

# GOBERKELEY SMARTSPACE: VIRTUAL COMMUNITY MEETING FOR THE ELMWOOD AREA

**Date:** April 27<sup>th</sup> 6:30 PM

**Attendance:** Gordon Hansen, Dianne Yee, Dana Rubin, Ayaka Habu

**Participants:** 22 members of the public

## Running Notes:

### Revisiting the project background goals

- Project Background
- Project Goals

### The Pilot development process so far

- Spring 2022: Collected more merchants/employee data from survey

### New proposals for the pilot in the Elmwood

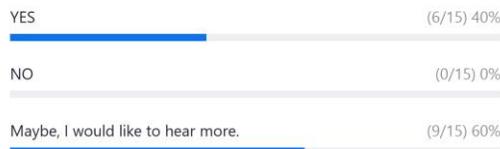
- Proposals came directly from the community
  - o **#1** New parking permits for local merchant employees. (Not UC Berkeley nor Alta Bates). They would be available to park in RPP areas A, B, and L. The city will conduct a supply analysis for how many permits are issued and how many available parking are available. RPP area B has the least amount of available parking. To encourage merchants to drive less, each additional permit will be more expensive than the next for an individual merchant or employee.

#### Local Merchant Employee Parking Passes

Poll | 1 question | 15 of 22 (68%) participated

1. Do you support the implementation of an employee parking pass program? (Single Choice) \*

15/15 (100%) answered



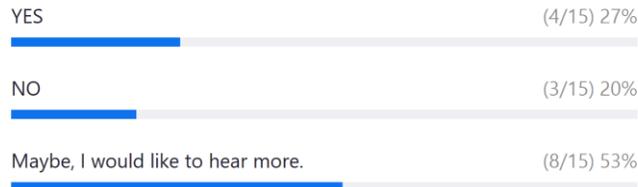
- o **#2** Extend unpaid time limits in portions of RPP Area D and L.

## Longer unpaid time limit

Poll | 1 question | 15 of 22 (68%) participated

1. Do you support extending unpaid time limits from 2 to 3 hours in some portions of RPP Areas D and L? (Single Choice) \*

15/15 (100%) answered



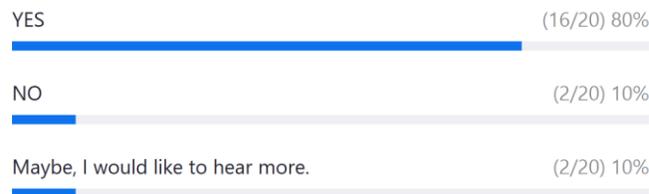
### ○ #3 Facilitate transit pass benefits for local employees

## AC Transit EasyPass Program

Poll | 1 question | 20 of 23 (86%) participated

1. Do you support the City helping local merchants provide annual transit passes to employees as an employee benefit? (Single Choice) \*

20/20 (100%) answered



## Next steps for pilot

- Proposals will be refined and finalized in May
- May 19 Transportation Commission review, June 28 see City Council approval

## Discussion: Feedback & questions

- **Resident:** Please explain again how cars parking in our neighborhood more having is going to “increase available parking”
  - **Gordon:** Not every proposal will be able to answer every goal in every place. For example, the merchant permit does not reduce the number of vehicles coming to the neighborhood since these vehicles are already parking in the neighborhood. What this employee permit can help with is reducing the shuffling and the associated GHG emissions that come with it.

- **Gordon:** They are already here, just shuffling around. It helps with other goals of reducing the 2h shuffle. We won't be able to address all the goals with each strategy. Pricing proposals are not an option in Elmwood due to strong community feedback. We are instead looking at incremental changes to shift behavior.
- **Resident:** There is an existing agreement that governs merchant parking. How will the new proposal be integrated with that?
  - **Gordon:** Yes, there is. This new program will complement the existing merchant program that exists already. The spirit of this proposal is to balance the number of permits that are being used with the actual number of parking spaces available.
  - Merchants could have additional permits for employees in addition to their merchant parking permit.
- **Resident:** Elmwood has been a stepchild with four RPP. Has there been any considerations about making an Elmwood Parking District in the two blocks at the intersection?
  - **Gordon:** Yes, we are not going to issue a number of permits beyond the number of available spaces. We are still working on determining the specific number of permits that should be issued.
  - We did two sets of analyses: Permit saturation- how many permits issued to parking spaces available; Block-face saturation looking solely at blocks within the two pilot areas.
  - An Elmwood-specific permit would be challenging to operationalize.
- **Resident:** RPP was implemented by Council long ago. How does the new 3-hour proposal integrate with the current law?
  - **Gordon:** If it requires a BMC change, then necessarily we would bring the item to Council for their approval via ordinance.
- **Resident:** Tell ABAG they should pay for an EasyPass program. Typical – almost \$1 million to study a program but no \$ to implement help for small merchants. Wells Fargo can afford it but what other merchants in the elmwood?
  - **Gordon:** Our grant doesn't allow purchasing transit passes for businesses as an eligible expense. For the future, finding funding sources can help execute a program. Based on the survey, there are about 10 businesses that are interested in opting into the commute benefits program.
- **Resident:** Do you know AC Transit has specifically flagged College Ave as a major problem area to keeping transit running smoothly and timely- has anyone made any effort to make transit on College Ave more efficient and reliable.
  - **Dianne:** Not that we're aware of.

