

The use of parking restraint as a travel management tool

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ABSTRACT

A travel plan consisting of a variety of 'carrots' or enticing measures but without the 'sticks' or restrictive measures will struggle to achieve modal shift away from single car occupancy trips to a site. People will generally take the easiest and most convenient form of transport to make a trip and it can not be denied that for many trips this most convenient form of transport will be the car. Very often changing to a more sustainable mode requires planning, commitment and perhaps a lifestyle change. Therefore, without a 'stick' to act as a catalyst for change people won't make these changes. Some of the most common 'sticks' that are incorporated into travel plans relate to parking, including the rate of parking provision and charges.

This paper will discuss the pros and cons of providing maximum and minimum parking for new developments in conjunction with the introduction of **effective** travel plan measures that provide travel choices and options.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the role of parking as a travel management tool.

However, at the outset, it is worth pointing out a few key issues associated with parking:

- ◆ Parking is a drain on valuable space;
- ◆ Land used for parking serves no primary purpose. Its only purpose is to facilitate movement by cars;
- ◆ Car parking areas do not generally offer pleasant environments.

One can therefore conclude that parking is an undesirable consequence of our current love affair with the car. It is a poor and often unpleasant use of a valuable resource: land.

2 EXISTING SITUATION IN NEW ZEALAND

Parking standards are set out in district plans. However, most parking policies in New Zealand do not reflect current national and regional transport planning objectives, which seek to encourage travel by modes other than the private car. Most district plans set out minimum parking standards, many of which are based on historical data. They are based on the premise that:

- ◆ All parking should be provided within a development site; and
- ◆ The amount of parking should be sufficient to accommodate the vast majority of demands.

There are a number of examples of different approaches in New Zealand. Auckland City has for some time had maximum parking standards in its Central Area Plan, and North Shore City Council is introducing maximums within Albany, but current parking policies are often leading to perverse or undesirable outcomes. For example:

- ◆ The provision of parking to meet standards is in effect facilitating accessibility by private car. This is clearly contrary to TDM principles which seek to encourage travel by other modes;
- ◆ The current rules encourage a developer to meet the district plan standards. A development that does not meet these standards is deemed to be non complying, and this can turn a non notified application to become notified. In this instance it can be more convenient for a developer to provide additional parking spaces, even though he/she considers it unnecessary, solely to avoid costly delays;
- ◆ Current standards can lead to undesirable urban design outcomes. Examples are blank empty facades at the ground floor level, as it is normally cheaper to provide parking at this level rather than higher or lower levels, or situations whereby pedestrians are required to walk across masses of open air parking in order to reach an entrance (say to a shopping mall);
- ◆ Current standards can also rule out “desirable” development due to the cost.

3 PARKING AS A TRAVEL MANAGEMENT TOOL

Delegates will be aware that the primary purpose of travel demand management is to reduce the demand for travel and to influence the need for travel, with the aim being to reduce travel by private cars, without adversely affecting mobility and access.

Travel demand management strategies and travel plans often consist of a variety of 'carrots' or enticing measures but there is also a need for "sticks" or restrictive measures. The carrots are designed to entice people into "alternative modes" while the sticks are designed to force people out of their cars.

I am often asked whether both sticks and carrots are required for the same area. I suggest that parking is fairly blunt stick, but is a fairly effective method of achieving a mode shift. A diet of only carrots may achieve a modicum of success, but in New Zealand we are fairly wedded to the benefits of car travel. Once a person owns a car, then that vehicle will be the most convenient form of travel for many (but clearly not all) trips, to the extent that many of us will need a fairly blunt stick to get us to change behaviour. In this context, in the short term at least, the carrots are designed to replace the reduction in accessibility implicit in the measures imposed to discourage private vehicle use. In the longer term there may be a different situation, as we all become more aware of the need to change our behaviour for health and environmental reasons.

At this point, I would like to dispel a few myths.

- ◆ One is the suggestion that "car parks do not create a demand for car travel". This may be the case in a situation with unrestrained parking, but in areas of parking restraint, then the provision of additional parking clearly facilitates additional travel by private car;
- ◆ The second is that there is a direct relationship between parking and trip rates. I will give examples at the conference relating to how trip rates differ with parking rates. I do not believe that if you halve the parking (relative to a situation with unconstrained parking) then you halve the trip rate. Indeed the issue of trip prediction is significantly complicated in situations of parking restraint, as many trips may be to adjacent (off site) areas, or a lower rate of on site parking may increase the rate of drop off trips, which will lead to two way rather than one way trips.

Parking policies should therefore be developed to ensure that parking is provided and managed in a manner that is consistent with other areas of transportation planning and policy. These policies should be designed to facilitate the following.

- ◆ The development of consistent parking standards and policies across a region, otherwise developers will tend to gravitate to those areas where more parking can be provided, as they may perceive this to be a benefit);
- ◆ Encouragement of greater use of passenger transport, walking and cycling, particularly in higher density centres and corridors, while not discouraging development within those centres;
- ◆ Revision of current parking policies and standards in order to avoid encouraging the use of the private car when other alternatives are, or are planned to be, available.

The need for parking policy is particularly acute in the case in higher density centres, where:

- ◆ There is greatest scope for passenger transport use, and travel by walking and cycling modes, meaning that reduced parking can be considered without significantly adversely affecting accessibility. Indeed it can be considered in order to actively encourage travel by other modes;
- ◆ There is greater potential for mixed use developments, with the likelihood that the use of spaces can be shared, where the timing of peak demands differ between adjacent uses. This is the case with restaurants and entertainment uses such as cinemas. These attract some activity during the day, but the peaks occur during the evenings and at weekends, meaning that spaces can be shared with, say, retail or office parking;
- ◆ There is greatest pressure on land, meaning that land prices are often high. However, the greater density of development means that the demands for parking and therefore the percentage of land

given over to vehicle parking, can be substantial. This inevitably has adverse consequences on urban design.

The emphasis on modes of transport other than the private car in these centres means that accessibility by other modes of travel should be considered first, rather than as an afterthought.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In my opinion, the provision and management of parking has a significant role to play in contributing to the integration of land use and transport as:

- ◆ It is consistent with national travel demand management objectives, with the emphasis on sustainable transport outcomes; and
- ◆ It can reduce the amount of land given over to parking, with beneficial consequences for urban design and local amenity.

However, parking restraint can have a number of side effects which need to be considered, including:

- ◆ It can reduce accessibility if it is not accompanied by sufficient measures to encourage accessibility by other modes of transport;
- ◆ It can lead to the diversion of car trips rather than a change in mode if the parking policy is poorly or not consistently applied. For example, one can envisage a situation whereby a shopper could choose to drive further to an out of town shopping centre due to the lack of parking at the local town centre; and
- ◆ It can lead to developers choosing to locate in areas where more parking is allowed if a parking policy is not applied consistently within a region. This can lead to development in areas where, for example, other more sustainable modes of transport may not be available or appropriate.