



# Downtown Parking Demand Management Action Plan

## **Executive Summary**

Parking is an integral part of a balanced, linked, and sustainable multimodal transportation system and that is crucial to maintaining a viable Downtown. Providing convenient access for employees, residents, shoppers and visitors will ensure that Downtown Atlanta remains a vibrant hub of activity. Traditionally convenient access has meant expanding parking to meet an ever-growing demand. Today, providing access goes well beyond building more parking to include managing the supply, operation and demand for parking. Developing and promoting an efficient, easy-to-use parking system can help achieve the larger goals of the Downtown community: economic development, improving quality of life, and both encouraging and facilitating the use of all transportation modes.

The Downtown Parking Demand Management Action Plan (the Plan) was developed for the Downtown Transportation Management Association (TMA), Central Atlanta Progress and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District by UrbanTrans Consultants, Inc. and Carl Walker, Inc. with assistance from Lanier Alternative Transportation Division and Transportation Management Systems. The Plan discusses the existing parking environment and how to optimize the parking supply, while supporting increased ridesharing, transit, walking, and bicycling. The recommendations include public and private actions needed to implement the plan, including zoning changes, public infrastructure investment, and appropriate parking projects and incentives.

The Project Mission is:

To understand Downtown Atlanta's parking needs and identify strategies and projects that enable public and private stakeholders to maximize the available parking supply in order to enhance Downtown economic development and increase attractiveness of all transportation modes.

## **Study Process**

The Downtown TMA, a program of Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (ADID), initiated this Action Plan to address current and future parking needs in Downtown Atlanta. The project began in February 2006



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and concluded in October of 2006. Working together with the Downtown business community, parking operators, residents, transit operators, the city government, and other stakeholders, the study addressed parking in the context of creating a vital and vibrant Downtown. Using an analysis of current parking conditions, best-practices research, and input from stakeholders and the broader community, the plan offers recommendations and action items toward achieving this end. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), with broad representation from the community, oversaw the planning process and assisted in defining the project mission and goals.

## **Key Findings**

### **Parking Supply**

- There are approximately 95,000 parking spaces in the study area in 109 parking structures and 325 surface lots.
- Approximately 67,000 of these spaces are located in parking structures, with 25,250 spaces in surface lots and an estimated 2,000 on-street spaces.

### **Operations**

- Off-street parking is primarily privately operated with market forces driving decisions by property owners and operators related to parking.
- Property owners need to be involved in any efforts to change the quality of parking conditions.
- Various payment technologies are in use and the trend is toward unattended lots.

### **Off-Street Parking Pricing**

- Parking rates are set by the market and vary with demand, especially during special events.

### **On-Street Parking**

- The City of Atlanta manages the City's on-street parking within the study area, including:
  - 632 metered spaces
  - 386 marked spaces (without meters)
  - 1,084 unmarked spaces (estimated)

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- Current meter rates are uniform throughout the city at 1.5 minutes for each \$0.05 or \$2.00 per hour. A lower rate of 3.0 minutes for each \$0.05 or \$1.00 per hour is available near hospitals and City Hall.
- The City is currently in the process of evaluating two types of multi-space meters as part of a program to replace most of the existing electronic single-head meters with multi-space technology.

## **Short-Term Parking (fees based on short stays)**

- The lack of short-term parking is a concern for business owners.
- There is not enough on-street capacity and operational disadvantages reduce the incentive for private off-street operators to offer short-term rates.
- Without municipal lots the City's leverage over off-street short-term pricing structure is limited.

## **Occupancy**

- The combined occupancy rate for both off-street and metered/marked on-street parking was 66 percent, the same as for off-street parking alone.
- The least occupied area was around the Georgia Dome and World Congress Center, where occupancy is directly linked to special event activity.
- The most heavily occupied areas are around Grady Hospital, Georgia State University and government office buildings, where 82 percent of the off-street parking was occupied, and on-street parking was at 77 percent.

