

## 5.0

# Parking Guidelines

### 5.1 Preamble

The parking guidelines contain recommendations for local governments. They are not mandatory.

### 5.2 Purpose

The parking guidelines respond to the CTR law's requirement that each affected jurisdiction's CTR plan "shall include...a review of local parking policies and ordinances as they relate to employers and major worksites and any revisions necessary to comply with commute trip reduction goals and guidelines..." *RCW 70.94.527[4][e]*

These guidelines are intended to give direction to jurisdictions in their review and revision process and to help achieve regional consistency in parking policy changes.

The Task Force recommendations cover parking supply, parking costs, and site design. They also address parking revisions for existing sites. Because of the focus of the CTR law, the parking guidelines deal with long-term (all-day) parking more likely to be used by commuters rather than short-term, quick-turnover parking most likely to be used by shoppers.

The recommendations are designed to encourage local land use codes to respond to reductions in parking demand as SOV use decreases through CTR programs and to encourage local jurisdictions to provide flexibility to employers to use parking management as an element of their CTR programs.

*These guidelines are based on the Parking Policy Report produced by the Task Force's Subcommittee on Parking, Training, and Model Programs, July 1, 1992 (see Appendix F). This report contains analysis and more detailed methodology and reasoning behind the recommendations.*

### 5.3 Findings

The Task Force finds that local parking policy is critical to the success of the CTR law because of the close relationship between commuter behavior and the supply and cost of parking.

Although parking needs are changing, most local zoning codes do not yet reflect these changes. Ample research demonstrates that employee parking is oversupplied, both locally and nationally, particularly at office and industrial developments. A survey sent to planning officials of 29 Washington local jurisdictions indicated that a significant number receive requests from developers to supply less than the minimum parking required in the local code. However, the need to go through a lengthy variance process discourages many developers from providing less parking than required.

Charging for parking has been shown to be a more effective and direct way to influence mode choice than fine-tuning parking supply. Local governments do not now have the authority to require property owners or employers to charge for parking, and many employers are not aware of their true parking costs. A key means for achieving CTR goals is the ability to apply similar parking supply and cost strategies at both existing sites and new developments.

The Task Force also recognizes the influence of site design on travel mode choice. The presence and quality of facilities for pedestrians, transit users, and bicyclists are critical to the convenience, comfort, and safety of commuters using those modes.

Each jurisdiction may make its own decisions regarding the strategies recommended here, as local parking requirements are the result of many factors, including land-use policies. CTR goals are among those considerations. However, the regional nature of transportation systems calls for a coordinated approach to parking policy revisions, and the schedule and requirements of the GMA (*RCW 36.70A.070*) provide an appropriate opportunity to make such revisions.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### **5.4.1 Basis for Reviewing Local Jurisdiction Parking Standards**

The Task Force encourages local jurisdictions to follow these recommendations as a basis for establishing parking standards for new developments and expansions:

1. Review parking policies and standards in conjunction with and consistent with arterial and transit levels-of-service required under the GMA. The timing of parking policy review should be coordinated with GMA policies adopted by July 1992 and new comprehensive plans adopted by July 1993.
2. Review off-street parking requirements for professional office and industrial uses, as well as related land use categories such as business or industrial parks, high-tech, and light industry. Institutions should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Standards should be set to meet actual demand, rather than to provide "ample" parking.
3. Conduct parking demand studies, if desired, to supplement previous national and local studies that analyze the supply of parking at office and industrial sites. Explore the use of Congestion Management Funds available through the Intermodal and Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) to support studies relating to parking policy.
4. Report to the Task Force in the annual progress report any problems experienced in implementing these recommendations, such as inadequate resources.

### **5.4.2 Adjusting Parking Supply**

The Task Force encourages local jurisdictions to consider the following recommendations when adjusting parking standards in land use codes:

1. Lower the minimum parking requirement for all office and manufacturing land-use categories to the level of projected parking demand, commensurate with the achievement of 1995 CTR goals.
2. Allow further reductions below the minimum on a case-by-case basis. Case-by-case deviations below the minimum should be linked to implemented TDM measures. Requests by developers to reduce parking supply below the minimum should be considered by administrative review rather than a variance process.
3. Establish maximum parking standards for new development. Maximums should be set to meet actual demand, including a cushion of ten to 15 percent for practical capacity to guard against spill-over parking. Exceptions to the maximum standard should be handled by administrative review. In areas where maximums are established, jurisdictions may consider residential permit parking programs or other off-site parking controls, such as short-term meters, if spill-over is a concern.
4. Base maximum and minimum parking standards for office and industrial uses on studies that take into account employee densities at specific employer sites and full-occupancy projections.
5. Re-evaluate minimum and maximum standards in 1995 and 1997 to determine whether changes in parking demand resulting from the CTR law warrant additional reductions.
6. Require reserved parking spaces for carpools and vanpools at office and industrial sites to accommodate and encourage HOV commuting. These spaces should be nearest and most convenient to building entrances and should be posted as reserved for HOVs arriving between 5:30 and 9:30 a.m. HOV spaces may be available for other uses after that time. Increase the code requirement for HOV-reserved spaces, commensurate with increases in HOV demand resulting from CTR law implementation.

*A methodology for computing the number of HOV spaces is provided in the Task Force's Parking Policy Report, July 1, 1992.*

7. Allow nearby properties with different peak times in parking demand to share parking spaces as a means of reducing unnecessary supply.
8. Allow developers/employers to establish a public parking management program, in lieu of requiring all or some portion of on-site parking.
9. Establish an administrative process that encourages existing developments to reduce excess parking as an element of their CTR programs. These reductions should be consistent with the revised parking standards recommended here for new development.

### **5.4.3 Site Design Standards**

Local jurisdictions are encouraged to establish site design standards for new development that facilitates the use of alternatives to SOVs. Site design recommendations related to parking are as follows:

1. Require secure, well-lit bicycle parking facilities close to building entrances. Encourage property owners and local jurisdictions to cooperate so that cost-effective covered bicycle parking, showers, and lockers can be provided. Bicycle parking should be provided as a ratio of total parking stalls, with a minimum specified. A higher ratio may be warranted in dense urban areas.
2. Require employee parking to be designed and located to ensure direct, convenient, and safe access for pedestrians and transit riders between the street and the building entrance.
3. Work with transit agencies and site developers to establish requirements for transit facilities, if the site is located adjacent to a street with existing or planned transit service. Provision of pedestrian facilities, such as covered walkways, also should be encouraged, in exchange for reductions in required parking.

*Guidelines for parking layout and other site design elements that are compatible with transit use can be found in A Guide to Land Use and Public Transportation, Snohomish County Transportation Authority (SNO-TRAN), December 1989; as well as in a myriad of other land-use and urban design publications.*

### **5.4.4 Parking Cost**

Employers should be encouraged to consider employee parking charges to help achieve CTR goals, as well as specific parking management suggestions. In addition, jurisdictions should consider the following recommendations.

1. Pursue educational and incentive strategies first to determine if CTR goals can be achieved without parking charges.
2. Pursue the use of Congestion Management Funds available through the Federal Congestion Management and Relief and Surface Transportation Program to support demonstration projects that provide incentives to encourage new and existing property owners to reduce parking supply and/or charge employees for parking.

## **5.5 Future Task Force Actions**

In addition to the guidelines contained here for local jurisdictions, the Task Force will continue to review and recommend local and state actions that will help achieve CTR goals. The Task Force intends to:

1. Develop specific guidelines for employee parking management programs at new and existing employment sites, including employee parking supply.
2. Review local experience with changes in parking demand as reported in local jurisdiction annual progress reports. Incorporate findings and recommend revisions to these guidelines in the Task Force's December 1995 report to the Legislature.
3. Ask the Legislature to amend the 1990 Local Option Commercial Parking Tax to include non-commercial parking sites, if there is insufficient progress toward achieving CTR goals by 1995. The Task Force may bring this issue to the Legislature earlier, if appropriate.
4. Plan and fund, in partnership with local jurisdictions, educational workshops and informational materials designed to increase employer awareness about parking cost and its influence on mode choice. These information materials should be part of the orientation program for employer senior managers and the training for ETCs and employer program developers. Explore the use of Congestion Management and Air Quality Improvement Program funds available through ISTEA.
5. Investigate aspects of the Uniform Building Code, fire codes, zoning codes, and other regulations that increase the costs of providing covered bicycle parking and lockers/showers. Recommend state and/or local changes that would allow these facilities to be provided in a cost-effective manner without compromising the integrity of the regulations.