



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Robert D. Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager

FROM: Robert Spillar, P.E., Director 
Austin Transportation Department

DATE: March 27, 2012

SUBJECT: CIUR 502 - Six month report on extended parking meter hours

City Council directed the Austin Transportation Department to provide a six month update on the impact of extending parking meter hours Thursday and Friday evenings, 5:30 p.m. to 12 midnight, and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 12 midnight, in the downtown area. The following provides a recap of the anticipated benefits from extending hours and managing parking in the evening, staff findings, financial impacts, future initiatives, and recommendations.

Parking Management of Extended Hours

Goal - Turnover: Daytime parking is managed by charging to park by the hour. This encourages more turn-over of spaces for more patrons and visitors versus use by long-term parkers. Prior to extended hours, there was an estimated 0.5 turns per night of the 3,000 on-street spaces, meaning parking was over capacity and only enabled one visitor per space after 5 p.m.

Findings: Since paid parking was instituted, the average length a driver stays parked at a meter is two hours and seven minutes, creating an average turnover rate of 3.3 turns per space/night. A conservative estimate of two turns per evening yields an additional 6,000 additional vehicles access to on-street parking spaces each night.

Conclusion: Based on these findings, staff concludes that parking downtown is more accessible to visitors, as drivers are now roughly three times more likely to find available on-street parking due to managed meters.

Goal - Increase Off-Street Utilization (long-term parking): Prior to extended hours, employees and patrons staying for longer periods of time had access to free on-street parking, therefore little incentive to park off-street in garages or parking lots as intended. This creates parking congestion and little opportunity for businesses to welcome new visitors downtown. In order to ease the transition to extended parking meter hours, staff worked with off-street garage and surface lot owners to make facilities available that were previously closed in the evenings, and to provide parking at a reasonable price (~4,800 additional off-street spaces at \$5-\$6). Staff also installed wayfinding signage along major roads and at off-street facilities to help drivers locate previously unmarked or difficult to find garages and surface lots.

Findings: Over the last six months, utilization of off-street spaces (14,000 available) has increased by five percent, from 66% to 71%, which is an estimated 700 additional cars parking long-term off-street. In other terms, staff has seen a shift by long-term parkers from on-street to off-street facilities, creating roughly 13% more availability on-street. This still leaves approximately 4,000 off-street parking spaces available on a busy Friday or Saturday night.

Conclusion: Staff has found that while there has not been a decrease in downtown visitors, on-street parking availability has improved due to a better managed parking system which directs long-term parkers off-street to previously under utilized facilities.

Goal - Encourage Transportation Utilization: The transportation demand on downtown Austin is high, and our roadways and parking system a limited resource. To continue serving the City's growing population, transportation alternatives play a key role in providing downtown visitors with alternatives to driving, parking, and adding to congestion. Staff's goal was to encourage alternative transportation and monitor trends following extended meter hours for the opportunity to seek additional alternative services based on demand.

Capital Metro Service (Bus and Rail): As part of outreach during the transition to extended hours, staff worked with Capital Metro to provide educational brochures to all downtown visitors informing them of transit services. Since implementation, Capital Metro's Night Owl ridership has increased 8.3% from September to December when compared to the previous year. Capital Metro now plans to increase service later this year from every hour to every 30 minutes. Additionally, Council's recent approval to extend Capital Metro's Red Line rail service to weekend evenings will also be beneficial in providing alternate transportation to the downtown area.

Bicycle Facilities: Staff installed five bicycle corrals in the downtown area, providing 75 additional bike parking spaces. Nightly usage ranges between 50% and 100% capacity per night and indicates a high demand for bike parking facilities. Staff will continue to survey other potential bike parking locations and implement as needed.

Car Sharing: Austin recently instituted a car sharing program in Austin in cooperation with both car2go and Zipcar. While no direct correlation can yet be made between extended parking hours and car sharing usage, car2go reports a 28% increase in overall usage when compared to the previous year. The Zipcar franchise has not existed long enough to measure results. An increase in car sharing, however, is in line with staff goals to improve overall transportation alternatives and reduce single occupancy vehicle reliance.

Loading/Unloading Zones: Prior to extended hours, musicians often contended with on-street parking congestion and loading/unloading gear from parking spaces or from traffic lanes. In order to clear metered spaces for customers and create more efficient access to venues for musicians, three loading/unloading zones were added to the Red River district to provide easier access to area venues. Transportation staff is working with the 6th Street Association Director to provide additional loading zones in the alley ways along 6th Street.

Goal - Improve Safety Concerns: Lack of parking enforcement officers during the evening prior to extended hours placed an additional responsibility on Austin Police to enforce parking violations. Time spent on enforcing parking prevented officers from dedicating their time solely to safety concerns. In a survey conducted prior to extended parking hours, the Austin Police Department noted that an average of 15 to 25 weekly hours were spent handling parking problems downtown. Officers who responded also noted that tending to evening parking violations prevents officers from handling higher priority calls and being readily available for back-up.

