



Department Source: City Manager

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: January 4, 2016

Re: REPORT-Smart Growth Parking Recommendations Follow-Up

Executive Summary

Last Fall, per the request of Councilpersons Trapp and Thomas, and former Councilperson Hoppe, the City of Columbia, Missouri, applied to Smart Growth America (SGA) for free technical assistance to complete a parking audit workshop (see City of Columbia 2015 Parking Audit Results). Upon winning the award for technical assistance, the city signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SGA stating that it would complete the parking audit and workshop, and make an effort to carry out SGA recommendations resulting from the workshop process (see MOU, SGA-Columbia). The SGA recommendations, and accompanying staff recommendations, were included in a November 16, 2015 city council report, which sought council input on next steps. These recommendations are re-summarized below and the original SGA recommendations are attached (see SGA Parking Audit Report and Suggested Next Steps).

The following report includes input from the Downtown Community Improvement District (CID) (see CID Letter, 12-11-14, CID Letter 7-17-15 and CID Feedback on SGA Recommendations, 12-10-15) and the 2011 City of Columbia Parking Task Force final report (see Parking Taskforce final report, 1-15-13), as requested by council on November 16th for the sake of making a more informed decision concerning the SGA and staff recommendations. Additionally, per the request of Councilman Thomas, more information about the fourth SGA recommendation for the creation of a downtown access and circulation plan is included in the staff feedback section of this report. In light of this new information, staff is seeking a council decision on how to proceed with the proposed SGA recommendations, in order to complete the SGA Memorandum of Understanding signed by the city.

Discussion

Consultant Recommended Actions and Timeline to Address Parking Policies/Strategies, Including Staff Feedback

1. Form a city-wide parking commission.

This commission would initially focus on downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, but would later broaden its mission to include all areas of the city.

Within 6 months following workshop

Implement new Parking Commission



Staff Feedback: If council decides to create a parking commission, staff suggests making it a city wide parking commission from the beginning, as a number of current parking challenges occur beyond the downtown boundaries. In addition, any parking commission would need to include a diverse stakeholder group, similar to the stakeholder representation at the parking workshop.

2. **Use mode share and public transportation to reduce downtown parking demand.**

A consultant will complete a new transit plan for the local transit system (COMO Connect) in the coming months (procurement is almost complete). Use that project to develop metrics for mode shift away from driving and establish city-wide mode share objectives to ensure an integrated approach to parking and transportation.

Within 9 months following workshop

Initiate development of transit plan for COMO Connect

Include mode share analysis and objectives in plan development

Staff Feedback:

Mode share objectives are not included in the Transit Service Analysis and Planning Assistance Project contract with Olsson Associates that has already been approved by council. However, there is potential to include mode share objectives in any plan that is developed after the transit study is completed in early 2017.

3. **Public information, marketing and education.**

Develop a transportation demand management (TDM) program similar to GO Boulder¹, as a collaboration between the city and MU, which provides information and educational resources on travel choices, including walking, bicycling, transit and driving. Develop outreach to ensure that people are aware of multimodal opportunities and have access to transit passes and other resources to encourage a shift in travel away from single occupant vehicles. Develop an employer TDM outreach to work with employers in Columbia (including the university and colleges) to help employees benefit from commute options and choices.

Within 1 year following workshop

Include new TDM outreach program in 2017 budget development for consideration by City Council

Within 18 months following workshop

Initiate development of new TDM outreach program

Staff Feedback: With the exception of university and college partnerships, the City of Columbia currently has a number of outreach programs (see below) similar to those under the umbrella of GO Boulder. Barring council direction to alter current activities, staff plans to continue these programs:

COMO Connect, the City's Public Transit System, has a number of programs aimed at increasing awareness of, and access to, transit opportunities. Children under 5 years of age ride free, and students 5-18 years of age can ride free by displaying a valid student ID. The disabled, elderly (ages 65+ years), Medicare and Medicaid recipients,



and qualified low income residents can apply for half fare eligibility through the COMO Connect website. In addition, downtown employees qualify for half-price bus fares, priced at \$25 a month. Finally, all persons, including city employees, who have purchased a parking permit in an unmetered off-street parking facility qualify for a free, annual unlimited use bus pass. These programs are currently promoted through the COMO Connect and CID websites.

Since 2008, the city's Get About Education and Outreach programs, managed by the Parks and Recreation Department, has provided a growing number of programs designed to encourage and educate our community about the benefits of healthy transportation. Bicycle safety and skills classes follow the curriculum of the League of American Bicyclists, a national advocacy organization. Classes are offered free of charge and include City Cycling, Bike Buddy, bicycle maintenance and weather related cycling seminars. Encouragement programs include a wide variety of theme rides introducing cyclists of all skill levels to bicycle friendly routes. Ride participants are introduced to streets with bike lanes or pedways and those with low traffic volume and connectivity to the Columbia trails system. GetAbout staff participates in numerous outreach opportunities throughout the year at community-wide events, campus activities and workplace seminars. Collateral materials include bike maps, trail guides and bicycle/pedestrian safety pamphlets. GetAbout partners with the CID and various City departments (Transit, Health and Columbia Police Department) to offer awareness activities including Bike, Walk and Wheel Week, Trails Day and Lighten up Columbia (bike light giveaway program). Funding for GetAbout Columbia is provided by the Federal Highway Administration's Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program.

On August 17th, 2015, the city's parking utility started a pilot project offering 200 discounted permits to downtown business employees, and others with long-term parking needs, to park at 10-hour meters away from prime parking spaces in the city's central core. Permits are currently \$35 a month and are processed by Parkmobile, Inc. To date, 38 permits have been sold.

