

PBOT Downtown Meter Rate Adjustment

Subcommittee Meeting #1 Notes

June 23rd, 2015

4:30-6:30pm

Committee members in attendance: Mujtaba Ali, Bob Buchanan, Reza Farhoodi, Tina Wyszynski, Pete Collins, Ben Schonberger, Tony Jordan, Nicole Knudsen, & Betsy Ames.

City Staff present: PBoT: Judith Gray, Kathryn Doherty-Chapman, Malisa McCreedy, Marni Glick, Grant Morehead, Erika Nebel (Commissioner Novick's), Damian Crowder (PDC)

Consultants in attendance: Rick Williams

Facilitator: Eryn Deeming Kehe

Welcome, introductions

Ms. Deeming Kehe began the meeting with introductions at 4:35pm

Ms. Deeming Kehe reminded the committee that this subcommittee is different than the larger Central City Parking Policy committee and the charge is specifically to look at a near-term downtown only meter rate adjustment. Policy and operational issues will be noted to take to the larger Policy committee or city staff as needed.

Public comment

Ms. Deeming Kehe asked if there was anyone from the public present to give public comment.

No public comment was given

Meter Rate Adjustment Process, Policy, Data presentation

Ms. Gray then gave a presentation on the current meter rate adjustment process, the existing policies and the timeline. Ms. Gray described the policy that directs this committee formation (TRN 3.102). She explained the timeline of this process, and how the various current parking studies and planning efforts work together.

Decision making

Ms. Deeming Kehe reminded everyone that the decision-making process of the larger Central City policy group is to seek unanimity but that if not, a 2/3 majority vote would be sufficient. She asked the group if they wanted to assume the same decision making rules. Everyone agreed to use the same decision making process.

Question: Are all of the Downtown groups represented? Are they all here?

Staff Response: All members of the Policy committee were invited; some didn't choose to participate. Others were interested but had schedule conflicts. This is a subcommittee so we don't expect all members of the committee to participate. Any meter rate increases will require a vote by City Council, so there will be additional opportunity for public comment.

Current on-street parking policy

Ms. Gray explained the priority of on street parking downtown, is for shoppers, less than 4 hours.

She shared the current policy of meters in downtown Portland (as described in TRN 3.102) -

“...the on-street parking system in commercial districts is managed to support the economic vitality of the district by

- encouraging parking turnover,
- improving circulation,
- encouraging use of off-street parking,
- maintaining air quality, and
- promoting the use of alternative modes....”

Occupancy and turnover study

Ms. Gray then reviewed the recent parking occupancy study data from the April 27 Policy SAC meeting, showing Central City parking occupancy above 85% for multiple hours throughout the day. She also noted that the Goose Hollow counts show lower occupancy levels but that’s because there were no events that day and Lincoln High School was not in session. It is understood that the counts don’t accurately reflect the parking issues in Goose Hollow.

Question: Did you look at private off-street occupancy data as well when you looked at this?

Staff response: No we did not this time, we could not get off-street data; the private operators typically don’t want to share that data. We have some private occupancy data from the 2008 counts.

Comment: When Lincoln high school is in session the parking environment is very different. Also the signage is very confusing because of the complexity.

Staff response: Thank you for that feedback.

Ms. Gray explained there were not evening counts done for the South Waterfront areas. Pete Collins of the South Waterfront TMA (also on the committee) has conducted those counts but didn’t have them available.

Question: Was this data collected after the disabled parking regulation? Didn’t changing that open up spaces?

Staff Response: Yes this was collected after the disabled parking permit regulation change. Yes, that change did open up a considerable number of parking spaces, yet those spaces (or that occupancy) were quickly filled in with parkers paying the meter.

Comment: I think the 71% is too low for average occupancy at the South Waterfront from my experience. There will be more demand at South Waterfront for people parking to take the tram up the hill.

Question: I thought there were not supposed to be monthly parkers in Smart Park. Can you explain?

Staff Response: In the retail core, shoppers are the priority, if there is additional capacity they can sell monthly permits if they want. Recently the 4th & Yamhill garage eliminated the monthly parking permits.

Question: If we change meter rates, what are we going to do with those displaced parkers that are workers? Where are they going to go? What is the city doing about that?

Staff response: The city has a policy that says we supply parking for customers, not for commuters.

Equity

Equity considerations are not included in this city policy but equity is important to the city. Ms. Gray talked with Nicole from SEIU about equity considerations regarding parking meter adjustments. She raised the concern that low income workers downtown might be adversely impacted. Some park around 5 p.m. for longer shifts; they pay for 2 hours and then can leave their car parked after enforcement hours. We need to make sure we consider those impacts, however on-street parking is not managed for employee parking. Also, all parkers will be better served if pricing is more effective; and we also have the SmartPark garages with a flat rate of \$5 after 5pm.

Comment: There are other workers besides cleaning staff that may be impacted, restaurant workers, retail workers, etc. something to keep in mind.

Comment: Agree. One hour is not enough time to make appointments or get anything done. I think that people would happily pay for the relief of knowing that they have enough time to do their businesses and not get a ticket.

Staff Response: Yes, that's something we can look at later.

