

**Summary Notes from Westlake Avenue North Interest Group Meeting 3
Business Owners, Managers, Employees, and Customers
Monday, November 20, 2006**

Summary and Introductions

SDOT staff hosted the third and last of three Interest Group meetings with Westlake community stakeholders to gather and discuss concerns and issues, and to identify volunteer representatives to take part in a Westlake Parking Workgroup. This meeting was focused on issues specific to business owners, managers, employees, and customers. Forty members of the community signed in as attendees.

The meeting opened with introductions of all participants, followed by a brief discussion of the intended purpose and outcomes by Marty Curry. As a consultant, Marty is facilitating the three Interest Group meetings and the subsequent Workgroup meetings.

Parking Management Goals (with Questions and Answers)

SDOT's Mike Estey gave an overview of the City's parking management goals generally and as they pertain to Westlake. He described that the Westlake Avenue North parking is in public right of way, City staff do their best to manage public parking consistent with City policies and goals, while at the same time to best address the needs of the adjacent businesses, residents, property owners, and other interests. He said there are two main goals of the City's parking management plan for Westlake: 1) achieve an 85% maximum peak occupancy of spaces (an industry standard indicating the parking is well utilized but that there are available spaces to be found without a significant amount of trolling); and 2) understand and address the wide variety of user needs in Westlake. Mike's full speaking points are Listed in Attachment 1 at the end of this summary and linked on the SDOT web site. His response to what is "on the table" for discussion during this outreach process is essentially anything that achieves those two primary goals and is not currently illegal or unfeasible.

During Mike's presentation, he responded to questions and took comments. Among them (with a brief summary response given at the meeting included):

Will you explain where SDOT is in the process with regard to City Council actions? *(Today the City Council passed legislation to adopt the 2007-2008 City budget, which includes revenue assumptions for Westlake Avenue North. If conditions change, staff will go back to the Mayor's Office and Council to present revised revenue projections. Legislation adopted by Council in September 2006 allows for all-day parking and performance-based pricing.)*

How was the problem identified in the first place? How many surveys were performed? *(Surveys were performed 3 weekdays in May and 3 weekdays in August 2005.)* An attendee commented that she rides a bike the length of the corridor every day, has lived there since 1967, and does not see a parking problem. *(We appreciate that everyone will have their own perspective; SDOT has heard many comments to the contrary, that there is a problem.)*

Isn't this a revenue enhancement move rather than a neighborhood upgrade? *(SDOT does not install paid parking to raise money. Paid parking is one tool to provide better access, availability, and turnover of parking.)* One attendee commented that community members feel parking management has been "rammed down our throats."

Did your survey ascertain the number of residents and number of employees in the corridor? *(The 2005 study focused only on vehicles, where they were parked, and for how long. We have heard the request for more data, and will do our best to respond and provide what is accessible and relevant, but would appreciate the community's help in sharing what they have gathered and agreeing on future data for the Workgroup to consider.)*

Is the identified shortage of parking over the whole corridor or just part of it? *(We recognize that access is currently most problematic on the southern half of the corridor. The upcoming meetings with the Workgroup will help determine which tools are appropriate in which areas.)*

An attendee stated that at a previous meeting Mike Estey said SDOT is open to solving the problem without paid parking, that everything is on the table. *(Mike responded that in spirit that is accurate, but with the previously stated caveat that whatever is proposed must be both legal and feasible. For example, greatly increasing the number of parking enforcement officers in the area would not be feasible.)*

An attendee commented that if there is a way to limit parking to just those who truly have a right to use the lot, the problem would go away. That would eliminate such users as the park-and-riders, people who park there and walk up the hill to work, and people who park there then take a taxi to the airport.

How about permits? *(As has been discussed, the current plan is to implement a residential parking zone and permit system, but at this time we do not have information on how or whether other users could be eligible for a similar permit. At upcoming meetings we will provide more specific information on City and State regulations.)*

Given the uniqueness of the area and all the complexities encountered in trying to solve the parking problem, why not just acknowledge that the situation has worked up to now and not bother with managed parking? *(It is SDOT's responsibility to proactively manage the City-wide right-of-way to assure access is open to all. We also foresee that the upcoming developments in the South Lake Union and Denny Triangle areas will put increasing pressure on the existing inventory of public parking.)*

Small Group Discussions

The large group then broke up into three smaller working groups to discuss in greater detail the specific thoughts, comments, questions, and concerns attendees had regarding business owners, managers, employees and customers issues as they relate to parking in the corridor. The City presented a summarized list of the business issues and concerns it had heard over the past several months from meetings, emails,

conversations, and other comments. Each of the three smaller working groups then elaborated on those issues, brought up additional ones, and prioritized its top concerns. The details of those small group discussions can be found as Attachment 2 at the end of this Meeting Summary and are linked on the SDOT web site.

