



December 7, 2012

About the new plan for parking and transportation management at Washington Park

Dear Friends,

Washington Park is one of the crown jewels of our Gold Medal-winning Portland Parks & Recreation system. The park suffers from problems, which have been widely recognized for two decades. Now is the time to face these challenges to ensure that Washington Park remain a Portland treasure for many generations to come.

With more than 3 million visitors a year and growing, we realized that a world-class system for parking, transportation and access is our best option for the park, its venues and neighborhood livability.

An essential step in this process was taken on December 5, when the Portland City Council unanimously voted to authorize the Washington Park Transportation and Parking Management agreement.

Where are we now?

To get to the park, visitors can walk, bike, and ride the bus or MAX, but most still drive cars. Until now, to help defray the costs of parking operations and security, the Oregon Zoo, World Forestry Center and Children's Museum non-members paid \$4.00 to park in the south parking lot, using an honor system.

All of the parking lots and roads in Washington Park are owned by Portland Parks & Recreation. Current funding sources for maintenance are simply inadequate to keep them in proper condition.

Neighbors, park and venue visitors have long recognized serious challenges including:

Administration

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Nick Fish, Commissioner
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- Poor access
- Insufficient parking during peak times
- Limited park-wide coordination among venues
- Serious congestion issues
- Safety concerns related to vehicle and pedestrian conflicts
- Deteriorating infrastructure in the park
- Visitor and vehicle impacts in adjacent neighborhoods
- Lack of incentives to utilize MAX, in spite of the publicly-funded MAX station
- No single source of consolidated information on transportation options and parking availability

Ok, the park needs some care. So what now?

After 18 months of public process and negotiations, perhaps the greatest achievement is that for the first time the venues, public entities, and many of the neighbors have come together around an action plan – and most importantly, a reliable way to fund the solutions.

Before they even leave home, visitors need to be able to go to the Web for up-to-the-minute information on alternate transportation options and parking. People who chose TriMet should be able to get off at the Zoo MAX stop and take an easy, free shuttle to the famous International Rose Test Garden or Japanese Garden a mile away.

In an era of limited funding for transportation, the fact that the park has its own transportation network created a unique opportunity. By City Council approving paid parking for all 1,400 parking spaces throughout the park, we now have self-sustaining revenue for improvements the public have asked for and deserve.

Most important to residents and park visitors, the new Washington Park Transportation and Parking Management plan includes a non-profit to manage transportation-related concerns called the Washington Park Transportation Management Association, or TMA.

How will I be able to give input about parking and other plans?

Representatives from each of the popular attractions in the park, as well as neighbors, will remain deeply involved to implement the new Washington Park Transportation and Parking Management Plan. The TMA will be a one-stop decision-making forum where anyone can bring their park transportation-related concerns and ideas.

The TMA board brings together organizations committed to maintaining the best visitor experience at the park. It will include nine directors, with representatives of Portland Parks & Recreation, Metro/Oregon Zoo, World Forestry Center, Portland Children’s Museum, the Portland Japanese Garden, TriMet, the Hoyt Arboretum Friends, and one independently-selected member from both the Sylvan Highlands Neighborhood and Arlington Heights Neighborhood Associations.

Soon, PP&R will launch the TMA by inviting representatives to seats on the board, and posting job descriptions for paid and volunteer positions.

How much of the parking revenues will be reinvested in Washington Park?

One hundred percent of the estimated \$2 million of yearly revenues will be reinvested in Washington Park.

City Council has established priorities including:

- Management/Maintenance/Security
- Park-wide Shuttle Service (including connecting public transit to Washington Park)
- City-required code/stormwater improvements to existing transportation infrastructure in the park
- Washington Park Master Plan
- Washington Park Road Maintenance
- Capital Projects for Washington Park transportation infrastructure (including roads, parking lots, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian connections throughout the park)
- Leverage of other funding sources
- Transportation Management Association costs

How much will I have to pay to park in Washington Park and when will paid parking be enforced?

The final rates will be decided by the TMA. Proposed rates for paid parking are \$1.60 per hour, with a \$6.40 all-day maximum during the peak season (summer) and \$4.00 all-day maximum during the off-peak seasons. This would allow visitors to pay a flat rate and enjoy their time without having to watch the clock and go back to the pay stations to “feed the meter.”

The TMA will consider the hours for paid parking, impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods, and other issues. It will help ensure that volunteers working at the park and attractions have equal or better access to the park.

Please visit our Portland Parks & Recreation website for continuously updated Frequently Asked Questions.

(<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/416949>)

I hope I've been able to address some of your concerns and questions as we move forward with vast improvements to our unique and world-famous park and its attractions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Abbate". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Mike Abbaté
Director