

Ann Arbor Downtown Parking Study–Phase II
Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates Inc.
Final Recommendations/Accomplishments Since Summer 2007

In 2007, the Downtown Development Authority and City Council adopted the Ann Arbor Downtown Parking Study Phase II report recommendations, developed by Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc. for the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority. The report set forward the following principles and actions as comprising a comprehensive parking and transportation policy for downtown. Implementation efforts as of April 2009 are noted for each action.

Parking Principles

1. *Parking is one part of a multi-modal transportation approach to providing Downtown access and mobility.*
2. *Seek to accommodate all Downtown parking activity within the DDA parking system.*
3. *Seek the most cost effective means for providing Downtown accessibility.*
4. *Support modes of access that promote efficient land use patterns, environmental sensitivity, non-motorized mobility options, and the community's overall quality of life.*
5. *The City administration will assume a leading role in defining preferred commuter transportation patterns within Downtown by encouraging alternatives to single occupancy vehicle commuting among its elected officials and employees.*
6. *Maintain sufficient parking supply to allow purchase of monthly permits on demand, or following a waiting period of no more than 30 days.*
7. *Maintain a formalized process for funding new parking.*
8. *Maintain a formalized process for determining when new supply is needed.*

Toolbox Actions

Establish a Dedicated Downtown Transportation Funding Source

Done

The DDA has dedicated funding for transportation using two funding streams - its tax increment finance (TIF) and parking funds.

The DDA has budgeted \$600,000/year for transportation programs out of its Parking Fund for 2009/10 and 2010/11 which will be used for: go!Pass subsidies for 7,000 downtown employees (a 15% increase over previous years), subsidy for the free downtown circulator LINK, payment for getDowntown program, including additional funds for a second getDowntown staff member, funding a transit Connector study, and a Zipcar sponsorship for 4 vehicles.

The DDA has also earmarked TIF funds for pedestrian improvements and planning aimed at making downtown more walkable and bikeable. In the near term this will include its Fifth/Division improvements project Phase I (\$7.1 million), 300+/- new bike parking racks/spaces (\$50,000) wayfinding (\$1.65 million), and additional ADA-curb ramp replacements (\$400,000).

An additional grant (\$100,000) was approved by the DDA in September 2008 for enhancements to the LINK service and getDowntown programs. And in March 2009 the DDA provided a (\$25,000) grant to getDowntown for the 2009 Commuter Challenge to encourage greater participation in the event and greater residual use of transportation modes.

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Create a Supportive Context/Parking/Transportation Oversight Committee

Done

Rather than a single committee, there are now several intertwined groups that meet regularly to coordinate parking and transportation efforts, and there is effective overlap between these committees to ensure that information is shared and projects are undertaken in partnership with others.

The UM/City/DDA/AATA Parking & Transportation Consortium works to coordinate AATA/UM bus systems and UM/City road/sidewalk enhancements. This group meets regularly and also shares information on UM/DDA parking systems and pedestrian improvement projects, such as wayfinding.

The City Alternative Transportation Program Manager convenes a monthly “Alt” Committee meeting that pulls together representatives of WATS, City, UM, DDA, Washtenaw Walking/Biking Coalition, and others for project updates and information sharing on alternative transportation initiatives.

The [getDowntown advisory board](#) has City, DDA, Chamber of Commerce, and AATA representatives working together. Several projects have been developed in this getDowntown committee, including the City’s Lead By Example initiative sponsored by the City and the downtown Zipcar program sponsored by the DDA.

The DDA has established a [Transportation Committee](#) to coordinate DDA efforts to improve transportation options in downtown and many committee members overlap with the DDA’s Operations Committee who coordinate the DDA’s Demand Management transition for the DDA’s parking system.

Maintain on-Going Parking and Transportation Conditions Review

Ongoing

The DDA is regularly tracking utilization data for the public parking system, and downtown transportation system. As recommended by Nelson\Nygaard, it receives occupancy data by parking facility, by day, week, calendar month. As part of this assessment, the DDA monitors usage against parking rate increases, as well as other variables such as number of business days per month. Its parking operator has provided information on off-street parking facilities that incur occupancy above 85%. The DDA also tracks go!Pass use and LINK ridership on a monthly basis and will now begin to receive Zipcar usage data. These reports are provided for the public on the [DDA website](#).

