

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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Comments by

Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities regarding:

Bill 16-536 - Omnibus Parking Amendment Act of 2005 Title II- Residential Permit Parking “Residential Permit Parking Regulation Amendment Act of 2005”

Before the Honorable Carol Schwartz, Chair
Of the Committee on Public Works and the Environment
Thursday, January 16, 2006

My name is Cheryl Cort and I am the Executive Director of the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities – or WRN. WRN is a non-profit organization that helps urban communities in the Washington, D.C. region capture the benefits of smart growth, with a focus on social equity. WRN has been integrally involved in transportation, parking, and affordable housing issues throughout this region. I also had the privilege of participating in the Mayor’s Task Forces on Parking, Transit-Oriented Development, and Downtown Congestion Management.

Summary

We strongly support the residential permit parking proposals in Title II. These provisions implement key recommendations from the Mayor’s Parking Task Force, and have garnered broad support as evidenced by local newspapers (attached). We urge the Council to move forward with these measures. They will create more responsible management of public curb space. Better management of public curb space helps make parking more available for residents. We request that the new revenues from any increased parking fees be dedicated to improve the neighborhood where the money is generated with investments in pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities, parks and other public amenities.

However, we are disappointed that performance standards for metered parking spaces do not appear in this bill. The Council should instruct DDOT to move forward both with improved management of residential parking *and* metered parking. The Council should set the goal of using the lowest price possible to ensure that one to two spaces are always available on every block. Again, new revenues should be dedicated to improving local public sidewalks, streetscapes, and other amenities that benefit all residents and neighborhood businesses.

We suggest three amendments to the bill:

- (1) DDOT shall manage visitor and commercial parking in concert with residential parking permit program to manage demand and reduce parking congestion.
- (2) DDOT shall adopt performance measures to ensure availability of metered parking supply to make it reasonably available when and where needed, with a target occupancy rate of 85 percent. The rate shall not exceed \$3 per hour without the express approval of the Council. DDOT should install multi-space meters which allow for alternatives to cash payments such as credit or debit cards, SmarTrip cards, and other media.
- (3) All additional revenues, after funding administration and enforcement, shall be dedicated to the blocks where generated to improve sidewalks, streetscapes and other public amenities.

Comments:

We support a graduated fee structure for on-street parking permits as proposed in this bill. Increased fees to manage demand is a rational and responsible way to manage on-street parking so that it can be more predictable for permit holders.

Prices should be set at the lowest level possible that ensures that one to two parking spaces are available on any block. Current RPP prices are far, far below market value. By increasing and graduating fees we send a signal that these public resources are valuable, scarce and need to be allocated fairly and rationally. We strongly agree that pricing should be used to manage curb parking where many more permits are issued than curb space can accommodate. Through proper pricing we can reasonably allocate this scarce and valuable public resource.

In neighborhoods where parking demand is low, but RPP is requested to keep out commuters, we suggest that fees be set only to recover administrative and enforcement costs.

Where more permits are issued than curb space available, it only makes sense to charge a graduated fee for more parking permits as use of the first parking space has less impact on neighbors than the second and the third. In high demand neighborhoods where on-street parking is scarce, single household parking three cars on the streets does not seem neighborly.

The residential parking proposal needs its companion piece of managing commercial meters and visitor parking so that RPP holders are protected from unmanaged guest parking, including employees and customers in RPP zones

The keys to ensuring that street parking is available by pricing meters to ensure 15 percent vacancy and installing multi-space meters were spillover parking into RPP zones occurs. Residential permit holders would not pay the meters, but visitors would. This will greatly improve turnover and enforcement. Using multi-space meters on RPP streets to

control spillover parking is now proposed for the Adams Morgan neighborhood, but many other neighborhoods would like to have this management tool.

We urge the Council instruct DDOT to develop the other repairs needed in the RPP system. The system was designed to keep commuters from driving and parking long term in neighborhoods. RPP needs to be transformed into a mechanism to fairly allocate scarce and valuable public parking spaces to residents and visitors where demand outstrips supply.

We ask that Council instruct DDOT to refine and fine tune the changes needed to make RPP work. I've been telling my neighborhood association that the system would be rationalized soon, but now that I don't see any other recommendations from the Task Force moving forward, I'm concerned that we will have to petition for each improvement. We hope a more cohesive approach can be developed. The Council should demand that DDOT create a cohesive system that is based on performance – making parking available through appropriate pricing of public curb space, while dedicating new revenues to improving the neighborhoods where the funds are generated.

Establish Meter Rates to Assure Parking Availability

I am disappointed that the administration's bill does not address the city's mismanaged metered parking which does not make parking available for visitors as it should. Nobody is really helped by metered parking that is too cheap, so that it is always full, and the hunt for a space long, frustrating and unpredictable. We request that the Council set a policy to ensure that metered parking is available by pricing meters at the lowest rate possible that leaves one to two parking spaces available on any block. This means that if someone wants to drive, she knows that she will find an on-street parking space convenient to her destination. The great success of the business district of Old Pasadena demonstrates how charging the right price, making parking always available and capturing the revenues to improve the business district can revitalize an area and out compete its suburban mall rivals.

Pricing meters so that people can find parking when and where they want it is good for businesses, and good for reducing traffic from frustrated drivers in search of a curb space close to their destination.

Conclusion

We urge the Council to support the residential parking permit provisions of this bill. This is an important step towards making parking reasonably available for residents and visitors. Other aspects of RPP also need to be managed along with permit fees such as visitor parking in RPP zones. We also ask that you include a policy to charge the right price for metered parking to make it reasonably available. All the new revenues from parking fee increases should be dedicated to local public space improvements.

Thank you for your consideration.