



City of Seattle
Department of Transportation

MEMORANDUM

To: Council President Sally Clark
Councilmember Nick Licata
Councilmember Jean Godden
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Bruce Harrell
Councilmember Tim Burgess
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Mike O'Brien

Via: Mary Rutherford, Director of Traffic Management
Mike Estey, Manager of Parking Operations and Traffic Permits

From: Peter Hahn, Director of Transportation

Date: May 29, 2013

Subject: **Report on Business Permit Program in Light Rail Station Area Restricted Parking Zones (RPZs)**

Purpose

In 2009, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) created five new Restricted Parking Zones (RPZs) around Central Link light rail station areas, in order to preclude neighborhood impacts from individuals who might want to hide and ride and take up on-street parking relied upon by local businesses and residents. This was the first time SDOT implemented RPZs in advance of any impact. Due to the number of small businesses in the station areas that use their own vehicles in support of their business, SDOT also developed a business RPZ program. Ordinance 123001 authorized the Director of SDOT to establish a four-year RPZ business permit pilot program in the Link light rail station areas and directed SDOT to report to Council on the effects of the program in 2011 and in 2013. SDOT submitted a mid-program report to Council in July 2011, recommending no changes at that time. SDOT is now submitting to Council the 2013 report, and recommends making this program permanent. SDOT conducted three on-street parking studies in 2010, 2011 and 2012 to determine how occupancy in and around the RPZs had changed since 2008 and to evaluate the business permit program. The most recent 2012 full report is attached to this memo. All studies found similar results; parking conditions are virtually unchanged from 2008, which was the intent of the RPZs and the business permit pilot.

Recommendation

Based on findings from 2010, 2011 and 2012 data, SDOT recommends making permanent the issuance of RPZ permits to eligible businesses and institutions in the Sound Transit Central Link light rail station areas.

Background

In April 2008, SDOT, in partnership with Sound Transit, launched an on-street parking planning and public engagement effort around the Central Link light rail station areas. This effort included a parking study in the fall of 2008 to measure occupancy of blocks within the quarter- and half-mile radii around each station area. This established baseline measurements before light rail service began. In general, the study showed capacity for additional on-street parking use.

SDOT attended nearly 70 community meetings, distributed mailings, hosted open houses, and conducted door-to-door outreach to obtain feedback from area stakeholders. Community outreach and findings from the 2008 data led to the proactive installation of RPZs in five of the light rail station areas: Beacon Hill, Mt. Baker, Columbia City, Othello, and Rainier Beach. In the spring of 2009, SDOT worked on establishing the RPZs with the goal of prioritizing resident and business parking needs over potential commuter parking use.

In June 2009, Council approved changes to the RPZ policy and authorized SDOT to establish a four-year RPZ permit pilot program for businesses and institutions in the station areas of the Central Link light rail segment. The pilot was primarily put in place to ease the transition to the new parking regulations and support small business owners and employees around the light rail stations areas – many of whom use their personal vehicles for business purposes.

Ordinance 123001 also set forth the following monitoring parameters for SDOT: when annual monitoring or survey indicates that 25 percent or more of RPZ blocks in a zone are at least 75 percent occupied and more than 35 percent of those vehicles can be attributed to non-residents, then SDOT shall cease to renew business permits for the 2011–2013 permit cycle. The 2010 parking study found that none of the station area RPZs met the threshold of 25 percent or more of RPZ streets being at least 75 percent full, and the existence and use of business permits does not appear to be outweighing residential parking needs. The study also found that parking use around the station areas did not change substantially from 2008 to 2010.

In the first cycle of permits (2009-2011) in these RPZs, 5,747 permits were issued. Of those, 25 percent (1,457) were business permits. Also in the first permit cycle, the City provided up to two no-cost permits and one guest permit to each household and business in the zones to ease the transition to new parking regulations. Residents and businesses paid for RPZ permits in the second permit cycle.

Key Findings from 2011 and 2012 Studies

- Parking utilization surrounding the light rail stations has not changed substantially between 2008, before light rail service began, and 2012.
- None of the station areas where RPZs exist have exceeded the occupancy thresholds established by the City Council that would cause the City to cease the issuance of permits to businesses.