City Lead by Example

Underway

The Nelson\Nygaard report pointed out that the City administration, as one of Downtown’s largest employers, can play a crucial role in defining transportation priorities by Leading by Example. To this end, the City has contracted with the getDowntown Program to coordinate a comprehensive commute trip reduction program for City employees. With the support of getDowntown the City has undertaken a survey of employee commuting behavior, conducted employee focus group meetings, amassed zip codes for employees who work in the downtown, created a centralized display unit for commuting options, recruiting commuting Ambassadors at the City and it is underway developing incentives for employees to give up their vehicles when commuting to work.

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Immediate Actions

**Maximize Downtown’s Accessibility through Non-Motorized Modes -
Maintain All-Season Sidewalk Access.**

Ongoing

The City enforces shoveling/sidewalk clearance laws for all city sidewalks, including those in the downtown and near downtown. If a sidewalk or bike lane maintenance problem is discovered, community members are urged to call or use the City’s online service to report it. The DDA recently approved a grant to encourage the development of a Business Improvement District on S. Main Street. Building owners in this area have expressed an interest in forming a BID to ensure that sidewalks and curb ramps have a consistent level of snow removal. The DDA grant was provided with the goal of assembling a BID library so future BIDs can be formed in other downtown areas.

Over the past two years, the DDA has replaced nearly all non-compliant curb ramps in the DDA District with ADA-compliant ramps and has committed funds to complete many others in the next two years. In addition, MDOT and City have been replacing non-compliant downtown curb ramps as part of their road resurfacing projects

Establish A Policy in Support of Prohibiting “Right Turns on Red”

Done

City transportation engineers reviewed this recommendation have concluded that determinations regarding this prohibition should be made based on the conditions in each location.

Establish A Policy in Support of Leading Pedestrian Intervals

Done

City transportation engineers reviewed this recommendation have concluded that determinations regarding this prohibition should be made based on the conditions in each location.

Increase Non-Motorized Transportation Funding

Done

The DDA has dramatically increased its non-motorized transportation funding. Most significantly, the DDA approved \$7.1 million for the first phase of a pedestrian/bike improvement project along Fifth/Division that will include bike lanes on both streets, pedestrian-scale LED streetlights, sidewalk bump outs and other intersection enhancements. In addition, the DDA has committed \$1.65 million for its new wayfinding signage system that will be installed in fall 2009. And the DDA committed \$1.86 million to replace downtown sidewalk curb ramps. The most DDA’s most recent large scale pedestrian improvement project was in the State Street area in 2003. In addition, the City has secured safety grant funding for countdown pedestrian signals, and used some of its 5% set aside from State gasoline taxes for bike lane striping.

Formalize a Downtown Travel Choice Coordinator Office

Done

The Nelson\Nygaard report recommended that the getDowntown program be provided additional funding to help raise its profile. The DDA has expanded its funding for the getDowntown office by providing new grants to pay for an additional full time staff member, promotions, and incentives.

Expand Car-Sharing

Done

The UM Zipcar program was expanded off campus and into the downtown earlier this spring with a grant from the DDA to subsidize four vehicles plus additional marketing/promotions funds. The DDA has also provided free parking spaces for these vehicles in what had been popular metered parking spaces. The program began in mid-March and has already seen tremendous usage from downtown businesses and nearby residents.

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Provide Free or Discounted Rideshare Parking

Underway

The DDA has set aside two of the most convenient parking spaces in 5 of the downtown parking structures for registered car- and vanpool vehicles until 10:00 AM. The getDowntown program is working with MichiVan and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority to match interested van/car pool riders and is actively promoting the benefits with downtown employers and at transportation events. The getDowntown program has provided a recommendation for a parking subsidy to discount rideshare parking spaces which is under consideration by the DDA's Transportation Committee.

Offer “Limited Use” Passes for Employers with Evening Operations

Done

The DDA is offering overnight/offpeak monthly parking structure permits that provide parking during the offpeak hours of 3pm and 9am. The cost is \$30/month (regular monthly parking permits will be raised to \$130/month beginning July 2009)

Implement a Valet Parking Pilot Project at Maynard Structure

Done

Valet service began at the Maynard structure in December 2008 based on a recommendation from the Nelson\Nygaard report that this program would 1) increase daytime capacity at a facility that is popular among visitors and commuters, and 2) increase efficiency of space at Maynard, especially at top floors. Thus far patron demand has not been particularly strong for this service, but there is a year-long commitment to this pilot endeavor.

Operate Evening LINK Circulator Service

Done

In 2008 the DDA increased its subsidy of the LINK to support evening service until 11:00 p.m. Interestingly the number of LINK patrons did not increase despite these expanded hours, and instead saw a slight decrease this year, The DDA Transportation Committee is currently evaluating elements of LINK service to determine how the circulator can better meet the needs of the downtown.