Forming the Workgroup and Next Steps

Following the small group discussion, the next steps for community outreach were described. This is the final of three interest group meetings. SDOT has received 29 statements of interest in participating in the Parking Workgroup. Once 12-15 Parking Workgroup members have been identified, the Workgroup will meet approximately five times over the next couple months, probably once every two weeks. (See Attachment 3 for additional details about the Workgroup.) The Workgroup will roll up their sleeves to put together a work plan and arrive at recommendations for a revised Parking Management Plan, with the details to be presented to City Traffic Engineer Wayne Wentz.

Further Questions and Comments

At the conclusion of the meeting, a number of additional questions and comments were raised and addressed. Among them (with a brief summary response given at the meeting included):

An attendee suggested that after the Workgroup develops their recommendations, SDOT should circulate a conceptual plan to get feedback from the community before spending any money developing the final detailed recommended plan.

When will Wayne Wentz (City Traffic Engineer) get involved? There is a fear that he will throw out whatever the Workgroup comes up with. *(He has been involved on an ongoing basis through the staff working on the public process. He will attend the first Workgroup meeting to share his perspective, and may attend other meetings as necessary.)*

The biggest point in all of the three interest group meetings is that the data does not exist as to who has the right to use the parking and who does not. *(SDOT will come to the Workgroup meetings with as much data as we can. We also understand that WANA has collected data on employers and employees in the corridor. Any other data that any of the community members could share will be useful.)*

Susan Appel stated that WANA surveyed businesses last summer to collect information, and if any business did not get surveyed, please contact her.

If WANA collects information on businesses and employees will SDOT trust the data enough to accept it as accurate? *(We need to get a handle on what information has already been collected and by what methodology. SDOT will work with WANA to identify what is available.)*

An attendee suggested that SDOT also document which businesses and residents depend on water access.

Attachment 1 – Parking Management Goals; Speaking Points of Mike Estey, SDOT
Attachment 2 – Summary of Small-Group Discussions
Attachment 3 – Summary of Parking Workgroup

Attachment 1 – Parking Management Goals
Speaking Points of Mike Estey, SDOT
November 20, 2006

- Parking is an important asset. In case of Westlake, is in public right-of-way. At SDOT, our job to manage in manner consistent with how manage public ROW parking elsewhere. Provide access & ensure mobility.
- When parking study done in 2005, data showed southern half largely “full” during significant portions of day. Over past couple months, have heard that more or less acknowledged. But disagreement about whether or not a problem. We think it is –limits access to businesses, amenities. Why we’re proposing to better manage the parking.
- **Two main goals:** 1) manage parking to achieve a peak maximum occupancy of 85% . . . parking is well-utilized, but don’t have to “troll” too much to find a space – those who need it have access; 2) in whatever implement, do our best to address the wide variety of parking uses in Westlake.
- With those two goals in mind, have been asked what “on the table” for discussion. Answer: anything that helps achieve those two goals that is not currently illegal (e.g., allowing RPZ permits for employees as a “class” in addition to residents – not currently legal).
- Broader context for our work – guiding policy documents like the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Strategic Plan. They speak to how Seattle will accommodate growth over time, and to employ various transportation strategies in response.
- Accepting that each area of city has its unique characteristics, want to be consistent in how apply tools available to manage parking. Unrestricted, time limits, paid parking, enforcement.
- The data collected in 2005 shows that existing unrestricted parking and time-limit signs not working well. In circumstances like this, experience in other parts of city is that paid parking is effective in providing improved access to available parking.
- In Westlake, draft June plan proposed managing the public right-of-way by introducing paid parking and a residential parking zone. Recognizing that Westlake has a variety of parking needs and has until now been free for parking, also proposed some innovative things:
 - allow for all-day paid parking (which don’t do anywhere else)
 - introduce the possibility of purchasing multiple days of parking; may better meet business, employee and marina user needs
 - allow residents to park in many paid parking areas by displaying a valid RPZ permit
 - start at a lower hourly rate than the rest of the city
 - adjust rates to meet performance targets; if occupancy falls substantially below 85%, then the City would lower rates; if occupancy is still substantially above 85%, the City may raise rates

- Comes back to trying to meet a couple key objectives: 85% occupancy (i.e. – access), and doing our best to meet a wide variety of user needs. What is “on the table” for discussion? Any and all ideas, thoughts, and suggestions to address those goals. We’ll be taking all of them at these Interest Group meetings, and the Parking Workgroup will wrestle with them.

