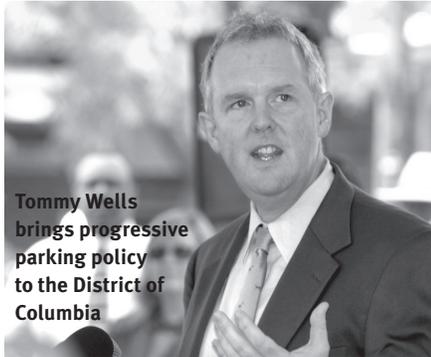


Sensible Transportation

Parking Reform Leadership Found (just not in NYC)



Tommy Wells brings progressive parking policy to the District of Columbia

Not many politicians think like Tommy Wells. Faced with the new Washington Nationals stadium in his district and a growing concern over traffic congestion, the Washington D.C. council member recently won ground-breaking legislation for one of the most advanced parking schemes in the country, known as “performance parking.” Here are his words of wisdom for New York City.

Why did you decide on performance parking as a traffic-reduction tool?

Capitol Hill is a mixed-use neighborhood with commercial corridors surrounded by residential streets. Add to this the opening of a new ballpark not too far away, and we expected a crush of cars to overtake the Hill and lock up valuable storefront parking. The plan we developed has two major components: an enhanced residential permit parking program for the residential streets; and market-based pricing on commercial streets. As the area became more and more successful we needed a plan to get a handle on the ever-escalating parking demand. Leveling the playing field so driving is not presented as cheaper and easier than taking transit, walking or biking to your destination is a necessary step we needed to take.

Who are your biggest allies?

As I started developing the proposal, I immediately engaged advisory neighborhood commissioners, business organizations and other local leaders. I wanted their perspectives and ideas to be rooted in the plan. Sustainable transportation and environmental groups have also been valuable allies. I should note, even those who were friends of performance parking went through periods where they

Read the full interview with Tommy Wells at: transalt.org/tommywells

questioned it. However, I challenged them to continue to engage in the public dialogue and they eventually found themselves back as supporters.

What obstacles have made reform difficult?

The most difficult part of performance parking has been that it has messed with people's routines. Adjusting the rules of public curbside parking throws people off because it is such an integral part of their daily lives. Change frustrates people. Working closely with the public to help them transition to the new system is the trick. We have offered “meter school,” developed special posters for businesses to post in their stores explaining how to navigate the new system, improved signage based on public feedback and created Spanish language instructions.

Why is returning revenue raised at the new meters to the community so important?

The revenue return does indeed help justify increases in the meter rates. However, highlighting the nexus between good parking management and the benefits it affords the community is fundamental. It reminds people that storefront parking, the quality of sidewalks, the availability of street furniture, the grade of bike facilities, the presence of real-time bus information are all related items. If we under-price parking, we not only get curbside inefficiencies, but we also give up a resource for getting the other things that make that street more vibrant and accessible. Parking management becomes a tool for so much more, and the dialogue becomes about access, not just car access.

What advice do you have for New Yorkers trying to move forward a similar program?

We have a fixed inventory of public curbside parking. The question is simply how best to manage it. We already manage it to some degree with rules and rates. Can we manage it better?

The second piece of advice I would offer is to remember that new parking policies should come with a well-thought-out public relations plan. Rapid response to unintended consequences, quick corrections of implementation mistakes and proactive public outreach will make performance parking much more palatable. Put a lot of effort into developing a good performance parking plan, and then put in twice the effort toward first-rate implementation. □

Parking Reform Catches on Nationwide

A new report, “Curb Costs: 3 US Cities Embrace Parking for Congestion Relief,” casts a spotlight on the newest parking policies from San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Chicago that we are working to import to NYC. What's happening in these cities makes New York's parking look positively 1953. To give you an idea:

- San Francisco's \$23 million “SFpark” program will test variable pricing and other advanced parking strategies at 6,435 curbside spots—one quarter of San Francisco's curbside parking. The project also includes variable pricing for the 11,677 off-street spots managed by the city.
- Chicago's privatization plan is the largest curbside parking initiative underway in the U.S. and involves privatizing the operations and management of 35,000 metered curbside parking spots and 1,200 off-street spots under a 50-year contract.
- Washington D.C.'s neighborhood performance parking plan will return 80% of the new revenue generated through variable curbside pricing and return it back to communities in the form of pedestrian, cycling and transit improvements.

From the Earth to the Moon

Every driving trip begins and ends with parking. But the demand for curbside parking in New York City far exceeds the supply. Drivers who find spaces stay longer to make the most of their find. And when all spaces at the curb are occupied, other cars looking for parking circle in traffic for an elusive space, leading to air pollution, illegal parking and traffic congestion.

A new T.A. study, *Driven to Excess*, documents the toll under-priced curbside parking is exacting on a 15-block area of Columbus Avenue, a major commercial corridor on Manhattan's Upper West Side:

- Motorists “cruise” a total of 366,000 miles a year as they search for metered parking in the 15-block survey area on Columbus Ave.: further than a one-way trip to the moon.
- Drivers cruise on average seven blocks to find a metered parking space. During peak periods, before lunch and from 6pm to 8pm, searches rise to an average of 14 blocks.
- Drivers searching for curbside parking in the survey area generate 325 tons of carbon dioxide annually.

In order to eliminate the excess traffic caused by under-priced parking, T.A. is calling for a pilot project that raises meter prices during peak periods and lowers it during off-peak to ensure the availability of one open space per block at all times.

Read both of these reports at: transalt.org/newsroom/reports