Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee

Notes from the meeting on February 26, 2013

The fifth Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee meeting took place from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on February 26, 2013, at One South Van Ness Avenue, 7th floor, Union Square conference room

Attendees

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ed Reiskin, Carla Johnson, Andrew Conway, Pete Curran, Ann Flemer, Dorene Giacopini, Vera Hale, Henry Karnilowicz, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Bob Planthold, Cristina Rubke, Jeff Spicker, Roland Wong

FACILITATOR

Richard Weiner

STAFF TO COMMITTEE

Lisa Foster, John Knox White, James Lee, Jay Primus, Annette Williams, Bryant Woo

1. Opening

The facilitator reviewed the agenda and meeting purpose.

2. Staff presentation of policy option analysis; questions and clarifications

Staff presented an overview of their policy options analysis document,[1] which evaluates each of the committee's policy ideas according to the agreed-upon criteria. Notes below relate to clarifications requested by committee members.

BLUE ZONES: POLICIES OPTIONS 1-2

- Has there been any thought about whether all blue zones are fully ADA compliant? Is there any thought about how *not* having to be fully compliant might mitigate the constraints on the number of blue zones?

    - It's possible to take a second look at city standards that add requirements that aren't in the ADA. See the blue zone overview[2] for a list.

    - Standards could exist in tiers, for example, to create some flexibility under certain circumstances. This way more blue zones might be added where they are currently restricted because of local regulations.

- Regarding the $1,000 to $50,000 blue zone installation cost range: Is it possible to know which spots would be less expensive? Are they geographically spread?

---

[1] SFpark.org/resources/accessible-parking-policy-options-evaluation/
[2] SFpark.org/resources/blue-zone-overview/

○ Blue zones are probably most challenging in downtown because of tow-away zones—to avoid these, you would use side streets, which tend to have more street furniture.

○ Many downtown areas also have sub-sidewalk basements, making installation difficult because they could require drainage or other structural changes

GREEN ZONES: POLICY OPTION 9

This proposal would require placard users to observe time limits in green (commercial) zones. Notes:

- Loading and unloading do not count towards time limits
- It's very important to combine this policy option with an increase in blue zones

METER PAYMENT: POLICY OPTIONS 10-14

- Has any study been done on the effect of these policies on disabled people who no longer park because of the costs?

  ○ Not aware of any study, but we talked to disability rights advocates in places like Philadelphia, Arlington, and Houston; and they reported few negative effects, and strong positive effects in terms of freeing up parking spaces. One said that although nobody loves to pay for parking, they have accepted it as a net positive because access is so much better.

ENFORCEMENT: POLICY OPTIONS 15-17

- What is considered "robust" enforcement (as referred to in other cities)?

  ○ Houston writes 9,000 to 11,000 tickets every year. In Phoenix, volunteers write about 1,000 tickets per year for parking in blue zones without placard, down from 3,000 in the past.

- Stings

  ○ Currently, SFMTA already does stings twice a week

  ○ SFMTA Disabled Placard Detail checks 200 to 300 placards per sting; maybe 8 of them turn out to be invalid or misused.

  ○ From January to June 2012, the detail performed 99 stings and confiscated 759 placards

  ○ When DMV gets and follows up on complaints, experience is that 2 out of 3 placards turn out to be legitimate

MORE FREQUENT CERTIFICATION FOR PEOPLE OVER 75: POLICY OPTION 19

(Policy not subjected to full analysis)

- How often are DMV records updated with death records?

  ○ DMV updates monthly with state death records and provides this information to jurisdictions for enforcement purposes

○ DMV re-issues placards every two years

○ The issue is how quickly the state gets the information, because the process takes time (county coroner, death certificates, etc.)

3. Subcommittee presentation on honed policy options list

A subcommittee member reviewed the group's recommendations for honing the policy options list, as outlined in the [February 5 subcommittee meeting notes](#).[3]

The subcommittee emphasized that policy options 5 and 6, where the state would need to pay for applicant review visits, would be costly.

The subcommittee added policy option 7, a certifier verification program and state database overhaul, based on the Regional Transit Connection (RTC) Discount Card Program. This would be much less expensive than options 5 and 6, but would still help reduce issuance fraud.

