

# **Downtown Employee Parking and Transit Pilot Program (PROPOSAL)**

## **Identified Problem**

- Many of Columbia's 7,000 downtown employees park their cars at on-street meters close to their places of employment (or that of their competitors), and "plug the meter" all day.
- This is an inappropriate use of on-street meters in a dense restaurant and retail district because it takes high-value parking spaces away from potential customers, who would create faster turn-over thereby creating even more value.

## **Issue Behind the Problem**

- Many downtown employees cannot afford (or cannot easily accumulate at one time) the \$60/month required for a parking permit or the \$55/month required for a COMO Connect transit pass.
- However, many downtown employees may be willing and able to (a) buy a lower-priced parking permit for an under-utilized on-street parking area such as Ash St., or (b) ride the bus downtown, if given a free transit pass.

## **Proposed Solution**

- Offer every downtown employee a lower-priced parking permit (say, \$20/month) for an under-utilized parking area and a free transit pass [based on a successful program in Boulder, CO].
- This will generate revenue from under-utilized parking spaces, free up high-demand parking spaces for high-turnover customers, increase ridership on COMO Connect buses, and lead to an increase in regular riders.

## **Program Implementation**

- Implement as a one-year "pilot program," starting on January 1st, 2015.
- CID markets the program and validates downtown businesses for a specified number of low-priced parking permit or a free transit pass.
- City distributes low-priced parking permits and free transit passes, according to validation spreadsheet provided by CID.
- City and CID track pilot program participation in terms of uptake and actual utilization of low-priced parking permits and transit passes.

## **Potential Issue**

- Can the City legally issue parking passes for on-street parking to a specific segment of the population, or does it have to be open enrollment?

## Downtown Employee Transit Parking Pass Pilot Project: Proposed Roles and Responsibilities

**Proposal: A one year pilot program to give downtown employees access to low cost bus passes and meter permits. Bus passes will be \$5 month; meter permits will be \$25.**

- This will be limited to 300 bus passes and 300 parking meter permits.
  - According to a 2012 parking inventory, there are around 400 meters that currently have less than 20% occupancy rates. There are also quite a few meters with less than 30% occupancy rates. These numbers will be updated before any decisions are made.
  - There is ample room on busses to add riders.
- Meter permits will be good only for specially designated 10 hour meters. 24 hour parking will not be allowed in those spaces.
- The program will not be available to City, County or University employees.
- The passes and permits will be issued to employers, who will distribute them to employees as they see fit. Public Works is checking to make sure this is not a legal issue.
- Each downtown employer can request up to 20 bus passes and 10 meter permits.
- Passes and permits will all be issued by quarters for maximum flexibility, but passes will be available for all four quarters at the first of the year.
- Start date January 1, 2015. Passes will be available Dec. 15 and first quarter passes must be picked up before Jan 10 to avoid the rush of business from returning students.

### Process and Responsibilities

#### **CID:**

CID will be responsible for certifying downtown businesses and allocating number of passes allocated per business. This can be recorded on a spreadsheet that looks something like the attached sample.

- This will require establishing clear criteria to manage the process and avoid any perceived conflict of interest. e.g. first come first served, some metric for determining number of passes they are eligible for. e.g. A shop with 2 employees should not get more than 2 passes.
- Certification should be done by Dec 1, to issue passes by Dec. 15.
- The business certification is good for one year.

CID will work with the City on a PR program which will include creating maps of available meter permit areas, and estimated walking time from those areas to downtown locations. e.g. "5-minute walk to Ninth and Broadway."

If allocated passes and permits are not all picked up by the quarterly deadline, the CID can send out a notice that more are available and revise the list of eligible businesses.

#### **City:**

Once the CID has certified employers and allocated passes and permits, the spreadsheet will be sent to the City for pass distribution and management.

City staff will track how many passes/permits are picked up and by whom and keep the CID informed. The Transit department can also track use of the free bus passes.

CID and City staff will evaluate the program at regular intervals to identify possible issues which can be addressed during the pilot period.

Meters for permit parking meters will be identified with new stickers, which should be coordinated with informational stickers added to all meters to identify new enforcement hours and parking time limits. This will be done as a joint effort by the CID and the City.

#### **Business owners:**

Passes and permits can only be picked up by the business representative(s) listed on the CID generated spreadsheet. They might need to show ID at pick up. The employer can choose to pick up/purchase their allotted passes for the entire year, or on a quarterly basis. They will be required to pick them up by a certain date at each quarter so staff knows if extra passes/permits are available. Employers will be encouraged to manage the passes and permits to ensure that only current employees have access to them. (e.g. issue only quarterly passes for high turnover jobs.)

Proposed Spreadsheet Headings:

Business Name (CID)	Person(s) Picking Up Passes at City (CID)	# bus passes allocated (CID)	# buss passes picked up (City)	# parking passes allocated (CID)	# parking passes purchased (City)
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