

# ***Frequently Asked Questions***

## ***Parking Policy Recommendations***

- ***What are the City's current regulations regarding off-street parking for new development?***  
In our central neighborhoods, and those best served by transit, the parking rules allow builders to provide parking based on the anticipated demand of their tenants. This can occur everywhere in Urban Centers and near light rail transit stations. It can also occur in Urban Villages that are within ¼ mile of frequently-served transit stops. No changes are proposed to these existing standards.

- In other areas outside of those dense and frequently-served areas, the minimum parking required is one space per dwelling unit; except for
- Frequent transit service corridors outside of urban villages, such as Rainier Avenue South, a 50% reduction in the minimum parking is allowed

- ***What is meant by Frequent Transit Service (FTS)?***  
“Frequent transit service” is defined in Seattle’s code as “transit service headways [time between scheduled bus arrivals] in at least one direction of 15 minutes or less for at least 12 hours per day, 6 days per week, and transit service headways of 30 minutes or less for at least 18 hours every day.” King County Metro’s use of the term recognizes the concept of averaging of service, for example, four evenly-spaced transit trips per hour is equivalent to an average headway of 15 minutes. Metro’s system maps are shown at <http://metro.kingcounty.gov/maps/>

- ***Is there any consideration of congestion on transit in the FTS standard...I've heard that full buses sometimes pass people by?***

The frequent transit service standard is based on the defined scheduled service, and not by daily variables such as over-crowding of certain buses. As a result of Proposition 1, passed by Seattle voters, additional bus service will be added to address frequency, reliability, and overcrowding. Improved service will begin in June and expand over the next year.

- ***How can we define standards according to bus service when bus service might decline over time?***

The areas defined are major corridors connecting each major part of town. They are the backbone of the city where bus services will remain strong.

Also, we periodically monitor the status of bus routes to ensure frequent service continues.

- ***When did the current approach to parking get adopted?***  
Seattle has been incrementally changing legislation so less parking is required in places with more frequent transit service and as other travel options have improved. No parking has been required for housing downtown since the mid-to-late 1980s, in recognition of the proximity of housing to employment options and effects on regional commuting. In the last decade, a series of changes to commercial and multifamily zones in 2007, 2011 and 2012 extended the

no-minimum parking requirement to more uses and more Urban Center, Urban Village and transit-served areas.

- ***What was the reasoning behind requiring less parking near transit service?***

Fostering new housing growth in such areas is encouraged by the City's Comprehensive Plan, regional plans that emphasize "transit-oriented development" and the personal savings and reduced environmental impacts of compact development patterns and the combined objectives of the City's housing and transportation plans. At the same time, there is increasing recognition that constructing parking is expensive for housing providers and it is oversupplied by around 30% on average throughout King County. See [King County's Right Size Parking evaluation](#) and its model that estimates lower parking demands throughout much of Seattle compared to other parts of the county. Therefore, too much parking is creating too much of a burden on the ability to live in Seattle with housing choices that are affordable.

The idea is to let the amount of parking be tailored to the needs of the expected residents. This is consistent with policies to encourage people to take advantage of a variety of ways to move around the city, including transit.

- ***What are the recommendations of the Report?***

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) recommend retaining the current parking policy as an important factor affecting the cost of constructing housing, while also addressing the City's objectives for managing growth. As an alternative, DPD and SDOT recommend strategies to address transportation and parking demand, rather than requiring parking in areas well served by transit.

- Promote and increase transportation options to ensure that our neighborhoods continue to be well served by transit.
- Require bus passes for new residential developments in center city neighborhoods and other areas frequently served by transit, along with car share memberships, bike share memberships, or similar services.
- Review residential parking conditions and the Restricted Parking Zone program to identify demand management strategies in growing neighborhoods.
- Promote shared parking for vehicle storage and remove City code barriers to such a strategy.
- Update City code to include improved bike parking for more types of new development and promote guidance for placing bike share stations on private property.
- Promote garage designs that facilitate sharing parking among different buildings in a neighborhood. This would include providing guidance for optimal access, layout and security.

- ***How many new developments provide parking when no parking is required?***  
Since 2012, more than 3/4 of the 219 new developments provide parking where no parking is required (average is 0.55 spaces per dwelling unit). Only about 12% of the 19,000 new units are built or proposed to be built without parking.

