



Transit for Livable Communities
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DATE: January 19, 2010
TO: St. Paul Planning Commission c/o Merritt Clapp-Smith,
1100 City Hall Annex, 25 West Fourth St., St. Paul, 55102
FROM: Barb Thoman, Program Consultant
SUBJECT: Draft changes to St. Paul's off-street parking requirements

Transit for Livable Communities is very supportive of the changes being proposed to St. Paul's off-street parking requirements. The changes will facilitate development and redevelopment, encourage transit use, bicycling, and walking, and reduce air and water pollution. The City's current requirements have resulted in the oversupply of parking spaces at many locations with the resulting loss of housing and commercial structures to parking lots and tax revenue to the City.

Specifically TLC:

- Supports consolidation of retail and office requirements at 1 per 400 square feet and consolidation of food establishment requirements at 1 per 400 square feet. This change will enable St. Paul to encourage neighborhood retail which helps make neighborhoods more green, inviting, and neighborly.
- Supports the reductions for residential units. We believe the residential requirements should be lowered to one space for each two bedroom units. Many more households today have fewer vehicles than in years past and a developer that caters to older and younger residents should be able to appropriately size the parking for the targeted market. Less parking will reduce the costs of housing. A developer can build above the minimum and then charge his buyers or tenants for additional parking spaces.
- Supports lower maximums than those being proposed. Designing parking for the highest use days of the year has substantial negative impacts – runoff, heat island effect, impacts to the pedestrian environment, and loss of tax base. St. Paul should be very selective about permitting parking in excess of the minimum requirements.
- Supports reducing total parking minimums through the use of shared parking, bicycle parking, car sharing, and mixed use corridors.
- Supports the new landscaping requirements including shade trees, internal pedestrian walkways, and wheel stops.
- Supports the new Travel Demand Management requirements.

The proposed changes are consistent with many of the recommendations TLC made in its report *The Myth of Free Parking* (2003). As you know, in 2008 the City of Minneapolis made changes to its parking requirements similar to what St. Paul is proposing.

We hope that these proposed changes will be the first step in a process to reform parking in St. Paul in an effort to become “the most livable city in America.” We would suggest these next steps: charging for on-street parking in more locations and changing zoning to require a more urban design form (off-street parking at the side or rear of new commercial or retail buildings).

If you have questions about our comments, please contact us by phone or e-mail. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.