Recommendations discussion

Ms. Gray outlined possible meter rate increases (\$.20, \$.40, \$.60 increases) with some qualitative evaluation of the different options for increases. These are provided for the subcommittee's consideration. They may also suggest other amounts.

Rick Williams asked the group: Let's hear your reactions to the data and the case that the city made. Are there questions we haven't asked, do you need more information? Has the threshold to raise the meter rates been met?

Comment: Yes, the data shows that the demand is very high. And the market is pushing up.

Comment: The data supports the increase but, if we raise on-street parking rates, where are the visitors going to park? What happens if the garages are full?

Mr. Williams Response: The Smart Park garages are supposed to be the safety valve, for visitors, so that there's always a supply available off-street. The original policy on garages is effectively manage those garages through price, change the rate, so the full sign never goes up and there's availability off-street. Those smart park garages were always intended for shoppers and they should remain the priority users.

Comment: There needs to be communication and outreach about this. Raising the rates will have negative impacts on perceptions for downtown businesses. Are there plans for a communications strategy?

Comment: Look at the policy goals, the idea is that some of these trips will be moved to different modes. I would argue that we should be making the other modes more attractive. Driving should be more expensive than other modes. It's an explicit goal of the city to shift travel modes.

Ms. Deeming Kehe asked the group: Does the data support a meter rate increase?

Comment: Agreed- communication is important

Comment: All the different districts are unique and have different needs, they could direct where meter revenue should go. A TMA model may be a good thing to consider.

Ms. Deeming Kehe asked- Is this an appropriate discussion topic for this meter rate committee?

Staff Response: This issue is for the larger policy group. Staff clarified that the TRN 3.102 (existing meter policy) provides direction for revenue allocation. It says that existing meter districts who have a rate increase first pay the costs of operating the meter district and paying the capital costs of the meters and equipment; and then secondly to consider unmet district transportation needs. It is done as part of the budget process.

Comment: I don't think you can have a conversation about this without addressing the revenue issue. We have to look at short and long term affects. How are we going to communicate this change to the public?

Staff response: We can certainly talk later about how to successfully roll out any changes, to implement a successful program. The revenue allocation issue is for the larger policy group.

Comment: Seattle and SF have clear performance measures about managing for performance, not revenue. Let's look at that.

Comment: I see the connection between price and availability. Is there a way to price the evening rates in garages that could be priced at an appropriate level for low wage workers?

SP operator response: We currently offer a discounted evening monthly rate (at SmartPark Garages). Starts at 3pm at two garages, it's half the monthly rate, so about \$90 a month.

Ms. Deeming Kehe: Let's get back to the question for the subcommittee: Has the threshold to raise meter rates been met?

Comment: The data supports raising the rate, but we need to make sure we communicate the increased availability and convenience to the public. I am in favor of an increase if it's done with the operational changes.

Comment: The data shows that it supports an increase, but I worry about the reality of low wage workers, they might be working multiple jobs and as we are talking about this, we need to consider them.

Question: Regarding the proposed 20 cent increase- did I miss some data on the behavior shift?

Staff Response: We don't have information about elasticity of demand with respect to parking prices.

Comment: Do we agree on 85% occupancy as a performance measure? If we agree on that, then we can start talking about how we get to this goal. I have not heard any arguments that it isn't.

Comment: Yes that is target, 85% occupancy to increase availability. If we are trying to meet these larger policy goals, we can't have parking on street be cheaper than parking in garages.

Comment: I am highly persuaded that the level of occupancy for a rate increase has been reached. When businesses have high demand, they raise their rates, I see this as a housekeeping change in order to even out demand. The adjustments we are talking about are very minor, in line with demand, with inflation, with the cost of transit, etc.

Comment: If the peak is that high now, then why don't we change the meter rates all the time? Why don't we manage for performance now?

Staff response: We don't have that policy which allows that now, we are looking at this now in the larger Central City policy group, but we can't do that at this time.

Question: Is this a council recommendation or a recommendation to the larger Central City Policy committee?

Question: Do the recommendations we are making on this committee have teeth?

Staff response: This subcommittee recommendation will go to City Council for a vote. City Council doesn't need to approve operational changes such as meter time stays, operations staff can make those changes.

Ms. Deeming Kehe asked to take a vote on raising the meter rates.

ACTION: Vote on whether or not meter rates should be increased:

6 yes, 1 no, and 2 abstentions

Comment: My hesitation to vote is that data should drive policy, and the data needs to be there before we can vote.

Comment: There is a lot of good data, but some anecdotal, I'm not sure. \$.25 is a lot when it's irritant to the customer, or to a low income worker.

Comment: Raising rates disproportionately affects low income workers so my vote won't change.

City staff: Is there additional information you would like to see to help you make a decision?

Are we missing something here? I thought we were asked for specific information.

Ms. Deeming Kehe: Do we have enough information to move forward?

Group: Yes, let's move on.

Ms. Deeming Kehe: Do we agree to move ahead with the 2/3 majority representing agreement?

Action: Everyone voted to keep the 2/3 majority vote of 6 yes, 1 no, and 2 abstentions on agreeing to a meter rate increase.

Ms. Deeming Kehe: When we come back to the July meeting we will be discussing the rate increase options and the other operational considerations.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:35pm.