

City of

Bellevue



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**TO:** Bellevue Transportation Commission  
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**SUBJECT:** Downtown Transportation Plan Update: On-Street/Curbside Parking  
<http://www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-transportation-plan-update.htm>

## INTRODUCTION

The update to the Downtown Transportation Plan will address mobility issues and challenges and support Downtown growth and urban livability looking out to 2030.

On June 13, 2013, the Downtown mobility topic will be **On-Street/Curbside Parking Supply and Pricing**. In future meetings, additional discussions of the use of curbside space will include Freight/Parcel Loading Zones, Taxi Stands, and Passenger Pick-Up/Drop-Off. Essentially, this topic includes the various uses of stationary motor vehicle activities that occur at curbside. Staff will review existing conditions, community input, and preliminary recommendations for criteria to be used in evaluating the potential to increase the supply of on-street parking on Downtown Bellevue.

## Council Direction

Council has directed that work on the Downtown Transportation Plan Update consider on-street parking and the related curbside uses of the right of way. Council Principle #1 addresses this topic as follows:

### **Plan for multiple modes of travel within, to and from Downtown Bellevue**

*Develop an innovative multimodal transportation strategy for Downtown Bellevue that updates the existing Downtown Subarea Plan project list. The recommended strategy should consider and incorporate the emerging and anticipated mobility needs of motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, taxi patrons and carpool/vanpool riders, and support the transport, parking and loading needs of employers, residents and businesses.*

## Existing Parking Management and Regulations

The Downtown Parking Program began in 1996 with regular enforcement, warnings and monetary penalties beginning in the summer of 1997. The main objective of the Downtown Parking Program is to provide free, short-term parking for downtown visitors and business patrons. This objective is supported through enforcement of safety and time zone rules.

## Comprehensive Plan – Downtown Subarea Plan

The following policies in the Downtown Subarea Plan support the use of Downtown streets for on-street parking and provide direction for reviewing the supply and management of the on-street parking resource. A potential outcome of the work on the Downtown Transportation Plan Update would be revised policies related to on-street parking.

- **Policy S-DT-61.** *Examine additional opportunities for on-street parking in the district. (Northwest Village)*
- **Policy S-DT-71.** *Examine additional opportunities for on-street parking in the district. (Ashwood)*
- **Policy S-DT-153.** *Permit short-term on-street parking on Downtown streets if such action does not create significant traffic problems.*
- **Policy S-DT-154.** *Initiate a public/private comprehensive examination of short-term parking problems Downtown, and develop a work plan to implement solutions.*
- **Policy S-DT-155.** *Utilize quantitative measures to analyze the short-term parking supply for neighborhood-scale retail and services, and implement parking management strategies or increase the parking supply as appropriate, and as resources allow.*
- **Policy S-DT-158.** *Provide for the needs of bicycles and pedestrians in the design and construction of new facilities in Downtown, especially in the vicinity of the Transit Center, along the NE 6th Street pedestrian corridor, and on 106th Avenue NE where on-street parking and/ or wider sidewalks may be appropriate.*

## Bellevue City Code

The authority for the City to regulate the use of streets for parking is established by Bellevue City Code; Chapter 11.23 Parking:

### **11.23.010 Parking restricted – Specified streets – Residential permit parking zones.**

*The city council may by ordinance establish parking restrictions, including but not limited to no parking anytime, time of day restrictions, and time limits on all or portions of specified streets.*

By a series of Ordinances, the City Council has created a number of spaces for on-street parking within Downtown. Specific restrictions are established for the use of curbside space for parking, including:

- No parking anytime
- No parking anytime except Metro transit vehicles
- No parking 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Sundays and Holidays
- 2 Hour parking 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Sundays and Holidays
- 2 Hour parking 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays

The total inventory of on-street/curbside parking spaces in Downtown Bellevue is about 300 spaces (parallel parking spaces are not individually striped so quantity is variable depending on

vehicle type and placement), compared to a 2010 inventory of 42,274 off-street spaces (PSRC). Most of the on-street/curbside spaces are designated for parallel parking, although angle parking is permitted on a few street segments in Old Bellevue.

