

PARKING PERMIT PRIMER: TYPES, PORTLAND'S AREA PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM, & OVERNIGHT PARKING PERMIT SURVEY RESULTS

Prepared by Sara Schooley, PBOT Parking Policy Coordinator
March 6, 2013

Purpose

Over the last few years, development has increased along many of Portland's main street corridors. Much of the residential development along these corridors is being built under city policies and zoning codes that have been in place since the 1980s, which allows residential developments within 500 feet of a transit route that has 20-minute headways during peak commute hours to build without parking.

Community members have reacted with concern about the rapid increase in the number of these projects; the new buildings' height, size, density, design; and the potential pressure to the on-street parking environment. The Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) has worked closely with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) to discuss how and what code changes may reduce some of these concerns. Initial recommendations were presented to the public in February 2013.

PBOT has been tasked with researching parking permit options to inform and add to the current parking discussion. This memo looks to do this in three parts:

1. **Types of Parking Permits.** This section looks into the major parking permit categories in North America, as well as offering insight from the Federal Highway Administration about the overall use and success of permitting.
2. **Portland's Area Parking Permit Program.** This section explains Portland's sole permit program, the Area Parking Permit Program.
3. **Overnight Parking Permit Survey Results.** In January, Dr. Donald Shoup, a professor at UCLA, authored an editorial in the Oregonian that suggested the use of overnight parking permits in Portland. PBOT staff conducted a survey of cities that have overnight parking permits to better understand the purposes, methods, and operation of overnight parking permit programs.

1. Types of Parking Permits

In North America, there are four major types of parking permits – residential parking permits, commercial parking permits, area parking permits, and overnight parking permits. Each of these permits works differently (in addition to nuances per city) and serves a different purpose.

A. Residential Parking Permit

The Purpose: Residential Parking Permits (RPP) look to protect resident parking by limiting on-street parking use for residents of a defined area.

How RPPs work: Residential parking permits give residents of a specific area the privilege of parking in a specified geographical area. Often, areas with RPPs are near business districts or destinations which may cause commuter and visitor parking to spillover to residential streets, which limits on-street parking of residents and their visitors.

B. Business Parking Permit

The Purpose: Business Parking Permits (BPP) allow business owners and employees the privilege to use on-street parking for hours longer than visitors.

How BPPs work: Business Parking Permits allow businesses and their employees to park in commercial areas. Often, these commercial areas do not have adequate off-street parking for employees and may have time limits for visitors. These permits allow employees to park on-street for longer than any applicable time limits.

C. Overnight Parking Permit

The Purpose: Overnight Parking Permit (OPP) programs are initiated for a variety of reasons, mostly to ensure street cleanliness and safety. OPPs are a way to keep records of what vehicles are parking on the street in order to identify abandoned vehicles and/or ensure that vehicles are moved for street sweeping or plowing.

How OPPs work: The city where the OPP is in effect will designate a time period (usually sometime between 2am – 6am) when only permit holders are allowed to park on the street. The permits are usually restricted to residents and their guests. While it seems possible to have multiple OPP districts within a city, it seems that OPPs usually apply to an entire city or township.

D. Area Parking Permit

- **The Purpose:** In essence, an Area Parking Permit Program (APPP) looks to combine RPP and BPP programs, in order to restrict on-street parking use by those not living or conducting business in the area (e.g., commuters or abandoned vehicles).
- **How APPs Work:** Area Parking Permits (sometimes known as Restricted Parking Zone Permits) are available for residents of and employees who work in a designated geographical area. Both residents and businesses are usually allowed

to get or buy guest permits to allow their temporary visitors to park beyond established time limits.

Discussion of Parking Permits

Discussion:¹ Innovation of permit parking programs has been fairly stagnant, especially in comparison to more dynamic parking pricing efforts around the country (e.g., SFPark).

