



To: Mayor and Board of Aldermen
David Andrews, Town Manager

Date: June 21, 2016

Memorandum

Project #: 38539.00

From: Timothy Tresohlavy, VHB

Re: Carrboro Parking – Board of Alderman Update #2

The purpose of this memo is to provide an interim update of the downtown parking study for the Carrboro Board of Alderman meeting on Tuesday June 21, 2016.

Project Timeline

This project officially began in January 2016, and a target completion date of November 30, 2016.

Public Outreach to Date

The project team has coordinated with various stakeholders to obtain as much public feedback as possible. Since the launching of the project website (www.parkcarrboro.org) in January of 2016 we have also launched an online survey of parking behavior (www.surveymonkey.com/r/parkcarrboro), which has received 500 respondents to date and will remain open into July.

On Thursday February 11, 2016 the project team hosted a Kickoff Public Meeting at the Carrboro Elementary School to promote the project website, online survey, present initial data collected, and initiate public feedback.

On Saturday April 30, 2016 VHB staff attended the Farmers Market to promote the online survey and solicit feedback relating to potential barriers to visiting downtown. Sidewalk gaps were identified by attendees, as well as some locations for additional bicycle rack parking.

On Friday May 13, 2016 VHB staff attended a Coffee with a Cop event at Johnny's Gone Fishing. The project team discussed the purpose of the project with Town Police, County Sheriffs, and residents. Links to the online survey were provided to attendees, some of whom completed the survey from the coffee shop.

On Thursday May 26, 2016 VHB staff was added to the agenda for a regularly scheduled Carrboro Business Alliance Meeting and discussed the project objectives with downtown business owners. VHB relayed a list of questions relating to parking challenges, loading zones, employee parking, and customer parking to Annette Stone, Economic and Community Development Director, for distribution. VHB provided contact information and left business cards for further discussion opportunities.

On Thursday June 16, 2016 the project team hosted a Mid-Point Public Meeting to present additional parking counts obtained during April, and compared results with the January counts. Findings are discussed below. The project team also presented some potential management strategies that could help balance future parking demand, and asked attendees to vote on the strategies that they believed would have the most beneficial outcome. Feedback indicated that (a) shared parking agreements between private land owners, and (b) improved signage were the preferred options to have a significant impact on parking.

General public feedback themes thus far have included:

- Wayfinding signage would help identify the smaller, lesser-known, public parking areas.

- 2-hour time limited parking could be more frequently enforced to promote turnover. This should apply to high-demand areas in the center of town, and the Rosemary lot.
- Downtown employees and/or UNC students are perceived as most identifiable violators of 2-hour time limits. Data suggests that this group is likely 80-120 vehicles, much smaller than the public perception.
- Limiting barriers to biking, walking, and riding transit should be equally important as parking management, and likely less expensive than building or leasing additional parking lots.

Existing Parking Supply

The **Town of Carrboro owns or leases 710 parking spaces in downtown**. Many of these spaces are signed as reserved for individual users, Town departments, visitors, ADA-needs, or other uses. What remains are 537 unrestricted public parking spaces within nine (9) parking lots/areas. These 173 reserved spaces (signage) may be one contributing factor to the misconception that there are “no places to park” in downtown.

There are 3,293 private parking spaces, which accounts for 82% of the 4,003 total parking spaces in Carrboro.

Existing Parking Utilization

VHB staff performed parking occupancy counts throughout the day on the following dates:

- Thursday January 14, 2016
- Thursday April 21, 2016
- Saturday April 30, 2016

Thursday was determined to be the busiest day of a typical weekday, with public schools and UNC classes in session.

The April parking counts observed a **maximum of 2,122 parked cars during the 11 AM to 1 PM period**. For comparison, the January parking counts observed 93 fewer cars during this period. The Saturday parking counts peaked during the 6 PM to 9 PM period, at 1,561 parked cars, which is 561 fewer cars than the weekday lunchtime.

Since the Town does not have jurisdiction over the private parking lots, the study team examined the peak parking occupancy for only public and leased parking areas. As described above there are a total of 710 public parking spaces, some of which are reserved. The April parking counts observed a **maximum of 466 parked cars within public lots during the 6 PM to 9 PM period**. For comparison, the January parking counts observed 110 fewer cars during its weekday peak period (lunchtime). The Saturday parking counts also peaked during the 6 PM to 9 PM period with 457 parked cars, which is only 9 fewer cars than the Thursday maximum.

These parking counts of public-only areas have confirmed a few public comment perspectives:

1. The peak period for only public parking lots is the evening 6 PM to 9 PM period (466 cars, 66% full), despite the overall parking peak at lunchtime (2,122 cars, 53% full).
2. The Saturday peak period for only public parking lots is nearly identical to the weekday peak (457-466 cars).
3. The parking deck has 249 public parking spaces available on levels 1-3. The deck was observed between 20-40% occupancy for 10 of the 12 collection periods. The two busiest periods, however, occurred during the 6 PM to 9 PM period, where the study team observed 193 parked cars (78%) on Thursday evening and 184

parked cars (75%) on Saturday evening. This is likely the effect of an evening events, generating an additional 80-120 vehicles in the deck.

Parking Turnover Analysis

In addition to parking occupancy counts, the project team collected hourly license plate information for all public parking areas between 8 AM and 5 PM to evaluate the typical length of stay. More than 2,600 license plates were collected during this 10 hour period. After removing duplicate plates a total of 813 unique plates remained, suggesting that **813 different cars were observed within the 710 public parking spaces** throughout the day.

A total of 476 cars (60% of total) were observed once or twice, suggesting that they parked for less than 2 hours. This group likely represents short-term visitors or customers, and 60% is a reasonably high percentage.

A smaller total of 151 cars (19% of total) were observed on seven (7) or more occasions. This group likely represents Town employees, Town departmental vehicles, downtown merchant employees, or UNC students. This group may appear to be a small minority, however **these 151 cars were occupying 48% of the “total occupied time”**, that is, these 151 cars accounted for 1,277 of the 2,646 total observed license plates, and effectively rendered these public parking spaces unavailable to customers. These 151 cars are also contributing to the public misconception that there is “no place to park” in downtown.

Potential Parking Management Strategies

There are many parking management strategies that should be considered in the short-term. The success of these strategies will mitigate and/or delay the need to build additional public parking lots to meet future parking demand. Strategies are grouped into five (5) categories:

- Education: Increasing awareness of the locations of public parking lots, very short walk-times, and eliminating confusing or inconsistent signage.
- Encouragement: Incentives to promote turnover in high-demand areas, and guide employees to park in the low-demand parking areas for longer-term parking. This category may include paid parking options that incentivize turnover through cost.
- Enforcement: Provide a more frequent parking enforcement presence to promote voluntary compliance of the 2-hour time limit, without issuing parking citations or towing (last resort).
- Evaluation: Continual data collection of peak parking occupancy, turnover, and/or survey of parking behaviors. This category suggest that data should be more valuable to parking management than opinion.
- Engineering: Adding new parking spaces by optimizing existing lot layouts, building new spaces, adding on-street parking areas (traffic engineering required), or seeking shared parking lease agreements between private land owners.

There are many potential strategies that support the objectives of these categories. Not all strategies will be perfectly suited for Carrboro, and therefore it is **important that options are data-driven and support the needs of all users** (Town staff, business owners, customers).

Attendees of the mid-point public meeting voted for shared parking lease agreements (Engineering), signage improvements (Education), and increased enforcement efforts (Enforcement) as the most likely to significantly benefit parking in Carrboro.