### **Community Input**

Through community outreach for the Downtown Transportation Plan Update, and the Downtown Livability Initiative, staff has heard multiple and sometimes divergent comments and opinions related to the use of curbside space, as summarized as follows:

- Most comments are that there isn't enough on-street/curbside parking in Downtown, yet others have stated that there is too much and that it should be removed in favor of using the entire street for moving traffic.
- Those who believe that there is not enough on-street parking would like more of it to support businesses and to visit friends and relatives who live Downtown.
- We have heard that some people prefer to have an on-street parking space to drop in for a quick visit to a coffee shop, convenience store, or a friend, versus using a parking garage.
- Some suggest that a greater supply of on-street parking could either be permanent or restricted by time-of-day or day of the week.
- People have expressed that parked cars along the curb create a good buffer for pedestrians from moving vehicles, while this opinion is not universally shared.
- Many believe that on-street parking spaces are a precious public resource and users should pay to park.
- Other comments note that the process of driving between private parking lots creates traffic, and that public health could be improved if people could park their car once and walk to various businesses.
- Some have observed that delivery vehicles stopped at curbside may block a travel lane from time to time; and that in some locations taxi stands are needed to support car-free residents and visitors.

### **On Street/Curbside Parking – Value to Community**

On-street parking provides for the convenient, short-term parking needs for business customers and visitors. In the Downtown mixed-use urban context, land use and the urban design intent of the streetscape are supported and enhanced by the presence of vehicles parked at the curb and the vitality their passengers bring to the sidewalks and nearby businesses. Curbside parking can be designated as a 24/7 use of that space, or parking may be limited to select days of the week or times of day. Cities, including Bellevue typically designate the use of curbside space by ordinance, mark the space with signage and striping, and actively manage the public resource, including metering for use of the space and issuing citations for violating the terms of use.

On-street parking is a public resource that has value. One qualitative method to understand the value of public parking spaces (and private ones too) is expressed in the graphic called the “parking triangle”. This simple graphic is packed full of useful information for those who manage parking, based on the behavior of those who are traveling to a destination and looking for a place to park. It should be noted that parking spaces themselves do not create the demand for parking, the demand is created by the destination-the adjacent or nearby land uses. The parking triangle does not directly imply anything about the land use that is being served by the parking supply, except that spaces that are “convenient” to popular land uses may be in greater demand – as expressed by price - than those spaces that are “inconvenient”.

- **The Parking Triangle**

This simple graphic provides a wealth of information that we can all relate to as follows:

- Where parking is available and convenient, it is expensive
- Where parking is expensive and fully used, it is likely to be convenient
- Where parking is convenient and cheap, it is probably fully used
- Where parking is fully used yet inconvenient, it is probably because it is cheap
- Where parking is cheap and available, it is likely to be inconvenient relative to the driver’s destination
- Where parking is inconvenient and expensive, it is likely that many of those parking spaces will be vacant



- **The value to the economy** and urban environment

- Each on-street parking space along a vibrant retail corridor can improve the sales for merchants in the immediate vicinity
- Many studies have been done on the value of an on-street parking space to a downtown economy. In Bend, Oregon, for example, a study has shown that each on-street parking space that turns over about 8 times per day generates about \$46,000 in retail sales.
- Presence of on-street parking makes the sidewalk more pedestrian friendly because there is a buffer of parked cars separating walkers from traffic

- **Bicycle parking corrals**

- On-street bicycle parking corrals that can accommodate several bicycles may generate more economic activity than a single car parking space because of the greater number of potential customers on bicycles that can fit into a single car parking space
- Potential sites for future bike-share docking stations if the Puget Sound Bike Share program comes to Bellevue. Phase I to be implemented in Seattle in 2014.