- The number of permits issued to residents and businesses has decreased since the program started. In 2009 and 2010 the permits were issued for free. Since 2011, when a fee was first charged, the number of residential permits issued decreased by 36 percent and the number of business permits decreased by 62 percent. The reduction in permits issued has not changed parking utilization in the neighborhoods.
- Residents from 12 blocks (23 blockfaces) within the zones have petitioned successfully to have SDOT remove RPZ restrictions from their blocks. The removal took place mostly in the summer and fall of 2011. (For reference, there are almost 500 blockfaces within the five RPZs.)
- In the 2011-2013 cycle, 3,300 permits were issued; of those, 17 percent (552) were business permits.
- Parking occupancy very near the Beacon Hill, Mount Baker, and Columbia City stations increased substantially during Seahawks games. Parking zone restrictions are not in effect on Sundays near these stations.

2013 Community Outreach

SDOT completed a robust outreach effort to the affected communities in the spring of 2013, specifically to gauge opinions regarding the RPZ business permit program. A mailer translated into eight languages was sent to all residents and businesses (approximately 7,500) in the five light rail RPZ areas. It contained a link to an online survey also translated into eight languages. Paper copies of the survey were provided when requested. In addition, staff completed door-to-door outreach to 88 businesses and attended five community meetings.

Over 300 responses were obtained from the survey. Eighty percent of all respondents felt that businesses should continue to be eligible for RPZ permits. Of the residents who responded (60 percent of the total respondents), 67 percent felt that businesses should continue to be eligible for RPZ permits. Full survey results are attached to this memo.

Conclusions

Maintaining this program permanently is consistent with RPZ goals of supporting mixed-use neighborhoods and local business districts, reducing neighborhood traffic impacts by large parking demand generators, reducing overall energy use and vehicle emissions, keeping parking demand from exceeding parking supply, and contributing to implementation of a customer-oriented permit program.

Next Steps

Staff recommends approval of the legislation to make the pilot program permanent. The legislation allows SDOT to cease renewal of business permits if monitoring indicates that 25 percent of the RPZ blocks in a zone are at least 75 percent full, and that 35 percent of the parked cars are non-resident vehicles.

For more information, please contact Ruth Harper at SDOT at 4-4103 or ruth.harper@seattle.gov.

2013 Light Rail Restricted Parking Zone Survey (English)

1. Are you a resident, business owner/manager, or employee?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Resident	60.4%	180
Business Owner/Manager	8.7%	26
Employee	33.6%	100
<i>answered question</i>		298
<i>skipped question</i>		0

2. Do you have at least one RPZ permit?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes - Zone 16 - Mt. Baker	2.0%	6
Yes - Zone 28 - Beacon Hill	17.4%	52
Yes - Zone 29 - Columbia City	30.5%	91
Yes - Zone 30 - Othello	19.5%	58
Yes - Zone 31 - Rainier Beach	1.7%	5
No	29.9%	89
<i>answered question</i>		298
<i>skipped question</i>		0

3. Is it generally easy for you to find on-street parking?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.1%	212
No	28.6%	84
<i>answered question</i>		294
<i>skipped question</i>		4

4. Do you use your vehicle for work reasons (deliveries, transporting goods, etc.)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	47.5%	141
No	52.5%	156
<i>answered question</i>		297
<i>skipped question</i>		1

2013 Light Rail Restricted Parking Zone Survey (English)

5. Should neighborhood businesses and their employees continue to be able to purchase RPZ permits near Southeast Seattle Link Light Rail stations?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	79.4%	235
No	10.5%	31
I don't know	10.1%	30
<i>answered question</i>		296
<i>skipped question</i>		2

6. Do you have other comments?

Answer Options	Response Count
	216
<i>answered question</i>	216
<i>skipped question</i>	82

7. Name (Optional)

Answer Options	Response Count
	104
<i>answered question</i>	104
<i>skipped question</i>	194

8. Please provide your e-mail address if you would like to be added to the project mailing list

Answer Options	Response Count
	121
<i>answered question</i>	121
<i>skipped question</i>	177