Establish a State Street Area Parking Benefit District Pilot Project

Underway

The Nelson\Nygaard report recommended that the DDA establish a pilot Parking Benefit District (PBD) in the State Street area to demonstrate the benefits of using on-street pricing to manage availability and generate funds for public improvements. Instead of creating a PBD, the DDA opted instead to use its TIF dollars for public improvements in this area including seating, sidewalk repairs and new trees. But there is a DDA commitment to move forward with a Demand Management framework that will involve a variety of parking rates. To this end, the DDA approved a parking rate increase that will go into effect in summer 2009 that set forward the message that it would work with City Council to implement a range of hourly parking rates on and off-street as part of a demand management framework. And the DDA purchased and will soon see installed two dozen new solar powered parking pay stations that will enable it to adjust parking prices by location and time of day.

Complete the Information and Wayfinding Campaign

Underway

The DDA expanded its [wayfinding project](#) budget to \$1.65 million and the project design was completed. The project is slated to go out to bid in late April 2009 with installation anticipated in September 2009. This project will include signage from the freeways into downtown and then to the four downtown districts, specific locations, and parking. “You are here maps” and pedestrian scale signage is also included in this project, as part of the DDA's effort to encourage “park once” behavior. Also included in this effort, the DDA now has its [parking vacancy data](#) available via the web and PDA's.

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Implement Express Commuter Bus Service

Underway

In the previous year AATA implemented express bus service between Chelsea and Ann Arbor, and will soon provide service on a new express bus service between Ann Arbor and Canton.

Track Technology Investment Opportunities

Underway

The DDA has implemented pay-by-credit card service at all cashiered off-street parking facilities, and this has proven to be very popular. A pilot project utilizing completely self-serve parking equipment is being utilized at the 5th & William lot. The DDA is also underway with a pilot using an AVI system that would provide hand-free hourly parking payment at the parking structures using a debit system. Stored value cards are available for use at the on-street parking meters. New accounts receivable software, computers and other technologies have been purchased for the DDA's parking operator with the goal of making more parking data and policy initiatives available in the coming months.

Expand the Guaranteed Ride Home Program

Done

Participants in Michigan Rideshare (a program of Ann Arbor Transportation Authority) are not only able to find car and van pool partners quickly and securely, they are also able to take advantage of a free Guaranteed Ride Home program which provides reimbursement for taxi trips if participants need to leave work unexpectedly or work unplanned overtime.

Coordinate Park and Ride Improvements

Underway

AATA is currently working on options for improving existing Park and Ride service. A new lot is under development at M-23/Plymouth Road. At peak hours there is service every 10-15 minutes from the ride lots. Real time information about bus location is available for PDA users at Park and Ride lots and other locations.

Leave Parking Exemptions in the Zoning Code

Underway

The Nelson\Nygaard report pointed out that the City's current zoning regulations, such as parking exemptions and allowing acquisition of monthly permits to serve in lieu of meeting on-site requirements, are considered best practices for downtown parking management, and have served many such districts well. The report cautioned against imposing new minimum parking requirements. After many years' work, Ann Arbor City Council will soon vote to approve its downtown rezoning amendments. Within this initiative there will be no new auto parking minimums, rather, the proposed regulations will lessen the amount of parking required for future downtown projects. The proposal will also replace negotiated agreements for off-site monthly permits with the option of providing a contribution in lieu of constructing required parking on site. This contribution would be used for public parking and transportation improvements in the downtown.

Facilitate Shared On-Site Parking

Underway

As part of its A2D2 rezoning effort, City Council is considering ways to expand the opportunity for shared parking through zoning. One proposal would count each private parking space reserved, signed and enforced for a car-sharing service (e.g. Zipcar) as four required motor vehicle parking spaces. Another approach for the core downtown area is a proposal to exempt the floor area of above-grade parking structures that house parking in excess of the requirement from the building's floor area limitation, up to a maximum of 200% of the lot area, if the excess parking spaces are made available to the general public. To qualify for this zoning premium, the design of the parking structure must meet standards for public parking, and the property owner must sign a development agreement outlining the operating conditions for the parking.

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Pursue Existing Joint-Development Opportunities

Underway

The Nelson\Nygaard report recommended that the City and DDA should coordinate with the District Library to expand the Library on top of the City's surface parking lot adjacent to the Library. The AADL board reviewed this opportunity and instead determined that it would construct a new building on its existing site. The report also recommended that the city-owned site at 1st & Washington presented another "ideal opportunity for Joint-Development expansion of the off-street inventory." The City used an RFP to select Village Green Companies to redevelop the 1st & Washington site with a mixed use project that includes a public parking component. Village Green's site plan was approved by City Council last year and Village Green is seeking bank financing for their venture.