However, cities have experimented with parking permit programs by implementing various restrictions that range from the number of parking passes a household can receive to what types of households are eligible to receive a residential parking pass. Several cities limit the number of passes per household, which reduces the potential for abuse (e.g., residents re-selling extra passes).

Aspen and Boulder provide examples of the monetization of excess residential parking spaces. While neither city charges its residents market-rate fees for parking permits, each city has found that it can monetize excess capacity in the neighborhoods and does so by allowing visitors to purchase parking passes. Aspen sells daily visitor passes for \$7.00 and monitors parking occupancy rates to assure that sufficient parking capacity exists for neighborhood residents.

Boulder offers quarterly commuter parking passes that are good in residential parking zones. Area commuters who work in Boulder's downtown core are allowed to purchase these passes. While the program has had success in maximizing the city's parking potential, the guest-parking program currently has a wait list, indicating that its price does not reflect its true market value.

Cincinnati is considering applying advanced pricing and management principles to its residential parking. The CUF Neighborhood Association, which represents the Clifton Heights, University Heights, and Fairview neighborhoods, formed a committee in 2010 to address oversubscribed on-street parking and the excessive circling and congestion that result. The committee has completed its proposal to manage roughly 3,000 on-street parking spaces. Authority would be given to the Department of Transportation and Engineering to set both monthly residential permit prices and short-term meter prices to achieve an 85 to 90 percent occupancy rate. Prices would be set to be somewhat more favorable to residents than to short-term visitors.

Despite these advances, additional innovation is needed in the realm of RPP programs. Residents are being offered access to a community asset at little or no cost. In addition, the issuance of permits does not guarantee that access is maintained. Many cities refer to permits as a "hunting license" due to the limited availability of parking spaces,

¹ This discussion is adapted from the US DOT FHWA report "Contemporary Approaches to Pricing Parking," and can be found at <http://www.parking.org/media/129582/fhwa%20parking%20pricing%20primer.pdf>

especially in high-density areas. The alternative to using permits pricing to curtail parking spillover onto the curb in high-density residential areas, such as the above-noted Cincinnati proposal, is the imposition of minimum parking requirements, which raise housing prices by many tens of thousands of dollars per unit as well as change the dynamic of the neighborhood. Policies that improve neighborhood access, and recognize the true value of curb parking in residential neighborhoods need to be pursued.

2. Portland's Area Parking Permit Program

Currently, The City of Portland has a singular parking permit program – Area Parking Permit Program. The City has 10 different Area Parking Permit Area Zones, which surround the Central City.

Portland began the Area Parking Permit Program (APPP) in 1981 in response to citizen concerns about commuter parking in neighborhoods. Commuter parking originates from outside the permit area and has no apparent connection or business within the permit area. The following Q & A addresses how Portland has set up its APPP to address commuter parking.

In August of 2012, Council approved a pilot program, known as the “Mini-APP” Pilot Program. This pilot program was established to make it easier to establish an APP and proposed changes to current APP rules on size restrictions and criteria. The City of Portland has yet to establish a “Mini-APP,” so it is unknown how effective the proposed changes are. For the Q & A below, any differences between the established APP process and the “Mini APP” proposal are noted.

Q. How is an APP established?

A. There are three factors in establishing an APP Zone:

1. Definition of the problem.

In designing the APPP, it is important to PBOT staff that APP areas are only designated where there is an actual commuter parking “problem.” The neighborhood association, business district association, and the City Traffic Engineer must agree that there will be a look to see whether the parking spaces in the area are 75% occupied (25% by commuter parking) at least four days per week and nine months per year. Vehicles that originate from outside the proposed permit area but are visiting a resident or conducting business in the proposed permit program area are not considered commuter vehicles.

Currently, there is a neighborhood that is looking into creating a Mini APP. The “Mini APP” program allows the Neighborhood Association more to identify a

problem and does not necessitate the 75% occupancy rate with 25% by commuters. Yet, even with the flexibility in defining the parking problem, whether or not the problem is significant enough to warrant an APPP is up to the discretion of the City Traffic Engineer.

