



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: August 27, 2024
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Approved By: Gabriel Engeland

Subject: Discussion of Parking Enforcement and Parking Restrictions

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- Business Communities
- Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing
- Neighborhood Safety Infrastructure
- General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council direct staff to explore private sector parking enforcement services, make parking restrictions uniform in similarly situated neighborhoods, and discuss other options for parking control measures as necessary.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this staff report. It is anticipated a contract for parking enforcement services could range from \$100,000 to \$300,000 annually, however, a percentage of this cost, up to 100%, would be offset by the revenue generated from parking citations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

Not applicable.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Los Altos Police Department enforces parking under the powers outlined in the City's municipal Code. The City limits parking as follows:

- Downtown parking is limited to 2 hours between 9 am – 6 pm.
- Downtown parking plazas are limited to 3-hour parking.
- Parks and other municipal parking lots have a maximum of parking no more than 72 hours consecutively.
- The Library at the municipal center has 2-hour parking during open hours.
- Areas around schools have variable/non-standard hours where parking is restricted at different times and location, sometimes varying from block-to-block.

Currently the Police Department has one Community Services Officer (CSO) who completes parking enforcement for the City. In addition to parking enforcement, the CSO is the primary employee responsible in the City for special events. These job duties require planning and collaboration with event organizers around parking and traffic management. The CSO is responsible for approving traffic and parking plans, placing and removing “no parking” signage, and working during the events to ensure no vehicles are blocking the street and traffic safety measures are in place and adhered to. The responsibilities associated with special events take priority over regular or proactive parking enforcement.

The CSO can dedicate approximately 30% of total time to proactive parking enforcement. When special events are not taking place or being planned, the proactive enforcement rate is higher, but the annualized average is approximately 12 hours per week of proactive parking enforcement citywide. The current staffing assigned to parking enforcement means the City does not have dedicated parking enforcement on most days, in most locations, or during most hours when parking restrictions exist. Additionally, there is no proactive enforcement on the weekends, during special events, or when the CSO is off shift, including vacation or personal time and City recognized holidays. Additionally a new State law (AB 413) known as the “daylighting” law prohibits stopping, standing, or parking within 20 ft. of a marked or unmarked crosswalk, and gives cities the ability to enforce infractions by parking citation. The City intends to enforce this law, particularly around areas marked as Safe Routes to Schools. Enforcement of AB 413 will require proactive parking enforcement beyond the capabilities of the Police Department due to staffing.

On average, the City issues 100-115 parking tickets each month. The majority of these tickets are issued downtown, and many are related to special events. As time allows, the City conducts proactive enforcement around several of the schools where complaints have been received and responds to parking complaints that are called into the Police Department Communications Center or forwarded to the Police Department from Code Enforcement. The City does not complete regular proactive parking enforcement in other neighborhoods, at parks, libraries, or in other business districts or city owned parking lots. The City takes part in the Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Service Authority (AVASA) and responds to reports of abandoned vehicles.

Complaints about the availability of parking downtown have been consistent, but recently requests for parking enforcement have been received in the neighborhoods around schools specifically, and generally in neighborhoods that experience cars parked under stop signs, too close to intersections, and for vehicles parked longer than 72 hours or that have become disabled. In addition to these requests, the City recognizes the need to increase parking enforcement at City libraries, city-owned parking plazas, and in parks, as well as beginning enforcement of AB 413.

In order to increase proactive parking enforcement, the City could assign current police personnel to complete parking enforcement, hire additional CSOs, or seek a private sector partner to proactively enforce parking as identified above. Though any of these three options would lead to more effective parking enforcement, City staff recommends seeking out a private sector partner to supplement current enforcement. The primary reasons a private sector partner is preferred is both the near-term and legacy costs associated with contracting this service are lower than hiring additional staff to complete enforcement. Additionally, a contracted partner would have parking enforcement as the only priority whereas police personnel will regularly have calls for service or other responsibilities that would be a higher priority, meaning the sole focus for a contracted partner will be parking enforcement during the times and at the locations where the City restricts parking.

In researching this topic Staff found a nearby city, San Bruno, that faced many of the same challenges around staffing and competing demands for the resources available. Similar to Los Altos, San Bruno assigned Community Service Officers to manage parking enforcement. San Bruno staffed 5 total Community Service Officers (2 full-time, 3 part-time) to try to effectively enforce parking. San Bruno ultimately adopted a blended enforcement approach where a private sector parking enforcement agency took on many of the proactive parking enforcement responsibilities.

If the City is unable to come to terms with a private sector partner, staff would recommend adding an additional parking enforcement CSO to complete regular proactive parking enforcement. Historically, the City has had 1.5 FTEs dedicated to parking enforcement.

In addition to completing more proactive enforcement, staff is recommending a uniform and consistent approach to the placement of “no parking” signs. Currently, the Public Works Department reviews requests for no parking signage where certain conditions exist, including safety concerns, traffic flow, congestion, or known times of increased intensity due to nearby land uses. However, this approach largely focuses on specific complaints or concerns from a resident or residents as opposed to a holistic view of how no parking restrictions impact the larger community.

The approach means the City currently does not apply “no parking” or other parking restrictions in a uniform manner for similarly situated properties or neighborhoods. The area around Jardin is a good example of parking regulations having different time restrictions and no parking locations even though they are in place due to the same traffic, parking, and congestion caused by the High School. Jardin is not the only area in the City where residents are experiencing this,

but it is a primary example of an area where signs should be placed uniformly, and restrictions should be similar from street to street.

Should the City Council choose to apply similar standards for “no parking” areas like Jardin will have uniform enforcement and application of regulations, as will other areas of the City where this issue exists today.

The City Council may also wish to discuss options not outlined in this staff report with regards to parking restrictions, these options could include neighborhood parking, city-wide or limited permit parking, or overnight parking restrictions.

ATTACHMENTS

1. San Bruno Staff Report
2. CSC Staff Report