

**Town Center Parking Study
Summary of Public Participation Activities
September 22, 2022**

Since June 2022, the Town Center Parking Study community engagement process has included multiple opportunities to collect community and business feedback. This document summarizes the public participation activities conducted and feedback collected to-date. These findings will be presented to the Mercer Island City Council during a Study Session on the parking study scheduled for Monday, October 3, at 5pm.

LET’S TALK ACTIVITIES

The City launched a [Let’s Talk project page](#) in August 2021, with 713 unique visitors. Let’s Talk featured three engagement tools to gauge the community’s needs on key issues such as on-street public parking supply and wayfinding/navigation:

1. **Share Your Ideas:** Community members responded to the prompt, “What does a successful parking and transportation system in Town Center look like to you?” (17 comments)
2. **Take a Quick Survey:** Four quick polls asked the public how they travel to Town Center, how they make their travel decisions for the day, which parking management goal should be prioritized, and their feeling on prioritizing on-street parking over other uses of the right-of-way. (232 responses)
3. **Map Your Input:** Community members pinned areas where parking is challenging, where new mobility options are needed, where parking works, and more around the Town Center zone. (32 pins)

Key Takeaways from the Quick Polls

- When asked which mobility option they use most frequently to travel to or around Town Center, 84 percent of respondents reported using a personal vehicle.
- The top three factors influencing their transportation decisions were their schedule and obligations for the day, the reliability and convenience of the travel choice, and the travel time.
- Forty-seven percent of survey respondents identified making it easier to find parking as the most important goal for parking management.

FOCUS GROUPS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

From August 8-19, the City hosted two (2) general focus groups and five (5) community group presentations with approximately 30 participants. Each meeting was held virtually via Zoom and included a brief presentation, opportunities to engage via the digital platform Mentimeter, and open discussion for participants to share needs and concerns.

Through the focus group participation and public comments shared via Let’s Talk, community members expressed support for the following parking management strategies.

Implementing Shared Parking

Shared parking was among the most popular strategies identified during the community engagement process. When asked to what extent they agree or disagree with various statements, the statement with which focus group participants agreed most strongly was, “It makes sense for all parking facilities in the Town Center to be shared among multiple uses if they can be.”

Prioritizing Parking for Certain Groups

Among survey respondents, another popular goal for parking management was prioritizing parking for certain groups, such as customers in a business district. On average, focus group respondents also agreed with the statement, “The most convenient parking in Town Center should be prioritized for visitors and customers.” Many community members expressed concern that off-island commuters would park and occupy key spaces in the Town Center all day to use transit. They emphasized the following strategies to encourage long-term parkers to park off-street and ensure the availability of convenient parking for local visitors:

- Parking Time Restrictions: Community members noted the role parking time limits could play in reducing long-term parking and ensuring turnover and availability of on-street spaces.
- Enforcement: Several comments mentioned how regulations must be consistently enforced to be effective.
- Wayfinding and Signage: A relatively simple strategy suggested by many focus group participants and survey respondents was to improve signage and wayfinding to help drivers find available off-street parking, and to locate public off-street garage spaces nearer the garage entrances.
- Restriping: Some residents were frustrated by the narrowness of certain garage parking spaces and explained how this resulted in unused spaces, effectively reducing the capacity of garages. Several mapping activity inputs pointed out areas where restriping garage spaces may be especially beneficial in making off-street parking more attractive.

Deploying Paid Parking

Focus group participants generally agreed with the statement, “I’d support paid parking if it benefited the community in tangible ways, like making it easier to get places and supporting community initiatives.” Some community members envisioned a successful parking management program as one that used pricing as a strategy to ensure regular availability of convenient spaces.

Updating Development Standards

Several participants expressed concerns about seeing more unappealing and inaccessible private parking lots associated with new development. People tended to prefer requiring new parking be located underground and shared with the public.

Enhancing Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Along with shared parking, bike-ability was the most often repeated theme shared by focus group participants describing their visions of what transportation and mobility success would look like in Town Center. There was a strong desire for infrastructure that would allow residents of all ages to feel safe bicycling to and around Town Center by designating more bike lanes and creating more convenient and secure bike parking. Participants also envision a Town Center where they can park once and walk from one destination to another. Several Let’s Talk comments were received on the need for wider sidewalks and streetlights along all major streets.

Creating Community Gathering Spaces

Throughout the engagement process, a common theme was the desire for Town Center to become more of a “destination” – not only a place to shop and do errands but also an enjoyable place to spend time with others. Community members mentioned outdoor seating and gathering spaces as one way to achieve this, and most focus group participants indicated a preference for enabling more public right-of-way spaces in the Town Center to be used for outdoor dining. On average, respondents agreed with the

statement, "It makes sense to create more community gathering spaces in Town Center, even if parking has to be moved to do so."