As for a larger employer TDM approach, any effective one would need to be completed by MU and University Hospital, other local colleges, etc. and focus not only on employees but students as well. These options could be discussed further if an MU representative is appointed to a potential Parking Commission.

4. Prepare a downtown access and circulation plan.

Develop a downtown access and circulation plan (ACP) to address parking and transportation in downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. The ACP will result in strategies for improving the operations of each mode – pedestrian, bicycle, transit and personal vehicle – and will establish metrics to support ongoing monitoring and reporting of progress toward plan implementation. Data collection in support of performance metrics will be an early part of plan development. The project will evaluate leading edge technological solutions and tools for parking, transit and traffic management. The plan will address long-term vehicle storage needs (overnight/multi-



day parking) to free up short-term parking for access to downtown businesses. The project will be coordinated with the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission and the new Parking Commission (see above) to ensure broad awareness of the emerging plan and strong community buy-in and support for implementation.

Within 1 year following workshop

Include new downtown access and circulation plan in 2017 budget development for consideration by City Council

Within 18 months following workshop

Initiate development of new downtown access and circulation plan

Staff Feedback: An example of a downtown parking, access and circulation plan, which also includes transit, is that of Northbrook, IL, a suburb of Chicago². The plan aims to improve accessibility to downtown by automobile, foot, bicycle, bus and train. The following parking recommendations are included in the plan: use occupancy data to identify and promote opportunities for shared parking, which utilizes a parking space for two or more individual land uses without conflict; create back-in angle parking spaces for increased accessibility and pedestrian, cyclist and driver safety; consider various factors, such as the mix, density, and interaction between land uses as well as proximity to transit when creating parking requirements for new development, in order to prevent an over-supply of parking, which could drive up development costs and reinforce an auto-oriented environment with negative impacts on the bicycle and pedestrian environment and a disincentive to using transit.

Portland, OR also has a comprehensive downtown access and circulation plan.² Plan recommendations include: reducing travel lane size on some streets to provide on street parking, buffered bicycle lanes and increased pedestrian space; creating green street designs that can be implemented with redevelopment of properties; additional traffic signals to facilitate safe crossings and traffic flow; provision of curb extensions, rapid flash beacons, and bike infrastructure to improve street safety.

Despite the success of these plans, City of Columbia staff believes that the existing public street system and circulation pattern is adequate to serve the downtown area. Columbia has one 6th of the population of Portland, and unlike Northbrook, it does not border a much larger metropolitan area. Besides the on-street and public garage vehicular parking spaces that are currently available in Columbia, other projects have been done and/or are pending that will potentially improve downtown access for a variety of modes.

The GetAbout program has implemented hundreds of additional bicycle racks/bicycle parking spaces in the downtown area, and provided funding for sidewalk repairs and improvements, which has been a major upgrade to non-motorized mode access. Other sidewalk projects are continually in process.



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The pending Transit Master Plan to be done for COMO Connect will provide new research to maximize the efficiency of COMO Connect's downtown access, and potentially increase ridership and result in a mode shift away from private motor vehicles.

The parking utility has already begun to attend to downtown's long term parking needs through permit price structures based on traveler intent (i.e. hourly visitor, downtown employee, downtown resident, etc.) and prices will continue to be adjusted accordingly as the city grows.

In regard to potential physical changes in motor vehicle downtown access/circulation, the city made an effort in the late 1970's to alter the basic traffic pattern of the downtown by constructing a rectangular one-way traffic loop on existing public streets. This was intended to move through traffic off Broadway and route it onto more peripheral streets. This project was eventually dismantled due to negative public opinion and a general consensus that the arrangement was not beneficial.

Therefore, staff does not recommend the creation of a downtown access and circulation plan, which would require significant staff time and likely duplicate a number of current efforts. It could also potentially require the hiring of an engineering consultant and/or a dedicated staff position to manage the project. However, it could be useful for a potential parking commission to work in partnership with the Planning and Zoning and Bicycle/Pedestrian Commissions to evaluate tools for parking, transit and traffic management, such as data collection in support of performance metrics, technological solutions and ideas for long-term vehicle storage needs.

¹ Go Boulder: <https://bouldercolorado.gov/goboulder>

² Transit, Parking, Access and Circulation Plan:

<https://www.northbrook.il.us/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=4259>

³ Pearl District Access and Circulation Plan:

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/410811>

Fiscal Impact

This report includes recommendations, which are informational at this time. There may be financial impacts to consider should Council decide to pursue any or all of the recommendations.

Vision & Strategic Plan Impact



City of Columbia

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Vision Impacts:

Primary Impact: Downtown, Secondary Impact: Transportation, Tertiary Impact: Economic Development

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Secondary Impact: Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Mobility, Connectivity, and Accessibility

Legislative History

Date	Action
10/01/2014	Per the request of Councilpersons Trapp and Thomas, and former Councilperson Hoppe, staff applied to Smart Growth America (SGA) for free assistance to complete a parking audit workshop.
11/16/2015	SGA Parking recommendations included in council report. Council requested feedback from the CID and the final 2011 Parking Taskforce report before making any final decisions on SGA recommendations.

Suggested Council Action

Council is requested to make a decision on if, and how, to proceed with each of the four SGA recommendations. Staff will incorporate council feedback and revise recommendations before returning to SGA. For recommendations Council wishes to pursue, SGA will then set future progress report due dates, based on the revised recommendations, as required by the city's SGA agreement in the Memorandum of Understanding.