



Parking Technical Advisory Group

747 Market Street; Room 537

Meeting #71 – October 3rd, 2013, Notes

4:10 Meeting called to order by Co-Chairs

Rollie Herman, one of the co-chairs, called the meeting to order.

4:15 City of Tacoma Staff Update

Eric Huseby, Parking Services Manager for the City, gave an update on some City activities:

- UWT Area changes update: The rollout of changes around UWT continues to go well. Anecdotal evidence is that there is more turnover and parking availability.
- State Farm: Several hundred State Farm employees started at 909 A Street on Monday. The first day of traffic & parking went very well resulting in accolades for the parking/transportation system from some key parties.
- Commerce Street: Pierce Transit has closed its stops located in the 1100 block of Commerce. The City has transitioned these into parking stalls. Adjacent businesses are excited about the changes and additional customer parking.
- Data Collection: Rick Williams Consulting will be doing on-street data collection later this month. This include the paystation area as well as the County-City Building area. While this data will not be immediately available, it may be able to help influence the changes proposed for the County-City Building area.

4:30 County-City Building Area

The group next returned to the discussion of the County-City Building Area. At the last meeting the group tentatively recommended a 2hr time limit from 8AM to 4PM in the "short-term" area nearest the County-City Building. This area is roughly defined as S. 9th, Yakima, S. 11th, Tacoma, 13th, and Market. This was designed to target the long parking peak of 8AM to 2PM by forcing turnover while still allowing overnight parkers, like residents to park from 2PM to 10AM.

The PTAG affirmed its recommendation of a 2hr time limit with 8AM-4PM hours of operation.

Bates Sub-Area

The group discussed the longer term stay area identified near Bates Technical College. This area was relatively compact consisting of roughly Tacoma to Yakima between 11th and 13th. With Bates students and faculty parking on-street and off-street for extended time stays and few parking regulations, the parking is over occupied for many hours a day.

Despite this overparked condition, the group noted the limited number of businesses operating in this area – and those that did exist generally had regulated on-street time stays. Bates itself

dominated the area with some additional residential buildings mixed-in. The Bates students feel the parking is challenging, but don't want to make it more difficult. The parking technical advisory group did not hear from any residents in this area. It appears County-City Building staff are also long-term parkers in this area. This led to the question, "Is there really a problem, despite it being over-parked?"

The sense was that the over-parked condition is not impacting businesses operating in the area. Based on this, the group felt that rationalizing the time stays and increasing consistency with the short-term area would be the most effective path to serve both parkers and businesses/residents in the area.

The PTAG tentatively recommended that all regular time-regulated stalls in the area be consistent as 2hr time limits between 8AM and 4PM, consistent with the County-City Building area to the north and east.

Worksource Sub-Area

The other long-term stay area with a number of time regulated stalls is the area generally bounded by Tacoma, 13th, Market, and 15th. This area includes Worksource, residential buildings, and a number of vacant/underdeveloped spaces. The on-street parking was parked up in some areas for extended periods of the day. Other areas had little on-street occupancy.

Like the area around Bates, there was little concern that the parking situation needed many changes. The greater sense was that a few areas of 90-minute parking were having little impact on the area. Worksource had requested the availability of both long-term parking and short-term parking for its clients.

The parking technical advisory group noted the handful of block faces with 90min time limits were scattered in the area and the area's general demand for longer term parking. Because of this, the group considered making the time limits consistent with the adjacent area or simply removing the time limits all together. After some discussions regarding enforcement of these scattered time limits, it was clear that without a more consistent application of time stays it would be challenging to enforce time limits.

The PTAG tentatively recommended removing time limits in this area along Tacoma (south of 14th), Court E, Fawcett, Court D, and 15th.

On-Street Restrictions: Jurors & Official Vehicles

Finally the group discussed the two unusual groups of parking system users in the area that have not been prevalent in other areas – jury parking permits and official vehicles, particularly law enforcement vehicles. Both of these groups are using the County-City Building and have been given the ability to park on-street for extended periods of time in stalls that would otherwise be visitor/customer parking.

The advisory group discussed the availability of on-street and off-street parking for these users. It was noted that there is a parking lot the County-City Building has already reserved for law enforcement vehicles but it is all assigned stalls. This is a contrast from most other parking lots that use festival parking to better manage fluctuating parking demand. The parking technical advisory group felt that it would make more sense to use this off-street lot than give away public on-street parking. To better understand the usage of this lot, the PTAG requested better off-street parking occupancy data.

The County-City Building also provides off-street parking options for jurors as well as transit passes. Unfortunately, with the on-street parking permits provided by the courts (& not coordinated with City of Tacoma agencies) the most convenient parking for jurors is in the on-street customer stalls rather than in the off-street facilities. The advisory group was supportive of moving the jurors off-street.

The general sense on both of these issues was that the official vehicles and jurors were taking up on-street space that should be prioritized for customers of the County-City Building and other local organizations. It was shared that because of the lack of available parking, tickets were routinely issued to non-customers at the nearby McDonald's parking lot.

Some history of the issue had been discussed at prior advisory group meetings and was quickly revisited here. Over a decade ago when Pierce County began construction on a new jail facility some off-street parking areas were not available. To help relieve some of the pressure, the City and County agreed to accommodate official vehicles and jurors on street. However, the "new" jail opened in 2003 and the on-street accommodations did not change. Since the issue of on-street parking came to the fore again in 2007-2008, there has been a recognition that the County-City Building area has more demand for on-street stalls than there is capacity.

In order to free stalls for customers and clients, the PTAG tentatively recommended the City remove the large areas of on-street official vehicle parking and end the on-street jury permit program.

Paystations at County-City Building

Finally, the issue of paystations near the County-City Building was revisited. There are several block faces that have appropriate turnover (as shown by average time stays of less than two hours) but are over 85 percent occupied for multiple hours of the day. Within the existing paystation area, these would be considered problem areas.

The advisory group is recommending longer time stays in this area to meet the customer needs. However, this will also mean an increase in demand and an increase in occupancy. For an area that is already parked over capacity, the group should discuss whether paystations are appropriate.

There was a general sense that paystations should be explored, but some concerns over impacts of the changes already proposed. With the proposed changes and increased enforcement, some advisory group members wondered if occupancies would drop. However, current occupancies are inconsistent with the allowed time stays meaning increased enforcement may have little impact.

Since the meeting was wrapping up, a straw poll was taken to determine if paystations near the County-City Building should be explored further. A majority of the advisory group felt it was appropriate to move forward down this path while a substantial minority either disagreed or wanted more information.

This issue was to be revisited at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10PM with the next meeting on October 17th. In the near future, the location of the meeting would likely be changed to one of the first three floors of City Hall due to the new security measures being put in place.