

Traffic and Parking Standing Committee Zoom Meeting Monday, October 10, 2022 – 1:30 p.m.

Attended:

Samuel Patterson -Chair, Hal Robinson, Michelle Jennings, Dr. Greg Snyder, Dr. John Lobur, Ian Banner, Wade Roberts, Paul Caffera, Jane Mahan, Elisabeth Alexander, Lauren Bergholz, Jakob Gammons, and Nakiya Cayson; and Cassidy Savage, non-committee member, transcribing minutes

Discussion:

- **Agenda**

Sam welcomed those in attendance and went over the agenda for the first fall semester committee meeting for the current school year.

- **Parking Summary**

Sam opened a discussion regarding conversations that have recently taken place with Chancellor Boyce and other UM leadership about parking proposals approved for this academic year.

- **Virtual Parking Permit Adoption**

Sam updated the committee members on how the new virtual parking permit adoption has been going so far this semester. First, going over the benefits, he mentions the increased speed and convenience, fewer office visits needed, and no longer having replacement permit fees. He then discussed the observations we have made so far upon implementing these changes, explaining that there have been issues with people not entering license plates correctly, such as entering an “O” instead of a “0” (Zero), as well as not changing/updating license plate information for new vehicles. He went on to add that this has created more of an online process with data, citations, waitlists, etc., since prior years, waitlist management was a manual process of entering data into an Excel spreadsheet. Now, this is all automated.

- **Commuter Blue and Red**

Sam then went on to discuss the parking zone changes for this school year dealing with Commuter Blue and Commuter Red zones. He clarified that Commuter Red is Jeannette Phillips, Village South, and all former Park-N-Ride and Open lots, and the number of changes is less than people realize.

We discussed moving forward with the front vanity plate and the sticker adoption, and so far have issued approximately 600 vanity plates and front stickers. He went on to state that with a record-breaking freshmen class and the domino effect of having more residential student vehicles than ever before. Kincannon Commuter lot is now hybrid for Residential Garage permit holders, which creates more parking demand in other commuter lots across campus.

Hal shared his screen to pull up the parking map and go over additional changes. He stated the only zones that really changed are Manning, Jeannette Phillips, Village South, and Village West. We no longer allow residential students to park in the Manning lot, but they may park at Indoor Tennis across the street. Jeannette Phillips changed to Commuter Red as a result of underutilization and has been successful in getting students closer to the core.

Hal also stated that UM Law students that did not get Commuter Blue are now parking in Red at the Village South lot, another lot that was previously underutilized that now has consistent, full occupancy levels.

- **Oxford University Transit**

Sam headed off the discussion by explaining how the department worked with O.U.T. to adjust Rebel Red and Rebel Blue bus routes to include more bus stops in residential areas. He stated that O.U.T. has a new technology provider for an improved app called Trans Loc. This is the same app that MSU uses, in addition to other universities. Safe Ride has a new Student Advisory Board, and ridership numbers are up from the decline during the pandemic.

Sam went on to discuss Sharkcycle, the student design project from last school year. With the graduate student that led the initiative leaving, the work has mostly ended. He explained that a current senior design project is designing a mobile app focusing on gamification and alternative methods of travel.

Sam went on to summarize observations made from these changes and explained how staffing and hiring are still an issue with O.U.T and that new buses are 6 months to a year behind due to supply chain issues. We are continuing to push JAC and South Lot for Commuter Red permit holders. He added that with Sharkcycle ending, we are looking at e-bike share, such as Bird or Spin, as other possibilities up for consideration.

- **Questions for Summary**

John Lobur asked for clarification on Safe Ride. Sam explained that it is a convenient way for students to get to and from the square and avoid drinking and driving. He added that during Covid times, numbers were less and that numbers have gone up substantially. Safe Ride does not run on football gamedays when there are evening or afternoon games, but regular times include Thursday through Saturday nights from 9 p.m. – bars closing.

Greg Snyder stated that the changes made for this current school year have been great. He added that new grad students seemed confused by Commuter Red and Blue, and he explained that he described Red as outer and Blue as inner. He suggested that just that education of Red being Commuter Value would maybe help. Sam responded that prior to school starting, we put out some FAQs to try to help in that regard.

Sam went further, adding that Commuter Blue students are voicing frustrations regarding Commuter Red parking illegally in Blue lots, but that citations are being written to these violators each day, and that while not liking the idea of booting vehicles constantly on campus, that might be a possible solution in the future for students that are receiving excessive amounts of citations.