Attachment 2 – Summary of Small-Group Discussions Regarding Business Owners, Managers, Employees and Customers

At the November 20 meeting, the larger group split up into three smaller groups to further discuss concerns, questions, and ideas regarding parking in the Westlake corridor as it relates to business owners, managers, employees and customers. The City provided a summarized list of the business owners, managers, employees and customers issues it had heard over the past several months from meetings, emails, phone calls, and other comments. This document includes the City's initial summary of business issues, followed by the notes of each of the three smaller groups at the November 20 meeting. Each group was additionally asked to prioritize its top issues. Those are shaded at the top of each group's list.

Westlake Avenue North Parking Issues and Concerns

Business Owners, Managers, Employees and Customers

(As summarized from e-mails, letters, phone calls, meetings and conversations with community members)

Space Availability

- 1) Growth and development in the immediate area make it difficult to find convenient parking during some periods of the day.
- 2) Commuter parking for bus transport to center city destinations increases demand for available parking spaces.
- 3) Employees and customers of businesses, who charge for the use of their available parking spaces on the west side of Westlake Ave North, use the free parking on the east side of Westlake.

Economic Impacts

- 4) The cost of paid parking will increase the "effective" lease cost for office or retail space compared to buildings with free parking.
- 5) Potential loss of customers, who exercise their options to patronize businesses with free parking.
- 6) The cost of paid parking and other area development pressures/building standards will force local businesses to relocate, thus changing the unique character of the Westlake neighborhood for those who chose to live, work and recreate there.
- 7) The cost of paid parking will create an economic hardship for those local employees with lower wage jobs.

- 8) The cost of paid parking, on top of the economic hardships caused by the succession of local transportation-related construction projects, is unfair to business owners.

Convenient Use of Parking Spaces

- 9) Need to locate load/unload spaces close to business entrances.
- 10) Need to manage requirements for dumpster and recycle container storage.
- 11) Need to recognize the need for overnight and weekend business vehicle storage.
- 12) Need to provide for the frequent “in-out” parking requirements of the business community.

Enforcement and Security

- 13) There are public safety and security concerns associated with the parking areas.

Notes from Three November 20, 2006 Small Group Discussions
(Shading indicates the issues that each group identified as high-priority.)

Group 1

- Parking access for customers is a major concern (strong attention to park and ride impact); include full area to Fremont Bridge
- Can enforcement be improved with current limits?
- Paid parking will increase cost of operating local business; could force relocation
- Volunteer supported organization—concerned about impact of parking on volunteers
- Public safety issues
- Include residents on the west side of Westlake in eligibility for parking
- Also increased cost to employees
- West side of Aurora is last unpaid parking in area
- Paid parking will cause severe parking competition
- Expand parking study area to include north to Fremont bridge
- Paid parking will impact cost to customers—could force them to patronize other businesses
- Bus service is poor
- Water dependent businesses are unique
- Paid parking raises costs for all employees

Group 2

- “Premium parking” vs. “general parking” designation is confusing; in-and-out parking is a problem
- Why does project stop at Aurora bridge? Should stop at Fremont bridge
- Should create a special class of parking for employees (like for City vehicles)
- Doesn't mind paying for parking but needs to be able to buy monthly pass—inconvenient to have to pay every day
- Large vehicle storage (business vehicles, not loading) need large parking space, otherwise they use 2 regular spaces
- AGC building vicinity currently 2-hour parking, not used as much as all-day
- Let business owners have permits for subsidized employee parking
- Employees need all day parking
- Safety problem with hotel and gym patrons crossing WAN, is crosswalk possible?
- How much commercial parking is available?
- Issue of losing employees if they have to pay for parking
- Safety issues of car break-ins and theft
- Clean up broken glass—does SDOT do it?
- Would like to thank City for cutting back trees for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Live in condo on west side of WAN, one space per unit, insufficient parking for 2-car family or guests
- AGC paid parking not utilized (upper management gets paid parking, McCormick and Schmick validates)
- 2-3 businesses use disproportionate amount of parking
- Parking is a problem year-around, worse in summer
- Need overnight and weekend vehicle storage; bought the property without parking because there was free parking
- Favorable toward paid parking compared to \$22 downtown
- National Sign parks around 40 cars/day
- Restaurants and hotel are bottlenecks

