

# Parking & Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday October 24, 2013

1:00 pm, OM 340

## MEETING NOTES

**Present:** Doug Adelstein, Wendy Johnson, Brian Sullivan, Kunle Ojikutu, Kurt Willis, April Markiewicz, Darin Rasmussen, Julia Gassman, Carol Berry, Paul Mueller

### 1. Introductions were made of all members present

### 2. Update on Changes Implemented Based on Last Year's PTAC Recommendations

April provided an overview of changes that have been implemented by the university in response to the PTAC's recommendations earlier this year. The following recurring expenditures have been removed from Parking Services budget:

Employee Bus Pass Subsidy	\$70,000
Sustainable Transportation Program	\$27,451
Public Safety Support Functions (staffing)	\$67,536
<u>Lincoln Creek Bond Payments</u>	<u>\$200,000</u>
Total	\$364,987

The PTAC's proposed increases for some of the parking fines were also approved, though how much increased revenue to Parking Services from this source is yet to be determined.

### 3. Review PTAC Charter and Charge and Discuss Possible Changes

April reviewed the PTAC Charter, stating that with the completion of the Parking Services financials by Brian Sullivan, the remaining tasks for the committee are to examine parking fees and parking policies. Specifically those tasks will entail the following:

#### 1. Parking Fees

- a. Fee setting process
- b. How rates/fines compare to other universities with similar parking systems.
- c. Rates for departmental spaces, reserved spaces, rental vans/vehicles, vendor and visitor parking, event parking, special rates and agreements, fees for campus and private events such as weddings.
- d. Financing plan and rates to implement parking capital plan.

## **2. Policy Review**

- a. Current approach for space and permit allocation and review of approaches used at other universities similar to Western. Include review of how the approach serves the University's Mission and Goals.
- b. Determine and recommend means of enhancing campus "way-finding" assistance.
- c. Process to allow Director to respond to emergent needs while being transparent.

The first action of the PTAC will be to prioritize what the committee works on first. Given the short timeline and relatively few members on the PTAC, the consensus of the group was to work as a committee of the whole on these tasks rather than work as subcommittees, which we did last year.

April stated that reviewing parking fees and developing a rate setting process should probably take precedence. Vice President Van Den Hul needs all fees and rate requests for the next academic year by March 1<sup>st</sup>. This allows his staff time to prepare their division's operating budget requests by the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. The PTAC will also need to communicate any proposed changes to the campus community via survey's, public forums, town hall meetings, etc before submitting any recommendations so that feedback and any changes can be incorporated in the final proposal.

## **4. Prioritize Topics to Address in the Academic Year**

Prior to making any decisions on topics to address in the academic year, Brian will update the Statements of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Cash Position that were distributed earlier this year.

**Action Item:** Brian will update Parking Services' Statements of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Cash Position and forward them to the PTAC membership when ready.

Brian reiterated that even incorporating the \$364,987 savings to Parking Services, it will still be operating at a deficit of approximately \$2,000,000 projecting out to 2018. Without additional revenue from parking fees, Parking Services will not be able to accommodate the transportation and access needs of employees, students, and guests coming to campus. Moreover, inaction may lead to liabilities to the university from unresolved safety issues and failure to meet regulatory requirements.

Specifically, parking lots in many areas around campus are deteriorating and in poor condition; some of which are posing safety issues due to uplifted pavement from tree roots, potholes, and crumbling pavement. Moreover, stormwater runoff issues from the university's graveled lots have generated the attention of the Washington State Department of Ecology and the city of Bellingham. Though no legal action has been taken yet by them, the university still needs to be demonstrating good faith efforts to address those issues.

The PTAC members therefore need to begin the conversation of how much of an increase to parking rates need to be considered, given that any rate increases would be phased in gradually over several years. The financial projections that Brian will provide can help in that process. Looking back at historical rate increases, April reported the last rate increase was in 2007-08 for 1%. Prior to that was a rate increase in 2005-06 of 19%, a decrease in rates of 2% in 2004-05, and a rate increase of 24% in 2001-02. The double-digit increases had originally been intended to fund a parking structure on campus, however given the cost per parking space (~\$24,000), interest quickly waned.