The subcommittee discussed the importance of separating disability from income when thinking about access issues for people with disabilities. Several subcommittee members emphasized that parking access policy should focus on disability rather than income. The group recognized that adding meter payment may feel punitive for some people, even though it would create more access. The effectiveness with which any of these policies curbs placard misuse is an important part of the perception of these options, and of the ability to "sell" them to people.

Enforcement must be part of the package of recommendations. The subcommittee recommends further exploring the feasibility and effectiveness of the various options.

Short discussion among other subcommittee members:

● Any reexaminations or recertification processes could exclude those who now hold placards, creating new processes for new placards only. Anyone already with a placard could be grandfathered in. This would reduce cost, time, and bureaucracy.

● Some of San Francisco's variable parking meter rates are very expensive, making them difficult even for moderate income people, let alone disabled people with low incomes.

● It's true in some crowded places, SF*park*'s variable meter rates have risen significantly; but averaged across all the SF*park* pilot areas, rates have actually gone down.

● Paratransit uses a new system that now includes photo IDs, and it has helped reduce fraud. Privacy issue is a challenge but is worth overcoming.

---

[3] [SFpark.org/resources/feb-5-subcommittee-meeting-notes-accessible-parking-policy-advisory-committee/](#)

4. Discuss policy options list

BLUE ZONES

- This is the only policy option that benefits the disability community significantly-- but I haven't been able to find a blue zone in months.
    - Hopefully some of the other policies will free up blue zones.
- I can see how increasing the number of blue zones might increase the risk of abuse, if we don't address abuse. If the placard is now "gold", it would then be "platinum".
- What would be percent of total parking spaces if there were a blue zone on every blockface?
    - About 9% of metered spaces, more than double the 4% option.
- Could consider "one blue zone block" (every pair of block faces).
- That could be a goal, adjusting to circumstances like hills, tow-away zones, etc.
- Currently it's hard to know what the demand for blue zones is, since they're all full at 6 a.m. for the entire day.
- I don't think these policies are going to do that much individually; their effectiveness is interrelated with other policy options.
    - Is it possible for us to identify that we recommend the policy, with an "if" column? As in: increasing blue zones is great IF we also do X.
    - At our March meeting, we will need to recommend a package of linked policy options.
- According to the staff analysis, many of our policy suggestions will create only a slight improvement in access. Maybe we should look at chipping away at it; if we can link together five or six policies they might be able to create substantive change when added together.
    - There may be couplings that would increase the effectiveness of each policy.
    - The packages of policy options need to be evaluated in terms of effectiveness.
- The next subcommittee meeting will have to take into account strategy and marketing of these ideas
- I would also like to see other considerations in addition to increased access to parking: for example, if there is an increase in revenue, can we talk about using that revenue to help increase access in other ways (audible crosswalks, for example)

ENFORCEMENT OF CERTIFIERS

- For the most part, it seems like we're trying to go after a few bad apples in the medical community. If the process becomes too onerous, or people doing it correctly are concerned they might be caught up in a sting, those who are doing a good job of certifying placards may opt out, which could reduce access to placards for people who need it
- We don't want to increase burden on medical community and we also don't want to increase the burden on those who need placards by limiting access to health professionals.
- We could potentially eliminate nurse midwives and chiropractors; these seem problematic.

- Maybe a midwife shouldn't be able to certify for permanent disability, but should be able to issue a temporary one.

- The point is to try to get more intelligent requirements, for example a specific requirement regarding mobility limitation.

- We don't want to put forward a recommendation that is just to be voted up or down: we need some nuance (that is, it is not feasible to take on chiropractors at the state level – you would be seen as attacking their livelihood, and there may well be a role for them to play in certifications)

- This would need to be combined with other policies.

TIME LIMITS

- Is the four-hour time limit a maximum or a minimum? Would it require a change in state law?

    ○ Think four hours as a time limit floor[4]

- We need to think about people who are working or volunteering—how would a four-hour limit affect them?

- In my case, this would totally hurt me because I can't drive; I have to have someone drive me and I wouldn't be able to move my car after four hours. On the other hand, I still think this is an important policy change and we should go ahead with it.

- If green zones only allow parking for 24 minutes, I don't know what I can do within that time. Disabled people tend to use green zones as overflow disabled parking. I just don't see how we can do anything in such a short time.