Continue Seeking Joint Development Opportunities

Underway

In addition to 1st & Washington, recently the DDA and City have also worked to encourage redevelopment of the former YMCA site at 5th & William, and the former car rental lot at Division/Washington. Information on the Kline parking lot and Library parking lot has been shared with local and regional developers interested in future downtown projects. And currently the City's 4th & Catherine parking lot is under consideration for redevelopment with 100 units of very affordable housing.

Short-Term Actions

Implement Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Recommendations

* Install crossing islands for Huron Street crosswalks: The DDA has approved an improvement plan for Huron Street, and this plan has been reviewed by MDOT; currently MDOT/WATS/UM/City/DDA are exploring an alternate idea which is to see if it would be feasible to convert the four lanes of traffic on Huron to three lanes to facilitate pedestrians crossings.

Underway

* Install pedestrian countdown signals

Done

* Evaluate converting 1st & Ashley streets to 2-way traffic: Not currently scheduled

* Install on-street parking 1 block south on west side of Main, south of William

Done

Establish A Pilot Valet Program in the Main St Area

This will be implemented once the pilot project at Maynard has been completed.

Install Additional Multi-Space Meters

The first 25 multi-space machines will be installed May 2009; after the equipment has been evaluated for patron ease of use, the remaining 150 pay stations will be purchased.

Investigate Additional Parking Benefit District Opportunities

As mentioned earlier, the decision was made to pursue Demand Management variable parking pricing beginning in Summer 2009.

Quarterly Travel Choice Networking Sessions - Provide Parking Discount to Networking Session Participants

Done

The getDowntown Program Coordinator is meeting with and communicating with downtown employers more often than quarterly. Parking discounts are not being provided to participants, as this was deemed to be counter productive to the goal of encouraging use of other options.

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Offer Debit Account Alternative to Monthly Permit Holders

As stated earlier, the DDA is a few months into a pilot project using AVI technology in the structures. Among the many early lessons has been that the technology is geared more to a system where patrons put stored value on their accounts which is drawn down upon exiting. It will also require that the current practice of lifting the parking facility gate arms at midnight on Sunday morning to provide free parking on Sundays will no longer work as the system requires information at all times on who is in the facility and how long they have stayed. Thus a meeting has been held with representatives of the downtown churches to discuss ways of communicating about the future system which will require patrons parking on Sunday to pull a ticket upon entering and insert a ticket upon exiting.

Operate Summer LINK Service

The Nelson\Nygaard report predicted that evening LINK service will greatly expand LINK ridership, and then summer service should be provided to maintain ridership gains. Instead, we have seen that evening LINK service has not increased ridership, and more importantly, that 70% of ridership are students, who generally leave campus when classes end at the end of April. The DDA Transportation Committee is currently discussing various options to modify LINK service, and will continue to explore the potential benefit of summer service. The LINK is running during Art Fair on a modified route.

Expand Express Commuter Bus Service

AATA is evaluating demand for future service, as well as for its current Chelsea/Ann Arbor express bus program.

Formalize an In Lieu Fee Option

As noted above, the A2D2 downtown rezoning process proposed an in-lieu fee option for providing required parking on site.

Implement New Parking Requirements

The Nelson\Nygaard report recommended that minimum bicycle parking requirements should be enhanced and rideshare vehicle parking be encouraged. As part of the A2D2 rezoning proposal, requirements for the type, location, and quantity of bicycle parking new developments has been added.

Implement Right Turn on Red Prohibitions and Leading Pedestrian Intervals

Again, City staff have determined that these matters need to be addressed at each intersection on a case-by-case basis.

Recommended Long-Term Actions

- Manage All Parking Demand with Pricing
- Offer Debit Accounts for Hourly Parkers
- Offer Off-Street Parking Discount Options
- Implement Seamless Payment Systems
- Implement Pedestrian Improvements, including crosswalk striping, midblock crossings
- Retro-fit Existing Structures to allow street-oriented uses
- Encourage Rental Property Owners to Unbundle Parking Costs from Rents
- Contracted Permits – eliminated at the end of leases
- Washtenaw County Courthouse Plans – no new permits will be made available at Ann Ashley
- Premium Permits – maintain some quantity

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- Near Downtown Residential Parking Permits – increase awareness of the existing program
- Violation Forgiveness – establish a practice of “first time forgiveness”
- Increase Campaign to Get Bicycles Off of Sidewalks
- Expand The Programs – e.g. night ride for evening workers, etc.