2. Evidence of neighborhood support

In addition to the parking occupancy, the APPP is developed to be initiated and desired by area residents and business owners. An area may apply to participate in a permit program through a community-initiated petition with signatures representing 50% of the affected addresses (on signature per address) to be submitted to the neighborhood association and the business district association.

Once enough signatures are collected, the neighborhood association, business district, and City Traffic Engineer work together to confirm the eligibility of the area. If the area is found to be eligible, a ballot on the implementation of an APP is sent out to all potentially impacted households. A minimum of 50% of the ballots must be received, of which 60% must be “yes” votes, in order to approve the program.

For the Mini-APP pilot program, a minimum of 40% of the ballots must be returned to PBOT, of which a majority (over 50%) must be "yes" votes, to approve the program.

3. Proposed area boundaries.

The Neighborhood Association will propose a geographical area for permitting. The requested area must consist of a minimum of 40 block faces. For the “Mini-APP Pilot Program,” areas only need to include 12 block faces. The City Traffic Engineer must agree that the Area Parking Permit Program for this area would promote benefits, which may include

- Increased access to area residents and businesses
- Reduced traffic congestion
- Increased traffic/pedestrian safety

Adverse effects that may prevent implementation of the Area Parking Permit Program may include the:

- Lack of alternative modes of transportation
- Availability of simpler, cheaper solutions
- Legal existence of more than one firm with 50 or more employees that could not operate under the permit system constraints

The City Traffic Engineer may expand or contract (if larger than the minimum) the proposed area to conform to major physical boundaries such as arterial roadways, rivers, hills, or political boundaries such as neighborhood boundaries or to protect projected impact areas as determined by the professional engineering or planning staff.

Q. Can APP Zones be expanded or deleted?

A. Yes. A Neighborhood Association may request to change the boundaries or delete an APPP entirely. If the City Traffic Engineer determines that the proposal is eligible, Parking Control staff mail ballots to the addresses in the area to be annexed into or deleted from the permit area. A minimum of 40% of the ballots must be received, of which a majority must be “yes” votes to approve the change.

Q. What do residents need to show to get a permit?

A. To obtain a permit, residents must:

- show proof of residency in an APPP zone,
- show current vehicle registration,
- complete an application, and
- pay the appropriate fee (currently \$60/year)

Proof of residency consists of a copy of either a bank statement or credit card bill dated within the last 30 days showing the applicant’s name and address. The applicant must either be the registered owner of the vehicle (same last name is acceptable), or provide a notarized letter from the legal owner stating permission for the applicant to use the vehicle.

Q. What do businesses need to do to get permits?

A. Businesses need proof of business location along with a personnel roster showing employees’ names and number of hours worked per week. The number of permits allowed to businesses varies with each zone. Employees must obtain permits from their employers.

Q. Are guests allowed?

A. Yes. One guest permit may be purchased by each address in a zone, independent of other permits. This permit also costs \$60/year. A guest permit should be used only while the guest is actually visiting the address printed on the permit. Temporary guest permits are also available for free at the discretion of PBOT; parking operations staff keeps records of those asking for temporary guest permits to screen for abuse.

Q. Do disabled residents need a permit to park in an APP Zone?

A. If a vehicle has a valid disabled placard, it may be parked within any APP Area without an APP.

Privilege associated with an APP

The APPP has no limit on the total number of permits that can be purchased within the district, leaving the possibility that more permits may be bought than existing on-street parking can hold. In essence, an APP can be considered a “hunting license;” the permit gives you the privilege of parking in an area, but does not guarantee a space.

Every APP comes with the same privileges, independent of where within the APP Zone the applicant lives or works, whether the applicant has off street parking available or how long the applicant has lived or worked in the area. This is done purposefully, in order to not discriminate against or offer additional privilege to some over others for use of the public right-of-way.