- **Gordon:** AC Line 51B route improvement was recommended back in the mid 2010s, and other intersections were proposed to be signalized. This included Russell St & College Ave in the Elmwood but it was not ultimately implemented. One of the hopes of the transit pass program is 1) it's annual pass. 2) it can be used on multi transit agencies. This means employees can use it at any time in addition to commuting trips.
- **Residents:** Data collection like duration time, wait time, can you tell us more about that?
  - **Gordon:** Duration of stay: identifying number of vehicles and looking at them at one hour interval. We identify the unique vehicle licenses and track how long each of these unique vehicles stay. We also see if these vehicles have an RPP or not. We are currently not using license plate readers (LPR) due to privacy policies, so we are trying to anonymize the license plate to allow us to collect this data at scale via LPRs.
  - Parking Search Time: simulates a proxy experience for someone who is a shuffler, looking for parking at different times of the day.
- **Residents:** Some merchants must pay \$600. Is that true?
  - **Gordon:** Currently \$185/year for a Merchant Permit.
- Map said parking restrictions go to 7pm. Is that what it is currently?
  - **Gordon:** Yes.
- RPP has been a negotiation for over 30 years. Can we just change it? Or do we need buy-in from merchants and residents or will City Council just do what they want? How was the process that Ron Kelly did for RPP?
  - **Gordon:** Yes, we understand there is an agreement in place. There is also a desire for us to help manage parking for people who are hurting doing the 2h shuffle (on a trial basis as part of this pilot).
- **Resident:** Thanks for bringing up housing – since the city is pushing to add more housing, which is usually done at the expense of off-street parking, you are just increasing the need for on-street parking.
  - **Gordon:** the scope of this program is limited to combatting the 2-hour shuffle.
- **Resident:** Are there times where several adjacent [blocks] have no parking availability for extended periods? If that is the case, what options does a resident have when they have no place to park – park at a meter? Thank you
  - **Gordon:** Parking availability is different from block to block. What may happen is one block is 100% parked out but just around the corner there are few of available spots within walking distance. RPP also does not guarantee a parking spot in front of your house. So in this case, you would cruise around and find a spot that is one or two blocks away from your house.

- **Residents:** How do you ensure that the [recent surveys of employees, merchants, and residents conducted by the City in spring 2022] are legitimate? My deep concern: merchants may not have represented the needs of their employees correctly. I am aware of at least 5 employers that didn't send the survey to their employees.
  - **Gordon:** The surveys are premised on the assumption that respondents are telling the truth. In the Elmwood, we received responses from 40 (1/2 of total) businesses with over 300 employees. In the Southside, we received responses from over 60 (1/3 of total) businesses with over 620 employees.
- **Resident:** If 72% of people surveyed said that two hours was enough time for non-residents to park, what is the point of possible extending the limit to three hours? How will that help employees? A three-hour shuffle?
  - **Gordon:** We don't know. Hence, we are doing the pilot to test our hypothesis. We could drop this proposal. Yes, we'd be wanting to see if 3h vs 2h makes a difference.
- **Resident:** Is the greenhouse gas emissions from people trying to find parking worse than the thousands of idling engines stuck in traffic jams trying to get through the Elmwood every evening during rush hour? I think its apale comparison – With all the parking / transit / traffic /delivery / business problems, the 2-hour shuffle doesn't seem to be very high on most lists of serious concerns – keeping parking available for the theater and restaurants to keep them healthy should be a focus.
  - **Gordon:** We don't know. Hence, we are doing the pilot to test our hypothesis.
  - **Gordon:** Yes. But we are focusing on this small thing. We don't know the measurements yet, but we are going to test our proposals to measure and understand it better.
- **Resident:** Several business spaces in Elmwood a vacant now. In fact, they have been vacant for a while. Eventually these spaces will be filled, and more businesses/ employees will enter the picture. These should be considered as well, I think.
  - **Gordon:** I'd like to see Elmwood thriving again too. Securing transit passes for these new employees would be easy to do as new businesses could join the program. New parking passes for businesses would be challenging under our proposal for a maximum number of permits being made available at the start of the pilot.
- **Resident:** Much better meeting format taking our questions than having breakout rooms. Thank you for hearing us.
- **Resident:** [Other commenter] is correct – the commute to and from the campus along College Ave is causing big greenhouse gas emissions as well as up Dwight/Derby/Claremont to the highway

- **Resident:** I think all of us value having the Elmwood here and helping employees to park would seem to be important to supporting this Elmwood that we value. And the proposal to modestly increase employee parking in the RPP areas while balancing these increases with protecting resident parking seems very reasonable to me. I would not like to see [the proposal for employee parking passes] eliminated.
- **Resident:** Are we going to get the staff report that is sent to both the Transportation Commission as well as the City Council? The devil is in the details. Thank you! Carla.
  - **Gordon:** The Transportation Commission will receive a one-page summary followed by a presentation very similar to this one.
- **Resident:** The post office has nearly 30 vehicles that come in and out of their parking area, plus dozens of bobtail trucks every day, and even more employees who park in the neighborhood, while only 3 -or 4 employees work in the space. Has anyone considered moving the mail sorting and delivering services to a less dense neighborhood and commercial area, and putting that parking area to better use serving the business district? Keep the PO just make it less impact.
  - **Gordon:** That is a good idea, but beyond the scope of this project.
- **Resident:** What kind of infrastructure would it take for drivers to know where the available parking is?
  - **Gordon:** Some cities have tried out sensors, but they can be unreliable, expensive, and difficult to maintain (e.g., batteries don't last a long time).