Jakob Gammons stated that violators in Commuter Blue lots at the law school are a big issue and mentioned that there's been talk about wanting some Faculty/Staff spaces there converted to Commuter Blue spaces. Sam stated that we are familiar with some of the law school complaints and that Law Students will be on the agenda for the next meeting to go over that proposal.

- **Budget**

Sam briefly summarized budgetary items, stating that coming out of Covid, we have a lot of necessary garage maintenance costs. He added that we will be working with Facilities for preventative maintenance and that we will have to prioritize the necessary preventative maintenance issues. He mentioned this is to prolong the lifespan of the garages, which are 33% of our budget. He added that we are planning for a future garage. Sam went on to discuss technology costs, LPR, and O.U.T. occupying percentages of our budget.

- **Parking & Master Plan with Ian Banner**

Ian began the presentation by asking the committee their opinion on what makes campus memorable to them or to visitors. Sam named the Grove and the Lyceum. Jakob mentioned the flowers. Michelle Jennings mentioned how green the campus is.

Ian pointed out that what no one mentioned was parking lots and went on to state that while they make us feel many things emotionally, especially when full and when we're late, what the University is famous for is the greenness and softness and outdoor spaces.

Ian discussed the construction of the quad from the past near the Library and that we would not want that to be a parking lot and showed past pictures as reference. He explained that as the campus grows, much of the green space, natural systems, and habitat is still very important. He spoke of shaded walkways to provide shade for footpaths that would work for those parking lots that require people to walk 10 minutes in the heat and humidity of summer months.

Ian added that trees were planted on the west side of the Pavilion, once built for pedestrians, because that walk gets extremely hot due to the southern sun. He stated that planting trees and the importance of landscape is something a University will continue to prioritize. Ian then discussed integrated transportation, stating the plan is to make it as easy as we can for people to drive with wide, outer roads, adding the potential for more strategically placed parking garages.

In speaking of the master plan, Ian explained the plan for an inner ring road and a pedestrian priority zone. He mentioned there would be adding of more academic buildings and that some would be removed. He discussed that when Tad Smith Coliseum is removed, the space may be similar to Grove/Circle and that parking may be removed and replaced with areas of shade that could serve as an additional open space/quad location similar to the Grove and pointed out parking structure near Law School (building parking up, stacked using parking garages)

He spoke more of these soft, enjoyable, green areas and protecting our natural resources by converting hardscape to softscape. He added that for parking, we would build on previously developed sites and use stacked parking to minimize our footprint and preserve woodland.

- **Questions**

Paul Caferra brought up the University's fundraising effort and asked if any of that fundraising were available for these parking structures. Sam answered, explaining that we are auxiliary and get all revenue through our own means, so typically that is not the case unless a donor wanted to specifically put their name on a parking garage.

Ian stated that we've done 2 structures so far and that any subsequent structures would come about through conversations with other parties - not just facilities - that would involve meetings and considerations for other construction projects, as well.

Ian added that we hope it is not too long before we see another multilevel parking structure on campus.

- **ParkLenz Parking Guidance System with Kandaswaamy**

Sakthi presented for ParkLenz to the committee as a means to present a "solution," explaining it as an AI-based, real-time parking detection and guidance solution.

Jakob mentioned that students complain they cannot find parking. Sakthi answered, stating that they tell students and staff exactly where they can find parking at a given time, using cameras and AI software to determine space-specific availability information for outdoor spaces.

Sakthi went further, offering that the real-time availability data is presented to users in a mobile app, with which we have had a proven successful pilot. Sakthi pulled up the Auburn demo app and walked the committee through it, showing a list of lots on campus and the percentage of capacity for the lots. He then went to the map view to show all occupancy on campus. As he demonstrated, Sakthi explained the options of clicking on the lot, viewing the lot map, getting driving directions, real-time bus information, and walking directions to bike hubs and bus stops.

Wade Roberts stated he was curious about student workers getting designated to be allowed to park in Faculty/Staff areas because of students being unable to find parking. Sam answered that we have high occupancy rates in Faculty/Staff lots but that this topic has come up before and is probably something we'd have to talk about in the long term.

Sam asked Sakthi how the app was set up to get this data, whether camera or sensor-based. Sakthi stated that they take the video feed from the cameras overlooking parking spaces, and that data goes to the cloud to your phones. Sakthi also stated that during the parking demo for the Kincannon Commuter lot some years back, they were able to use the cameras we currently use.