3. Overnight Parking Permit Survey

In February 2013, PBOT staff surveyed a variety of cities that have overnight permit programs. We were specifically looking at overnight parking programs in order to better understand how other cities may address regulating residents, versus residents, visitors, and businesses. Overnight permits were specifically sought out due to council request and Dr. Shoup’s editorial in the Oregonian.

Portland does not currently have an overnight parking permit program – only an Area Parking Permit Program (APPP). While some stakeholders have expressed a desire to use the APPP as the permit program for these neighborhoods where the new development is happening, the APPP’s design and purpose is to limit commuter parking. For the neighborhoods with new residential development going in, the purpose is to most efficiently utilize existing parking for residents and visitors. In essence, the APPP works to manage conflicts between residential and commuters; an overnight permit program focusing on managing residential parking.

Survey Results

PBOT Staff researched nine cities across North American that have Overnight Parking Permit Programs:

- Milwaukee, WI
- La Verne, CA
- Haddon Heights, NJ
- Lansdowne Borough, PA
- Hoboken, NJ
- Providence, RI
- Los Angeles, CA
- Santa Monica, CA
- Pasadena, CA

The following summarizes the survey findings:

Purpose of Overnight Permit Programs. After talking to and surveying the cities with overnight permits, it was found that most of the cities created their overnight permit programs so that they could better control street cleanliness (street sweeping, plowing, etc), identify abandoned vehicles, and/or ensure accessibility for emergency vehicles. Many of the permit programs have been in place for over 50 years and, as such, have become a standard part of the cities' transportation management practice.

Hours of permits. All the surveyed cities' permit programs impacted street use between midnight at 6am. The most frequent timeframe for permit parking was 2am to 5am.

Cost. There was a wide variety between the surveyed cities in how much overnight permits cost. The lowest permit cost was found in Hoboken, NJ (\$15 for the first permitted vehicle per household). The most expensive was Santa Monica, CA, where the annual overnight permit costs \$150.

There were a few cities that, along with the permit price, charged an application/processing fee of either \$25 or \$100. These fees were non-refundable.

Some of the surveyed cities had a variety of cost "qualifiers" on their permit costs. These included:

- Milwaukee, WI: \$55 annual permit or \$20 for four months
- Haddon Heights, NJ: The application fee is \$25 if there is no room for a private vehicle on your property according to zoning code. The application fee is \$100 if there is room to have and/or construct a driveway according to code.
- Hoboken, NJ: Hoboken has a "Driveway Parking Permit" which is free and allows residents to park in front of their driveway if they show that their vehicle is shorter than their driveway's width. For non-driveway permits, fees are \$15 for the first vehicle, \$30 for the second vehicle, and \$90 for the third or other additional vehicles.
- Providence, RI: Restricts permits to two per household.
- Santa Monica, CA: Fee is \$15/month, \$75 for semi-annual, or \$150 for an annual pass

Geography. For all the cities surveyed, a valid overnight parking permit allows the permit owner to park on any street in the city during permitted hours.

Guest and Temporary Passes. All of the surveyed cities had an allowance for guests and temporary visitors. Some cities had a voicemail system where a resident could call in their guest's car. Other cities have temporary passes for purchase from \$3/night (La Verne and Pasadena, CA) to \$25 for up to five nights a month (Providence, RI).

Disabled Permit. Providence, RI was the only surveyed city which required disabled residents to pay for a permit. All the other cities either accepted a valid disabled placard as a substitute for an overnight parking permit or gave disabled residents free permits.

Information Needed for Permit Application. Most of the cities asked for a consistent set of information in order to get a permit – name, contact information, address, license plate information, vehicle information, etc. A few of the cities asked for additional information – proof of insurance (Haddon Heights, NJ - to show that the vehicle was drivable and not just being stored indefinitely on the street) and drivers license with a current address (Pasadena, CA - there is a student exception for this).