- ***How does parking influence the cost of housing?***  
The cost to build parking in residential garages is in the range of \$20,000 – 50,000 per stall or more, and consumes property space that limits the number of housing units that can be provided. A Portland, Oregon study found that garage parking at \$55,000/stall and the consumption of space which could have been used for housing would lead to rent that was \$500 higher per month for renters in a typical lowrise apartment development. Apartment owners cannot fully recoup the cost of building or operating the parking through rental of the parking spaces themselves. Even if parking is provided at separate cost to tenants, many may choose to park on-street as a more affordable option.

Many Seattle families cannot absorb such added costs, and are seeking affordable housing choices in Seattle. Housing choices without parking therefore serve a needed role in the housing market.

The average household in Seattle spends around 17% of their budget on transportation, and accomplishing more residential living opportunities in places that have more personal mobility options (frequent transit and other choices) would help people reduce that burden.

- ***Why does Seattle promote transportation options other than driving a personal vehicle?***  
Seattle is planning for at least 70,000 new households (more than 100,000 people) that will arrive over the next 20 years. Seattle's 2014 population is 640,500. If all new city residents and workers expect to drive every day, traffic congestion will grow faster and be detrimental to our transportation system and our economy. We simply do not have the roadway space to accommodate a personal vehicle for every person who lives or works in Seattle.

Instead, recent and ongoing policy decisions by the City are facilitating easier access to other transportation options that are both affordable and convenient. Seattle is increasing bus service, building street car and light rail service, allowing expansion of Transportation Network Companies (TNC=Uber, Lyft, Sidecar) and taxi service, growing free-floating car-sharing, and now Pronto Cycle Share.

- ***With Seattle's growing population, is there any concern about on-street parking availability?***

Whether you're a current resident or new to the neighborhood, on-street parking is public and open to everyone, but it's not an unlimited resource. Seattle manages on-street parking to balance competing needs (transit, customers, residents, shared vehicles); move people and goods efficiently; support business district vitality, and create livable neighborhoods.

Also, most new development includes some amount of parking. 75% of the housing projects reviewed by DPD in areas where residential parking is optional (since 2012) provide some amount of parking. There are also often other off-street parking options available in neighborhood business districts. The range of ideas in this proposal seeks to accomplish more efficient parking choices that will relate to encouraging better shared use of existing and

underutilized parking lots, “right-sizing” of off-street parking provided, and finding ways to temper on-street parking use through demand management strategies.

DPD is also working with SDOT to help ensure that people have access to a variety of convenient and reliable transportation options that can reduce dependence on a personal vehicle.

- ***How do on-street residential parking conditions and Restricted Parking Zones (RPZ) fit into the new Parking Recommendations?***

SDOT is reviewing residential parking conditions and the RPZ program in 2015. As a part of this process, SDOT will be looking at existing conditions in specific neighborhoods and will be identifying related demand management strategies. The RPZ program review will include an evaluation of the process for permit distribution, permit pricing, and the number of permits issued.

- ***What are the City and partners (such as Metro, Sound Transit) doing to provide more transportation options?***

Seattle voters recently approved Proposition 1 that supports improved bus service in Seattle. There are new streetcar lines and light rail service coming as well. The City has also supported the new Pronto bike sharing program, expanded car sharing options, and taxi and TNC service. More specific efforts include:

- Adding bus service to improve frequency, reliability, and overcrowding;
- Building quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure;
- Developing integrated land use and transportation policies that make it convenient for people to access groceries, child care, and employment opportunities through walking, biking, transit, and shared transportation options.
- Adopting Move Seattle, a 10-year strategic plan that identifies projects that will holistically maintain and improve Seattle’s transportation networks and provide interconnected and reliable transportation choices.

- ***What are the environmental benefits of choosing transit and other transportation choices?***

Continuing to enable a range of livable housing options in Seattle will help people avoid longer commutes and congestion that add to our air pollution and greenhouse gas burden. Choosing transit can also reduce fossil fuel consumption, and helps to avoid pollutant generation on roads that washes off into local streams, lakes and the Puget Sound. Flexibility in parking standards reduces the cost to construct housing and encourages housing development in areas of the city with access to frequent bus service.

- ***How many on-street parking spaces are there in Seattle?***

There are approximately 500,000 on-street parking spaces in Seattle. There are around 11,500 paid spaces and another approximately 12,000 that we manage through time limits or other strategies.

- ***How many private paid-parking spaces exist in Seattle?***

Based on City data there are 88,684 off-street spaces. The Puget Sound Regional Council did

a recent study in the Central Business District, Chinatown International District, Denny Triangle, and the waterfront that covered 48,864 stalls.