Any discussion of rate increases should also be considered in the context of maintaining and supporting transportation and parking infrastructure. Obtaining funds for small capital improvement projects in the short-term will help address those parking facilities in most dire need of repair. Ideally, the project(s) also would be highly visible to employees and visitors so that the community had could see how increased parking rate revenues are being used to benefit employees, students, and visitors alike. Rick Benner, chair of the Parking and Transportation Capital Implementation Advisory Committee, will be working closely with our committee in the coming months so that decisions are coordinated between the two advisory committees.

Doug emphasized that any discussion of parking rate increases is a change to working conditions and needs to be bargained. Moreover, given that bargaining usually does not take place until March or April, Doug expressed his doubts that rates could be negotiated and approved for implementation by Fall of 2014. A few committee members expressed their interest in getting clarification on the legislation that Doug cited. How the legislation was interpreted and then later implemented needs to be revisited. Doug said he would contact the lawyer that Human Resources consults on these matters and once he gets a response, he will inform the rest of the PTAC.

**Action Item:** Doug will contact the Human Resources department contracted lawyer and Western's AAG office to get clarification on the legislation regarding the need to bargain parking rates as a condition of employment. He will relay the information he gets to the PTAC.

During the remaining time of the meeting, various suggestions and topics were discussed. They included the following:

- A. Departmental spaces: Brian suggested that the university pay for ~30 parking places on campus specifically dedicated for the use of department guests, visiting scholars, community guests, etc. The intent is to address the concern voiced by faculty that the limited operating funds departments are allocated each year should be utilized to support the mission of the institution, not on parking permits for its guests. These guests collaborate with Western's faculty, guest lecture in our classes, and enhance the student's learning experience. As such, neither guests nor departments should pay for a parking space.

The guest/visitor parking spaces could be as one group in one of the core lots of campus or apportioned to lots closest to academic buildings. Julia stated that Parking Services already makes sure that department guests are assigned a parking space next to their destination.

- B. Bus passes for all employees. Carol suggested that with all employees having a bus pass more people will take the bus to and from campus. The revenue will provide a stable funding source to WTA that could be used as a negotiating tool to get more buses in service covering a wider area with greater frequency. As parking rates continue to increase, there will be greater incentive to take the bus and other forms of alternative transportation.

April noted that Rick Benner is working with a consultant this fall to determine the actual number of people who commute to and from campus via the various modes of transportation available. That information may reveal where resources should be directed to support alternative modes of transportation. Rick expects to have the consultant's report in January.

April stated that the committee should also consider the "transportation" component of its charge. Years ago a transportation specialist hired by the university had stated the primary focus should be on providing access to campus, with parking just one of the many options available. The priorities the committee identifies will drive the decisions it makes to solve its access, and by association, parking issues.

- C. Bonding as a mechanism to make capital improvements to the parking infrastructure over the next 20 -30 years. Brian asked Kurt how University Residences was able to pay for their parking lot improvements and the answer was they took out 20-30 year bonds. Brian thought that should be something for the committee to investigate as another funding option since that would help keep rates low over the years, but help the university immediately address its deteriorating parking infrastructure.
- D. Bringing John Shaheen, the transportation expert/consultant at the University of Washington to campus to meet the committee and answer questions. Last fall and early this spring Randy Stegmeier had been in contact with John and had started compiling a list of questions from the PTAC members to send him. The questions were never sent. April suggested the committee review the list of questions and see whether there are any that should be changed, deleted or added to the list.

**Action Item:** April will send the draft list of questions to the PTAC members to review. Any proposed additions, deletions or edits should be sent to her and she will compile an updated list for our next meeting.

- E. Lot utilization and number of parking spaces on campus. The contract Western has with the city of Bellingham is that we will maintain 3,400 parking spaces on campus. In recent years, lot utilization has decreased to the level that Western could

renegotiate that requirement to a lower number. Brian stated the current number will meet Western's projected growth in employee and student population for ~ 11 years. April added that at a recent meeting with Vice President Van Den Hul the decision had been made to keep the current number of spaces.

- F. Zone Parking costs. In response to a question from Wendy, Julia responded that zone parking is cheaper to implement and maintain than the system we currently use on campus.
- G. Parking permit assignment process. April mentioned that currently parking permit assignments are allocated based on employee seniority. There are several staff and administrative positions, however that require the employee to leave and return to campus during the day as part of her/his job duties. In those cases, it makes better business sense to assign a parking permit based on the employee job duties. Doug pointed out that the current system is perceived to be fair and equitable since all employees can eventually get a parking assignment near their place of work on campus.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm.

*Approved November 8, 2013*