Findings: “Our night shift officers have liked having parking enforcement officers available to handle parking violations. It keeps our officers focused on handling safety issues, and information calls.” - Lieutenant Allen Hicks, APD

Conclusion: Since implementation of extended hours, parking officers have multiple incidents where they were able to assist with safety related issues in coordination with police, including car break-ins and other crimes. Thus, more ‘eyes on the street’ improves the overall concern about safety.

Goal - Improve Parking Accessibility of Restricted Spaces: Prior to extended hours, limited enforcement resources of evening parking violations occurring at handicap spaces, fire hydrant access, valet zones, and no parking zones created both safety and mobility concerns.

Findings: Since implementation and consistent enforcement, staff has seen a greater adherence to parking regulations compared to the first months of implementation apparent by a drop in written citations of 2,000 per month.

Conclusion: Extending metered hours has enabled better management of restricted parking zones and improved access and mobility to those spaces.

Financial Considerations:

Goal - Encourage Turnover and Visitor Access to Area Businesses: Prior to extended hours, the Downtown Austin Alliance had conducted a survey of downtown businesses which indicated the number one complaint was lack of available parking downtown. City staff often received complaints from businesses that long-term on-street parkers were preventing turnover of customers for their businesses. As mentioned previously, turnover of parking spaces has improved; however, staff has continued to monitor business and mixed beverage sales taxes in order to assess any unanticipated impacts to businesses.

Findings: Business/Mixed Beverage Sales Tax: Extending evening hours on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings appears to have had no negative impact on downtown businesses. Sales tax increased 9.7% and mixed beverage sales tax increased 16.3% (October to December 2011) when compared to the previous year (October to December 2010). Please note there are many factors that influence this funding. (See appendix)

Goal - Generate Revenue for Downtown Initiatives, Parking Management

The original anticipated parking budget included extending parking meter hours Monday through Saturday, with estimated revenue of \$2.5 million, and 40% of that revenue dedicated to a Downtown Initiatives fund estimated at \$1 million. Due to the reduction in days as directed by Council, the evening parking revenue is estimated to have a shortfall of \$500,000, and the Downtown Initiatives fund an estimated shortfall of \$200,000.

Findings: Revenue projections are now estimated at \$2 million, of which \$800,000 to be allocated to the Downtown Initiatives fund.

However, the total Parking Management Fund revenue is on track to reaching original budget goals due to increased revenue from other units within the division such as the newly created car-sharing program, valet, and ground transportation division.

General Fund: Revenue generated from parking citations goes toward the general fund through Municipal Court. As previously stated, better compliance has resulted in a drop of roughly 2,000 fewer citations per month since implementation. Currently, the number of evening citations is roughly equal to daytime citations. Additionally, \$5 per citation goes toward the Child Safety Program.

Recommendations and Future Initiatives: Staff continues to work on improvements to the downtown parking system, including more efficient use of valet, commercial, and taxi zones. Staff anticipates more resources will enable officers to better manage parking in neighborhoods with restricted parking signs. Additionally, revenue generated for downtown initiatives (40%) will continue to be dedicated to projects like wayfinding, improved transit and transportation management, and a Transportation Management Association.

- Commercial service zones that expire after 7 p.m. will be converted to paid parking which will create an estimated additional 500 on-street parking spaces
- Six pedicab zones and additional taxi zones will be added to increase transportation alternatives
- Valet ordinance changes are anticipated to go before Council within the next few months with recommendations to add stricter enforcement and fee restructuring
- ATD will request additional enforcement outside of downtown to help manage parking in neighborhoods (with restricted parking signs)
- Development of a privately-funded parking phone application for real-time on-street parking availability information. Will be adding other transportation information as available (Cap Metro, garages, taxi, Car sharing, etc.)
- Wayfinding project – vehicle/pedestrian/event/visitor – Council will receive consultant report from Planning & Development Review Department in January 2013
- Recommend on-street parking policy that will allow ATD to extend hours if on-street occupancy consistently exceeds 85% of the capacity.

Appendix

Financials and Utilization of Downtown Extended Parking Hours

Utilization

On-Street Utilization

	May 2011	Feb. 2012	Difference
Tuesday	90%	72%	-18%
Wednesday	91%	84%	- 7%
Thursday	99%	89%	-10%
Friday	110%	98%	-12%
Saturday	113%	102%	-11%

Off-Street Utilization

	Spaces	Wed. May 2011	Wed. Feb. 2012	Fri./Sat. May 2011	Fri./Sat. Feb. 2012
Surface	4,895	32%	33%	82%	87%
Garages	9529	22%	25%	58%	62%
Total	14,424	26%	28%	66%	71%

Note: Excess of 4,200 spaces in off-street parking available on busy weekend evenings.

