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Testimony | Senate Government Operations Parking

1/15/2020

I'd like to extend sincere thanks to the Committee for their time and attention on this issue, and for inviting me, as a state employee, to share my thoughts about the problem, its impact, and some ideas for how to solve it.

I've worked for Vermont Commission on Women for 19 years as their project and communications coordinator. Our offices are located across the street, in the second floor of the Victorian building between the Secretary of State and the DMV.

{Problem}

State employee parking is inadequate during the legislative session.

This problem has grown worse in recent years, as new or renovated structures replaced state employee parking spaces. Examples near my office:

- the heating plant;
- new loading dock and other structures being built behind DMV
- the transportation center, in the formerly- and aptly-named Carr lot

Additionally, removal of 2 blocks of street parking spaces, extending from the intersection with State Street, along the right side of Bailey up to Terrace Street, due to the new bike lane.

I also note increased utilization of "reserved for special use" signage all through state employee parking lots, and note those spaces frequently sit unoccupied.

{Impact}

Lack of adequate parking results in a loss of productivity, as employees search for spaces, as they leave work to feed the meter, as they leave work to move their car multiple times per day, due to 2-hour meter restrictions; and as they move from a space many blocks away to one nearer their office or worksite later in the day. For those who park in the DOL lot, there are delays in shuttle service, or long, cold, icy (and frequently) dark walks back.

People outside state government don't want to meet in Montpelier during the session because of the parking problem. More meetings away means more fleet rentals and mileage reimbursement costs for the state.

With state employees parking in the street, the option is removed for those who it is designed for, creating a domino effect, with visitors resorting to our lots out of desperation.

When returning from offsite meetings or appointments any time between 8 and 4, especially mid-week, state employees will be hunting for spaces. In my experience, that's an average of between 20 to 40 minutes,

driving from lot to lot. It's immensely stressful. Often, I end up many blocks away, lugging carts of meeting gear down icy sidewalks and working late to make up for the interruption in my day.

Impacts also include monetary costs to employees, like parking tickets, and damage to cars in lots where folks "sardine" to fit into questionable spaces.

{Solutions}

- **Improve signage** using large neon yellow signs like the VTRANS uses for pedestrian crossings at the entrance of each state employee parking lot, with the words "State Employee Permit Parking Only". They must be placed in the lots in plain sight for drivers entering to see. The small white signs off to the side are not noticeable for visitors.
- **Ticket cars** without parking tags in state employee lots. **Enforce** with 3 violations resulting in towing the car. Tickets should state, "This Lot for State Employee Permit Parking Only".
- **Suspend bike path lane parking restrictions during legislative session** in downtown Montpelier. I've not seen a bike since November – make those spaces available for street parking.
- **Suspend all "reserved for special use" signage during the legislative session** (put a plastic bag over them, like on parking meters during special events.) Only reserve parking for parking spaces that are used every workday. Visitors should park in the street.
- Fleet works – it's a wonderful service and very efficient with friendly staff. **Move the fleet cars from behind the Visitor's Center to DOL on Green Mountain Drive during the session.**
- Request the City of Montpelier designate **two or three FREE parking spaces in front of the Welcome Center to accommodate visitors**. They park in our lot and walk to the State House and then downtown.
- **Consolidate necessary equipment** (dumpsters take up 4 parking spaces on our side of the lot) and materials (salt piles, plow parts) to take up as little parking spaces as possible.
- **Examine bus service routes and times and suggest changes.** The Rt. 2 bus gets here at 7:25 and leaves at 4:05 – both super early. The Capitol Shuttle should first stop downtown before proceeding up to National Life.
- **When building or remodeling structures, consider adding parking to the design.**
- Lastly, **a multi-level parking garage for state employees and the legislature** (perhaps in the Pit or behind our buildings) would fix this.