## **On-street Turnover Rates**

- Timing on meters has to be set to properly serve short-term parking needs, encourage turn-over, and discourage long-term parkers from using meters.
- Overstays were a significant problem at one-hour meters, causing a loss of valuable short-term parking capacity.
- One-hour meters were occupied an average of 83 percent through the day but occupancy reached as high as 91 percent.

An overarching goal of this Action Plan is to promote a balanced mix of parking and alternative transportation. The Downtown parking system was reviewed in the context of improving walkability, bicycling conditions and encouraging both transit use and ridesharing.

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## **Bike Parking**

- The current parking inventory includes 171 bicycle racks with 950 parking spots in the Downtown Action Plan study area.
- The existing bicycle racks are not always easy to see or access.
- Long-term secure and covered bicycle parking is lacking.

## **Walking Conditions**

- Parking facilities, particularly surface parking lots, affect the streetscape and the walking environment.
- Zoning codes can require designs of parking facilities to improve continuity and pedestrian feel of the area.

## **Transit**

- The study area is served by 6 MARTA rail stations, 20 MARTA bus routes, 8 Cobb County Transit bus routes, 7 Gwinnett County Transit bus routes, and 7 GRTA Xpress bus routes.
- The 2000 US Census reports 14.4% of all work trips to Downtown are by transit.
- Studies indicate that parking prices/availability are significant factors in transit usage to downtown areas.

## **Economic Development and Land Use**

- Convenient access by automobile remains a factor that improves prospects for most retailers and service providers in Downtown Atlanta
- Surface parking lots often serve as placeholders for future development sites.

## **Recommendations**

The elements of this plan provide strategic guidance and action steps for each of the goals. The action steps are organized into three implementation phases:

- Immediate                      6 months
- Short-term                        1-2 years
- Long-term                         3-5 years

See the following table for Summary of Recommendations. Full recommendations and action items are included in Section 5 of the Downtown Parking Demand Management Action Plan.



# Downtown Parking Demand Management Action Plan

Recommendations	Who Implements					Time Frame		
	<i>COA</i>	<i>TMA</i>	<i>CAP</i>	<i>Operators</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Short-Term</i>	<i>Long-Term</i>
<b>Goal A: Optimize the availability and use of Downtown’s existing parking resources to meet current and future demand.</b>								
<b>A-1: Maintain Parking System Inventory</b> The inventory associated with this Plan provides information about parking conditions and parking availability to not only those involved in development but also the public at large, including facilities available for paid public parking (monthly or transient) and parking rates.		TMA	CAP	Parking		Immediate	Short-Term	
<b>A-2: Develop Complete Land-Use Data to Support Evaluation of Actual Parking Ratios in Atlanta and Future Parking Sufficiency</b> Comprehensive land use information can be used in conjunction with building vacancy information and the vehicle accumulation data collected during the Plan’s development to determine parking demand ratios related to specific land uses within the Downtown area.		TMA	CAP			Immediate	Short-Term	
<b>A-3: Encourage Shared Parking</b> Encourage developers to perform a shared parking analysis and take advantage of opportunities to develop parking facilities that could be efficiently shared among multiple users.	COA	TMA	CAP				Short-Term	
<b>A-4: Identify Land-Banking Opportunities</b> Investigate the possibility of the city providing land for development of a parking structure, whether a standalone facility or part of a larger project that serves the needs of multiple generators in the area.	COA						Short-Term	Long Term