AUSTIN DOWN TOWN EXTENDED HOURS PARKING AREA

SALES TAX RECEIPTS

Payment Quarter	Tax Quarter	Fiscal 2006-07	Fiscal 2007-08	Fiscal 2008-09	Fiscal 2009-10	Fiscal 2010-11	Fiscal 2011-12
Dec-Feb	Oct-Dec	1,205,189	1,162,107	1,271,424	1,184,558	1,354,176	1,486,116
Mar-May	Jan-Mar	1,154,278	1,170,671	1,294,370	1,213,248	1,373,563	
Jun-Aug	Apr-Jun	1,251,313	1,270,419	1,295,822	1,177,506	1,348,778	
Sep-Nov	Jul-Sep	1,084,703	1,134,508	1,177,536	1,183,010	1,380,952	
Total		4,695,482	4,737,706	5,039,151	4,758,322	5,457,469	

YEAR TO YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE

Payment Quarter	Tax Quarter	Fiscal 2007-08	Fiscal 2008-09	Fiscal 2009-10	Fiscal 2010-11	Fiscal 2011-12
Dec-Feb	Oct-Dec	(3.6%)	9.4%	(6.8%)	14.3%	9.7%
Mar-May	Jan-Mar	1.4%	10.6%	(6.3%)	13.2%	
Jun-Aug	Apr-Jun	1.5%	2.0%	(9.1%)	14.5%	
Sep-Nov	Jul-Sep	4.6%	3.8%	0.5%	16.7%	
Total		0.9%	6.4%	(5.6%)	14.7%	

AUSTIN DOWN TOWN EXTENDED HOURS PARKING AREA

SALES TAX RECEIPTS

Payment Bi-Annual	Tax Bi-Annual	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-11	2011-2012
Sep-Feb	Jul-Dec		2,246,810	2,405,932	2,362,094	2,537,186	2,867,068
Mar-Aug	Jan-Jun	2,405,591	2,441,090	2,590,192	2,390,754	2,722,341	
Total			4,687,900	4,996,124	4,752,848	5,259,527	

YEAR TO YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE

Payment Quarter	Tax Quarter	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-11	2011-2012
Sep-Feb	Jul-Dec		7.1%	(1.8%)	7.4%	13.0%
Mar-Aug	Jan-Jun	1.5%	6.1%	(7.7%)	13.9%	
Total			6.6%	(4.9%)	10.7%	

Source: State Comptroller's Office

AUSTIN DOWN TOWN EXTENDED HOURS PARKING AREA

MIXED BEVERAGE TAX GROSS RECEIPTS

Tax Quarter	Fiscal 2006-07	Fiscal 2007-08	Fiscal 2008-09	Fiscal 2009-10	Fiscal 2010-11	Fiscal 2011-12
Oct-Dec	32,810,498	35,758,576	36,613,611	35,563,244	38,529,609	44,802,033
Jan-Mar	35,435,505	37,371,967	37,965,948	39,594,150	45,345,700	
Apr-Jun	34,434,060	36,909,826	35,387,496	36,534,205	41,200,682	
Jul-Sep	34,845,439	35,689,361	35,209,240	37,057,363	40,885,538	
Total	137,525,502	145,729,730	145,176,295	148,748,962	165,961,529	

YEAR TO YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE

Tax Quarter	Fiscal 2007-08	Fiscal 2008-09	Fiscal 2009-10	Fiscal 2010-11	Fiscal 2011-12
Oct-Dec	9.0%	2.4%	(2.9%)	8.3%	16.3%
Jan-Mar	5.5%	1.6%	4.3%	14.5%	
Apr-Jun	7.2%	(4.1%)	3.2%	12.8%	
Jul-Sep	2.4%	(1.3%)	5.2%	10.3%	
Total	6.0%	(0.4%)	2.5%	11.6%	

AUSTIN DOWN TOWN EXTENDED HOURS PARKING AREA

MIXED BEVERAGE TAX GROSS RECEIPTS

Tax Bi-Annual	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-11	2011-2012
Jul-Dec		70,604,015	72,302,972	70,772,484	75,586,972	85,687,571
Jan-Jun	69,869,565	74,281,793	73,353,444	76,128,355	86,546,382	
Total		144,885,808	145,656,416	146,900,839	162,133,354	

YEAR TO YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE

Tax Bi-Annual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-11	2011-2012
Jul-Dec		2.4%	(2.1%)	6.8%	13.4%
Jan-Jun	6.3%	(1.2%)	3.8%	13.7%	
Total		0.5%	0.9%	10.4%	

Note: Most recent tax months are subject to change pending payments that can occur in subsequent payment periods.