- **PARK(ing) Day space**

- According to the [parkingday.org](http://parkingday.org) website, PARK(ing) Day is an annual worldwide event where artists, designers and citizens transform metered parking spots into temporary public parks. A number of creative temporary PARK(ing) Day installments have popped up in Seattle and Vancouver in recent years. In San Francisco, some of the most popular PARK(ing) Day locations have become permanent components of the streetscape that include bicycle parking and café seating.

### **On Street/Curbside Parking – Potential New Parking Spaces**

Prior to preparing a recommendation to add any on-street parking spaces in Downtown Bellevue, staff proposes establishing criteria to evaluate each street and each block face for its potential use as permanent or time-limited parking. With the assistance from the consultant team, led by Rick Williams Consulting, staff has prepared a preliminary list of criteria – these are both objective and subjective measures that could help inform the decision on whether to add parking to the curbside of any Downtown street. Adopted codes and measurable data would be important factors as would Downtown livability considerations.

#### **Objective Criteria - Codes, Policies and Metrics**

- **Building/Sidewalks Relationships Right-of-Way Designations**

Originally adopted in 1983, this section of the Land Use Code sets forth specific standards and guidance for private development projects with respect to the relationships between buildings and the sidewalks, specifically the types of land uses and the design. The intent of these guidelines is to create a pedestrian-oriented environment in Downtown Bellevue, and it recognizes a range of uses and design treatments – categorized by right-of-way designations “A” through “E”. To the extent that on-street parking and other curbside uses support the intended land use and urban design character, this document is an appropriate tool to help evaluate the potential for on-street parking.

- “A” rights-of-way have the highest orientation to pedestrians and may be good candidate locations for curbside parking to support retail uses. Streets in Old Bellevue, for example are designated “A”. These streets have small, pedestrian oriented storefronts that are currently supported by on-street parking. According to the “parking triangle” on-street parking here is convenient and cheap, therefore it is likely to be fully used throughout the day.
- “B” rights-of-way have a moderate orientation to pedestrians, with sidewalk activities and amenities, including retail and service uses
- “C” rights-of-way have a moderate orientation to pedestrians, and the activities and design of the sidewalk environment is less retail-oriented than “B” rights-of-way.
- “D” rights-of-way have a low to moderate orientation to pedestrians, and the “D/R” rights-of-way incorporate ground floor residential uses along with service and commercial activities.

- “E” rights-of-way have a low orientation to pedestrians, not that pedestrian facilities are minimized, but the ground floor uses are not focused on creating a vibrant pedestrian environment.

- **Downtown Subarea Plan**

Downtown Bellevue has a hierarchy of arterial streets based on their connectivity, cross-section, and current and future traffic volume. These streets are mapped in the Downtown Subarea Plan as “Pedestrian Bias”, “Auto Bias”, and “Neutral”. Also in the Downtown Subarea Plan is a designation of “Signature Streets” which help define the functional aspect of certain streets. Designations are described in the categories of “Shopping Streets”, the 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE “Entertainment Avenue” and the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE “Commerce Avenue”. While the designations and descriptions of streets may change through the Downtown Livability Initiative, these adopted designations may also be useful criteria for evaluating streets for on-street parking.

- **Traffic Volume and Level of Service (existing in 2010 and projected to 2030)**

A significant function of Downtown streets is to move vehicles, and the only way the City currently measures the performance of a street is with respect of the capacity for vehicles and the delay of vehicles at intersections. Given this baseline, criteria related to traffic will be useful considerations for evaluating the potential for on-street parking. Metrics such as the following are available through modeling and analysis work already completed for the Downtown Transportation Plan Update:

- Daily/peak hour traffic volume
- Vehicular volume/capacity ratio on street segments
- Intersection vehicular level of service