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	COA	TMA	CAP	Operators	Other	Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
<p><b>A-5: Improve Permitting Process</b></p> <p>Involve parking management firms in examining the permitting process required to obtain temporary parking facility permits, permanent parking facility permits, and associated business licenses.</p>	COA		CAP			Immediate	Short-Term	
<p><b>A-6: Implement Updated Downtown Parking Standards</b></p> <p>Setting appropriate parking maximums and minimums for the Downtown area will assist in a more efficient use of the existing parking supply.</p>	COA		CAP			Immediate		Long Term
<p><b>A-7: Explore a Fee-In-Lieu Program</b></p> <p>Fee-in-Lieu programs allow developers to contribute capital to a collective development fund that is used to provide municipal parking instead of meeting all parking requirements on-site.</p>	COA							Long Term
<p><b>A-8: Explore Condominium Funding Program</b></p> <p>Like a Fee-In-Lieu program, the condominium approach provides an avenue for businesses and residents to voluntarily purchase shares of a new parking facility by helping fund its construction.</p>	COA							Long Term
<p><b>A-9: Remove Overnight Parking Restrictions</b></p> <p>Examine the possibility of restricting overnight parking only on specific days when street cleaning activity is routinely scheduled.</p>	COA	TMA	CAP				Short-Term	

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	COA	TMA	CAP	Operators	Other	Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
<p><b>A-10: Restore the Downtown Street Grid</b></p> <p>The reduction of block lengths in the specific locations proposed in the Imagine Downtown plan should be promoted as a means to reduce walking distances, expand parking options, and reduce pressure for the creation of new parking facilities.</p>	COA							Long Term
<p><b>Goal B: Identify parking management policies and programs that will increase the use of alternative transportation modes and contribute to an improved multimodal environment.</b></p>								
<p><b>B-1: Decrease Employer-Paid Parking Subsidies</b></p> <p>By balancing the costs of different travel options and offering employees a choice of how to spend a travel allowance, employers provide an economic incentive to choose something other than driving alone and the employer pays less for parking.</p>		TMA				Immediate		
<p><b>B-2: Increase Number of Preferential Parking Spaces for Carpools and Vanpools</b></p> <p>Five percent of all Downtown parking spaces should be made available for carpools and vanpools, especially desirable spots. Price discounts and special signs designating spots should be made available.</p>		TMA				Immediate	Short-Term	
<p><b>B-3: Implement Cash-Out Pilot Program</b></p> <p>Employees who participate in the pilot program are given the choice between a free parking spot and a monthly amount equivalent to the cost of parking spot.</p>		TMA				Immediate	Short-Term	

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<p><b>B-4: Promote Car Sharing</b> Car sharing supports alternative transportation usage, offering flexibility for both employees and residents who primarily use transit, bike, walk or share a ride.</p>		TMA					Short-Term	
<p><b>B-5: Include TDM Targets in Design Guidelines/Development Regulations</b> Central Atlanta Progress is currently updating design guidelines for new development within Downtown. Trip-reduction targets (by square footage) in new development should be part of these design guidelines.</p>	COA	TMA	CAP				Short-Term	Long-Term
<p><b>B-6: Promote Free Parking Days for Alternative Mode Users</b> As an added incentive to use alternative modes for the majority of work/school trips, employers can offer a limited number of free parking days per month.</p>		TMA					Short-Term	
<p><b>B-7: Include Commute Options Information in Parking Literature</b> Provide information on biking, walking, taking transit and ridesharing in parking literature to expand the exposure to commute options.</p>		TMA		Transit			Short-Term	Long-Term
<p><b>B-8: Improve Walking and Bicycling Conditions and Safety</b> Encourages walking and bicycling as primary modes Downtown, increases transit accessibility, and allows for parking only once for multiple destinations.</p>		TMA		Transit	APD	Immediate	Short-Term	
<p><b>B-9: Support Local Shuttle Systems</b> Develop and implement downtown circulator shuttles to reduce the need for automobile trips between downtown destinations.</p>		TMA	CAP				Short-Term	

