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Parking Management Strategies

Management of both on and off-street parking is important to the functionality of the Regional Thoroughfare Network (RTN). Control over the location and amount of parking can also support planning efforts toward revitalizing urban areas and town centers located on the RTN. Therefore, in some areas, restrictions on parking are appropriate, while in others on-street parking should be encouraged.

Restrictions on Parking

Most local zoning encourages the provision of adequate parking by establishing parking minimums. In suburban and developing rural areas, new developments often provide excess parking. However, there are drawbacks to allowing too much surface parking. Surface parking lots deter pedestrian access because they separate buildings from pedestrians and sidewalks and deter pedestrians from walking even short distances between adjacent properties.

Areas with less surface parking have a more pleasant and safe pedestrian environment. In urban and suburban areas, reducing the available parking can encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, biking and public transportation. In portions of the RTN that function as transit corridors, or on which transit service is planned, a restriction on the number of parking spots or an increase in the price of those spots can reinforce Transit-Oriented Development. Restrictions on parking in transit-oriented areas should also be formulated so as to prevent transit patrons from abusing merchant parking by using it as an improvised park-and-ride lot during the workday.

One technique to reduce excessive parking is establishing maximum number of spaces a developer can provide. Local governments can also allow and encourage shared parking, either in surface lots or in parking structures. This will provide a better environment for pedestrian-oriented development.

Resources

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Maryland Governor's Office of Smart Growth, *Driving Urban Environments: Smart Growth Parking Best Practices*, March 2006; p. 5-6.

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Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., *Northwest Connecticut Parking Study - Phase II: Model Zoning Regulations for Parking for Northwestern Connecticut*, Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments and Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials, September 2003.
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Atlanta City Ordinance, Section 16-28.028 Parking Structures

Bicycle Parking

Several thoroughfares on the RTN are considered "bicycle corridors." The final step in connecting people with places via bicycles is in the provision of bicycle parking. A safe, secure and convenient location for parking and locking is as crucial to the function of bicycle traffic as it is for vehicle traffic. According to bicyclinginfo.com, bicycle parking should be "visible, accessible, easy to use, convenient, and plentiful." Furthermore, provision of proper bicycle parking facilities prevents the use of street furniture and street lights as impromptu lock-up locations.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking is a highly efficient form of parking because the typical on-street parking configuration provides parking spaces that require only about half the space that a surface parking lot requires. A typical 400 ft. by 400 ft. block face that is used for on-street parking can provide the equivalent parking supply as a ¾ acre parking lot. In addition, on-street parking aids in redeveloping downtown business districts by:

- Providing traffic calming – on street parking tends to slow the pace of vehicular traffic in areas that should be focused on pedestrian-oriented activities.
- Encouraging street-level retail activity – on street parking provides a cheap and convenient supply of short term parking for street-oriented retailers and restaurants
- Improving pedestrian safety – on-street parking increases the distance between moving traffic and pedestrians along the sidewalk. This provides an added safety barrier for pedestrians.

On-street parking may be appropriate for some segments of RTN thoroughfares, especially in urban and maturing suburban context areas. In these areas, on-street parking can count toward the

minimum spacing between the sidewalk clear width and moving travel lanes.

On-Street Parking Conflicts

Bus Stops

No-parking zones should be established at bus-stops and enforced so that drivers do not park even temporarily at these locations. When the area in front of the bus stop is blocked, bus drivers are forced to load and unload passengers on the street, which creates a hazard for the passengers. In addition, as the bus stops in a lane of traffic instead of pulling up to the curb, it adds to the congestion and delay on the thoroughfare.

Bicycle Lanes

On-street parking and bicycle lanes are both suitable for thoroughfares in urban environments. However, where both are found on one roadway, they can often cause conflicts between motorists and bicyclists, when drivers have to cross bike lanes to access on-street parking. Therefore, on RTN routes that are bicycle corridors, on-street parking is discouraged on the side of the road where bicycle lanes are present.

Parking and the Pedestrian Network

Where parking is restricted or consolidated, particularly in more urban contexts, there should be an emphasis on the pedestrian network and environment. The longer people have to walk from their cars, the more they will be aware of the safety of their surroundings. To this end, parking garages and shared lots should be connected to adjacent commercial uses via well-lit pathways, stairways or sidewalks. Where parking is on street, it should be in the context of a complete pedestrian network, without gaps in sidewalk coverage between locations.

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