- **Transit stops/stations/bus volume**

Transit is a significant user of Downtown curbside space. Bus zones and transit layover space are not considered for on-street parking. Through the Downtown Transportation Plan Update, the concept of designating “transit enhancement corridors” has emerged as preliminary recommendation for certain streets that carry a significant volume of bus traffic on a peak hour basis. These corridors may not all be suitable for on-street parking as the curb lane may be designed for transit priority. Criteria related to transit use may include:

- Bus stop locations (bus zones)
- Transit layover space
- Roadway corridors that may be designated “Transit Priority Corridors”

- **Engineering Standards and Specifications**

A block face may have retail frontage, low traffic volume, great vehicular level of service, and no transit stops or layover spaces, yet it may be difficult to provide curbside parking due to the physical characteristics of the area and the standards that must be met or maintained. Below are some of the objective engineering considerations:

- Line of sight from intersections and driveways
- Traffic control devices
- Fire hydrants
- Parking space dimensions
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) considerations
- **Other Objective Criteria to Consider**
  - Downtown “superblocks” – pros and cons of parking on these long block faces
  - Bicycle facilities existing and planned – possible competition for curbside space
  - Transportation Commission discussion – additional criteria???

#### **Subjective Criteria - Downtown Livability and Economy**

- Could curbside parking provide a traffic calming function to foster and enhance Downtown livability?
- Would curbside parking improve the pedestrian environment by providing a buffer from moving vehicles?
- Could additional curbside parking support patronage of existing or planned ground floor retail uses and visitors to residential buildings?
- Is there a relationship between the location of bicycle parking and potential for additional curbside vehicle parking? Bike racks are installed on the sidewalks in areas with abundant retail storefront activity and residential uses – the same types of areas that would be supported by on-street parking. Examining a map of the bike racks may be useful to call attention to areas that may be appropriate for on-street parking.
- Consider the value to the Downtown community of the use of curbside space for parking versus traditional curbside bicycle lanes.
- **Other Subjective Criteria to Consider**
  - Transportation Commission discussion – additional criteria?

#### **On-Street Parking – Free or Pay**

The concept of paying for on-street parking is new for Downtown Bellevue drivers. City staff has in years past studied converting the 300 time-restricted free on-street parking spaces in Downtown Bellevue to pay parking. The Commission is asked to consider and provide

comments on the concept and value of metered parking in the context of the Downtown Transportation Plan Update.

- The high cost of “free” parking
  - Bellevue currently pays a contractor \$94,038 each year specifically for on-street parking management and enforcement. On average 550 warnings and infractions are issued each month. Revenue from parking tickets is lumped in with other types of tickets and at this time the City does not determine the breakdown of revenue by type of ticket.

The following are some factors that may be considered in making the decision to charge for on-street parking:

- Metered parking can increase turnover and improve opportunity for economic activity at nearby businesses.
- Parking meter revenue can be a resource for management, enforcement and maintenance of the on-street parking supply - paid for by the users of the parking.
- Parking meter revenue can provide a resource that can be invested in Downtown neighborhood improvements.
- Payment Infrastructure and Technology
  - A pay parking system could consist of electronic pay stations, which have become the standard in cities across the country and worldwide over the past decade. They are currently being used in Seattle, Kirkland, and Tacoma. Pay stations accept coins, credit cards, and debit cards. Pay stations operate on wireless communications – already in place in Downtown Bellevue – and are powered with solar trickle-down batteries.

## **NEXT STEPS**

With regard to on-street parking, the Rick Williams consultant team will use the assessment criteria to evaluate each street corridor and block face in Downtown Bellevue for its potential for on-street parking. A technical report and map will be the outcome of that effort, which will be available later in the Summer.

On July 11, 2013, the discussion of curbside uses will continue, with the topics being taxi stands, loading zones/loading activity and passenger pick-up/drop-off.

At the City Council study session on September 23, 2013, staff and representatives of the Transportation Commission will provide a comprehensive overview of preliminary recommendations for Downtown transportation.