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	COA	TMA	CAP	Operators	Other	Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>Goal C: Preserve and expand on-street parking to create a pedestrian- and retail-friendly Downtown, maximizing the availability of short-term parking to support that need.</b>								
<b>C-1: Expand and Improve On-Street Parking</b>								
Expand on-street parking wherever possible within the limitations of maintaining necessary traffic flow (vehicles, transit, bicycles, etc).	COA	TMA	CAP				Short-Term	
<b>C-2: Implement Planned Technical Improvements in the On-Street Program</b>								
Continue the upgrade of the city's meter system through the phased conversion to multi-space meters	COA					Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>C-3: Test Variable Pricing and Time Limits for On-Street Parking</b>								
Program multi-space meters to allow a longer stay after normal business hours to facilitate Downtown nightlife.	COA							Long-Term
<b>C-4: Explore On-Street Smart-Card and Validation Program</b>								
Smart-Cards are issued with a pre-paid value encoded on the card. The parking fee is deducted from the balance on the card and retailers can add value back.	COA							Long-Term
<b>C-5: Expandable Loading Zones</b>								
Metered spaces or unmetered on-street spaces along critical curb faces can be consolidated to create oversized loading zones, with no general parking allowed until after 9:30 A.M. each weekday.	COA						Short-Term	Long-Term

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	COA	TMA	CAP	Operators	Other	Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>Goal D: Develop initiatives that support a public/private collaborative to promote parking availability, ease of use, common validation programs, high standards of facility safety, facility maintenance, and positive customer experiences.</b>								
<b>D-1: Greater City Involvement in Providing Public Parking</b>								
Evaluate the benefits of an expanded municipal parking system and the development of a Parking Authority.	COA						Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>D-2: Form Parking TAC/Collaborative</b>								
Enlist the ongoing participation of the Action Plan's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) beyond the conclusion of the Plan's development.		TMA	CAP		TAC	Immediate		
<b>D-3: Increase Parking Facility Security</b>								
Initiate and sustain dialogue that will lead to creative, concrete and practical solutions for security concerns.		TMA	CAP		APD		Short-Term	
<b>D-4: Promotion of Parking Technology</b>								
Enlist local parking operators in implementation of technology that would be mutually beneficial to operators, owners, customers, and Downtown Atlanta.		TMA	CAP	Parking	TAC		Short-Term	
<b>Goal E: Promote parking accessibility to Downtown visitors and reduce site-specific congestion related to special event traffic.</b>								
<b>E-1: Improve Special Events Communication</b>								
Providing information ahead of time to Downtown travelers will assist in reducing the frustration surrounding event traffic congestion and higher parking pricing. Information on events can be coupled with providing information on travel alternatives, including travel routes and modes.		TMA	CAP		SEV		Short-Term	Long-Term

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	COA	TMA	CAP	Operators	Other	Immediate	Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>E-2: Form Special Events Task Force</b> A task force that includes all special event stakeholders will further aid in planning of special events and the collection and dissemination of relevant information.		TMA	CAP		SEV		Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>E-3: Explore Improved Real Time Traffic Information for Special Events</b> Real time traffic information will aid travelers in making informed decisions about mode choices, route choices and time of day travel choices.	COA	TMA	CAP	GDOT	SETF		Short-Term	Long-Term
<b>E-4: Provide Special Event Discounts for Carpools and Early Arrivals</b> Economic incentives for alternative-mode use typically come in the form of free or discounted parking rates.		TMA						Long-Term
<b>E-5: Residential Access Permits</b> Provide identification permits to Downtown residents that allow quick identification for authorized access to their neighborhoods when street controls are in effect for special events traffic management.			TMA		APD		Short-Term	

### Key for Implementing Agencies and Time Frames

COA: City of Atlanta

TMA: Downtown Transportation Management Association

CAP: Central Atlanta Progress and Downtown Community Improvement District

ADP: Atlanta Police Department

TAC: Technical Advisory Committee

SEV: Special Event Venues

SETF: Special Event Task Force

Immediate: In the next 6 months

Short-Term: In the next 1-2 years

Long-Term: In the next 3-5 years