Group 3

- Employee issues: 1) running out to feed meter; 2) increase in business debt load to employee
- Must use car for business; if arrive after 8:00 am, no long-term spaces; no short-term spaces mid-day
- Low wage employees will be greatly impacted; limited options including Metro; some need cars for work
- City has poor infrastructure to deal with issues: park-and-ride, transit service, garages, free parking, load zones
- What flexibility—charge on weekends? (don't want), after 6:00? (don't want), only a few hours at peak?
- Just because something is not currently allowed by State law, don't rule out changing the law
- What does City want? How will decide? Parking is a problem, can't find space after lunch nor can customers
- Business needs in-and-out free parking (5 minutes to hours); would affect bottom line not to have
- Customers may not come in if required to pay (retail and wholesale)

- Can City issue permit for 1-2 hours?
- Will owners have to pick up customer parking fees or ask them to move cars every few hours?
- Area is unique; as permits/special validations are issued, crime will increase. If paid parking, use revenue for patrols
- Customers drop off boats. Is there ability to apply for load zone? Charge to company? Size/area?
- Would like to see parking revenues for last 5 years and expectations for WAN; any economic impact studies of this area?
- Can City build parking garage?
- One of City's stated objectives is to get people out of cars with pricing, but it does not control bus system. Can City assure Metro will not remove #17 route from WAN?
- Will SLU park impact parking?
- Will 10% commercial parking tax apply to WAN public and private parking?
- Why does north end boundary stop at gravel road? Excludes some residents and office buildings; should have same requirements as others on WAN
- Is City willing to look at an alternate plan developed by residents and businesses rather than have them comment on a plan developed by City?
- Could City provide an alternate park-and-ride location?
- Bus stops without a place to park naturally will result in displacement of local resident and business parking; locate park-and-ride uses further out

Group 4

- Number of residents and employees—how many?
- If the people “intended” to park there were the only ones to park, there would not be a problem
- Need flexibility for different users
- Hard to find parking (China Harbor)
- Difficult to find parking at noon
- Visitor parking and multiple-day parking for floating home and boat owners
- Higher (differentially priced) will shift problem from one area to another
- For moderate income employees, paid parking is hardship
- Park and ride lot at south end of lake
- Not controlling people who store their cars here
- All-day pass will encourage all day parking
- Cost is issue for employees and clients
- Concerns about availability of parking for residents on the west side of Westlake
- How much revenue is estimated in budget for Westlake Ave?
- How many parking spaces? (1200)
- Free parking encourages drive alone

- Current paid parking not used
- Money raised—some reinvested in area (e.g. trash, broken glass)

Attachment 3 – Summary of Westlake Avenue North Parking Workgroup

As part of the Westlake Avenue North community involvement effort, a Parking Workgroup will be formed and meet with City staff to address issues identified by stakeholders and develop parking management recommendations. Marty Curry will facilitate the meetings, working with the workgroup and SDOT staff to ensure the process is open and effective.

Membership

The overall group will have a total of 12 - 15 people, who will be identified from volunteers from the three prior stakeholder meetings. The workgroup will reflect the various types of stakeholder interest and use of Westlake parking, and will include representation from the different geographic areas throughout the corridor. All workgroup meetings will be open to other attendees, though active participation at workgroup meetings will be limited to workgroup members.

Commitment

The group will meet approximately five times, once every two weeks (accommodations will be made for holiday schedules). An initial meeting will likely be held in December, with subsequent meetings taking place in January and February. Meetings will likely last about two hours each.

First Meeting

At the first meeting, the workgroup will need to establish a set of goals, ground rules for how the group operates during meetings, parameters for discussions, and a communications plan. The group will want to outline a work plan for how it intends to move through subject matter in subsequent meetings to reach its ultimate recommendations. As the person designated in the Seattle Municipal Code with the responsibility for making decisions regarding parking, curbspace designation, and the public right-of-way, City Traffic Engineer Wayne Wentz will attend the first meeting to share his perspective.

Communications Strategy – Keeping the rest of the community informed and involved

It will be important to keep the broader Westlake community fully informed and involved throughout the workgroup process. The workgroup will help serve as a two-way conduit of information to members of larger stakeholder and other interest groups. As part of a communications strategy, non-workgroup members will be kept current via regular updates of the SDOT website and email summaries of each workgroup meeting to the project contact list. The workgroup will also help with posting, spreading, and sharing information throughout the community involvement process. Non-workgroup members are invited to share and comment throughout the process, either through workgroup members or directly to SDOT staff. As mentioned above, all workgroup meetings will be open to other attendees, though active participation at workgroup meetings will be limited to workgroup members.