to incentivizing them to park outside the core downtown areas. While there are likely high administrative costs associated with a permit program, we feel it worthwhile, as it still remains relatively low cost when compared with implementing meters or satellite lots.

- a. Extend 4-hour parking limits to between Oak Street on the West, 5th Street to the East, A street to the North, and the border of Alison, Gresham, Beach, and Hargadine to the South. This includes Winburn Way and Granite Street.
- b. Eliminate 1-hour parking time limit spaces, increase all short term parking to 30 minutes, and increase number of 30 minute spaces.
- c. Residents will receive one permit for free, and a second can be purchased for \$10 a month. Guest permits can be obtained free of charge, for 4 days at a time, via the City.
- d. Employees can purchase a limited number of permits (for example, only 200 would be allowed for purchase annually), for \$10 a month.

Maps created by CPW will be provided. Should the boundaries be extended? Are 30 minute spaces sufficient for residents?

Maintenance/Monitoring

Ashland's Parking Management Plan will need to be monitored regularly in order to determine the effectiveness of policies pursued to address the city's parking issues. This monitoring plan assumes that this Parking Management Plan is adopted in early 2015, with Phase 1 strategies beginning to be implemented by mid-2015. It is recommended that the City of Ashland take the lead on coordinating these activities. Several proposed strategies can be taken within the City's current administrative capacity. Other recommended strategies may require contracting with external parties in order to be cost-effective.

Survey

Understanding how users of downtown perceive the convenience of parking is essential to determining how introduced policies may have affected their parking behaviors. To assess this, the City of Ashland should conduct a survey of downtown residents, employees, visitors, and business owners after the first full summer season in which Phase 1 Strategies have been

implemented. This survey should evaluate parking perceptions and changes in parking behaviors associated with the introduced parking management policies. The survey will also give the City an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of wayfinding and informational resources. This survey should be similar to the Parking Perceptions Survey administered by CPW in early 2014 (see Appendix X).

Parking Utilization Monitoring

In order to assess any changes in parking behaviors, it is recommended that multiple monitoring sessions take place as policies are implemented. While these monitoring sessions will only give a sample of occupancy patterns in downtown Ashland, it is expected that these samples will be representative of parking patterns at other similar times.

Monitoring sessions should take place periodically once policies have been implemented, and should follow the methodology developed by CPW (see Appendix X). We propose that a minimum of 3 monitoring sessions are conducted every year for the first 5 years of the Parking Management Plan implementation. Evaluation should be completed after 3 years of monitoring. Should the City choose to implement portions or all of Phase 2 strategies, we recommend that the city extend monitoring beyond the 5 year period. These sessions should cover a variety of days and times in order to get a comprehensive analysis of parking utilization. At minimum, monitoring sessions should take place:

- During peak (June-October) and off-peak Oregon Shakespeare Festival season
- Weekday and weekend
- Daytime (8:00am – 5:00pm)
- Evening (5:00pm – 9:00pm)

If successful, parking management strategies should result in a more even and balanced distribution of occupancy rates throughout Ashland's parking capacity. Ideally, an effective management plan will result in more areas city wide seeing a maximum occupancy of 85% during peak hours. Other targets to track through parking utilization monitoring include:

- In addition to the target 85% occupancy rates, areas in the core downtown area should have high turnover rates throughout the day.
- Loading zones should be utilized regularly by delivery trucks throughout the designated loading times.

Other Monitoring

- With the development of a centralized website that contains information about parking and transportation, the City will be able to track website 'hits' and whether or not visitors are using the resource. This tracking can begin immediately with the launch of the website.
- The City should track the distribution of residential and employee parking permits to determine how successfully the allocated supply of permits is meeting downtown users' needs.

- The City should track increases or decreases in parking violations to determine if there are management policies that may not be best meeting the needs of downtown users.

More examples of metrics and evaluation will be discussed at the October meeting.

Phase II Parking Management Strategies

After a period of monitoring, the effectiveness of the Phase I strategies (listed above, and including the overall categories of wayfinding, informational resources and regulation) will be evaluated. Per the Downtown Parking and Multi-Modal Circulation Committee's motions on July 2 and August 13, a discussion of both metered parking and constructing satellite lots will be tabled until a time when "low-cost, short-term" strategies have proven to be ineffective.

Per CPW's *Trolley White Paper*, distributed to the committee on August 13th, we recommended a complete feasibility study be conducted to ascertain more details regarding a trolley circulator in Ashland. Based on our research, the information from two surveys and discussions with the committee, we suggest the circulator trolley option should be examined, and exhausted as viable, before any discussion of implementing metered parking.

For the discussion regarding metered parking, CPW has previously submitted memos detailing results of the parking perceptions, policy options, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival patron surveys. As mentioned, results of the survey should not be the sole source of developing public policy, but merely an indicator of the political feasibility. As with a circulator trolley, a consultant should be hired to determine the details and cost/benefit analysis of metered parking.