    ○ Green zones are always right in front of or close to businesses that have quick, short term visits (like dry cleaners and florists). Loading and unloading doesn't count towards time limits. It would be important combine this policy with an increase in blue zones. Then, each type of zone can be used as intended and placed appropriately.

    ○ Green zones are paid for by merchants who benefit from very short term parking.

- I think merchants have a reasonable expectation that their green zones will have turnover; using them as lengthy parking zones does seem unreasonable

- We might find that if we are charging at meters and there is a time limit, the green zone may not end up being the problem that it is now. If the other policies have the desired effect the problem may go away.

- I think there needs to be some nuance. You shouldn't be able to park in a green zone all day. As a person with a disability you may need an hour where someone else only needs a short time, but all day is an abuse.

- The subcommittee should talk about clarifying signage.

---

[4] State policy could be set to allow local jurisdictions to institute time limits for placard holders of no shorter than four hours.

METER PAYMENT

- I'm opposed to meter payment for any reason because SF is the city where ADA had its beginnings, and it has been a leader in disability rights advocacy. Just because some other city does something different, I don't think SF should. We should honor our tradition as a leader by not charging for parking. Also fees have gone up in every realm, the elderly are facing shrinking income in every way, and people don't have the money to pay for parking.

  - What we've seen is meter payment as a way to create access—one of the most effective ways is by associating payment with placard use. I would disagree with characterization that meter payment is inherently anti-access; our data show the opposite.

  - It's a real issue in terms of affordability, but prices have not risen at all meters under the new parking policies (a third have gone down and a third have stayed the same, with a slight reduction overall)

- Disabled people are the most unemployed, underemployed, low-income group.

- While it is true that people with disabilities tend to have lower incomes, people with lower incomes are also less likely to have access to cars. According the US Census, while 50% of people with disabilities in San Francisco have low incomes, only 16% are both low income and have access to a vehicle in their households.

- Of everything we look at, the most effective ways to increase access is meter payment and increasing blue zones. But even increasing blue zones would not be effective without pricing.

- Many jurisdictions have lots of space (Sacramento, Oakland). We are the anomaly in many ways. Trying to suggest a statewide policy based on our situation may not fit other places.

- My misimpression before this process was that parking for free was analogous to discounted Muni rates (as a compensation for inconveniences due to elevators being out and wheelchair lifts not always working etc.) because I could only park in certain spots. But the focus should be on access. I can't be the only person who saw it that way; I think we have to really make sure that if we add payments, we are truly increasing access in every way—not just parking.

- Revenue generated should be designated to make the accessibility benefits work.

- The idea that money from meter payments by the disability community should go towards paratransit slid off the list. How can you separate out the funds?

  - It would not be difficult to track revenue that comes from blue zone meters.

  - There could be ways to estimate revenues that come from other parking meters.

- Muni has shown a pattern of charging more and delivering less. That's what this is going to be: charging more and offering less in terms of time limits. People need to be encouraged, not punished.

  - The expectation is that these policies will create more access, not less; so it would actually be delivering more.

- I want to repeat my suggestion that under state law San Francisco could designate a volunteer force of disabled people to enforce placard use.

- It would be useful to have regular postings in media about how many placards are confiscated, etc.

5. Determine any needed additional data and evaluation

- You may have already addressed this before I came into the meeting, but I'd like to know more specifically what stings entail, how they work, and whether there are ways to do them more effectively--especially what is the mechanism for determining which placards to investigate.

- State database—could this just be a line-item on a budget? Rather than a state law change?
    - If you don't make the state do this through legislation, there's no financial incentive for us to do it.

6. Closing

PUBLIC COMMENT

One member of the public spoke:

I want to piggyback on what Bob said: there are those of us who could be deputized to cite people who park in blue zones or in places where they shouldn't be, and if we were deputized to do that we could take care of ourselves. I hear time and again that "we don't want to put you in harm's way" but we are already in harm's way in terms of what we face every day on the streets and sidewalks.

We need to be able to put resources, meaning money, into enforcement. Nothing is without a cost. Everyone has parking problems, but think about it from our perspective: we have no choice but to either have someone drive us or take public transit. If I want to get someplace on time then I have to leave way, way before its start time. That makes no sense. We have to put resources into traffic and parking enforcement.

NEXT STEPS

The next meeting is the March 12 subcommittee meeting. At that meeting we will come up with a draft set of policy recommendations.