

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

January 22, 2019

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date beginning at 3:55 p.m., at City Hall, 80 Broad Street, Council Chamber.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Councilmember Seekings, Chair; Councilmember Wagner, Councilmember Moody, Councilwoman Jackson, and Mayor Tecklenburg **Staff:** Keith Benjamin, Rick Jerue, and Wanda Stepp, Council Secretary **Also Present:** Brett Wood, Chip Limehouse, Councilmember Gregorie, Councilmember White, Councilmember Shahid, Councilmember Waring

The meeting was opened with an invocation provided by Councilwoman Jackson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion of Councilmember Moody, seconded by Councilmember Wagner, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2019 meeting.

Adoption of Charleston Comprehensive Parking Study and Recommendations

Mr. Benjamin thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present. It had been six months in the making and when he was thinking about his remarks, he picked up the parking study from 20 years ago. He reread through it again and looked through its goals and objectives that were laid out which included developing a comprehensive program for safe traffic circulation and parking, that supported Charleston's role as a regional center for cultural and commerce, while retaining its historic and neighborhood character with the goals of adequate capacity, sufficient capacity for movement on and off the Peninsula, sufficient parking supply, safe operation of the street and pedestrian transportation networks, protecting historic and cultural community resources, and protecting the integrity and atmosphere of the neighborhoods. Those goals sounded very similar to their needs now. So, the question became how they would move forward in that regard, knowing that had been the case for two decades. They were grateful for the process, because they wanted to make sure that it was community-driven and they wanted to make sure they combined people's experience on the ground and make recommendations from there. Almost 4,000 citizens, workers, visitors were able to give input and that moved on to Stake Holder meetings, where they had individual groups from health groups, college and universities, faith-based groups, neighborhood councils, sit with them and explain what their needs and problems were. They had a public engagement session where people came in and engaged about what priorities should look like with parking and mobility. They also brought in some experts from Seattle, Columbus, and Charlotte to see what recommendations they could come with and how they had gone through their process. If they could better how people got from Point A to Point B, they were also bettering parking. If they could create better efficiency and user-friendly parking, they would also be doing the same thing for their transportation, which was why this was so pivotal to the larger conversation about access and mobility, both on and off the Peninsula.

Mr. Brett Wood, Kimley-Horn, stated that they didn't often have City Council as engaged in the process as they had been in this study, and that had led to a strong set of recommendations that were community-driven.

Chairman Seekings asked what the geographic area parameters were for the study.

Mr. Wood stated that most of the study was focused on the Peninsula. They had done a few things looking beyond the study area boundaries. They had looked a little further on upper King and had talked about things happening in West Ashley, largely because what would come out of this study, from a management and operations perspective, needed to be adaptable to other parts of the community. So, while the data collection they did was focused on the Peninsula, the outreach was on the Peninsula, they opened the process up to the whole community, because they used the Peninsula for employment, recreation, along with residential use. From the process perspective, they did a lot of up-front data collection, and they liked to consider it two-fold. One, was the reality of parking. They collected parking inventory data, how many spaces they had, how many meters they had, and had it all mapped, which was deliverable for the City. They also collected occupancy data for different parts of the system to understand how parking worked in different districts. They also looked at historic data that the City gave, as well as operational data, citation data, information that defined how the parking system was used. They called that the 'reality of parking'. Just as important, was the perception of parking and how people on the Peninsula viewed parking and how it married up with the reality of what they were seeing. The first third of the process was intended to collect that data, and after that they had an expert panel who talked about how things were implemented in their communities. Since then, they had developed a draft report and would be working on finalizing it as they finished the process.

From the perception side, they had done a community-wide survey, had focused stake-holder meetings, and a community forum, where they allowed people to prioritize the types of investments they would like to see in parking, transportation, and mobility. For the survey, they had almost 3600 responses. The next closest, highest response, was in Seattle, where they had close to 2000. For this survey, they had almost 2000 in the first night it was open, so they had a lot of people in the community that were passionate about parking. They asked questions in the survey about how easy it was to find parking, where they parked, and what preferences would be for future improvements. Based on the survey, almost everyone could find a parking spot within 2-3 blocks of their destination. They asked how long it took people to find that parking and almost 50% of respondents could find parking within five minutes, which indicated that it wasn't a capacity problem, but a problem of communicating where parking was and making it available at the right times of day. Another question they asked was how people got to the Peninsula and the majority of responses were 'drive alone'. That was a problem from a number of different perspectives. The flip side of that question was if people would take alternative transportation if it was available. More than 50% said that if public transit was better and more dependable, they would take that. Some of the other answers were things like taxis, Ubers, and Lyfts. For residents on the Peninsula, cycling and walking scored very high. They looked at parking occupancy for various components of the system. None of the parking was more than about 75% occupied at any given time. There were places where parking was constrained, such as King Street, between Calhoun and Broad. But, if someone went a few blocks in either direction, they could find spaces. They also looked at the data that was collected in October 2018 and wondered if that represented peak parking times, or if there were some seasonal adjustments that would drive the numbers higher. There was little fluctuation in the usage when comparing revenue data, about 8-10% between peak and non-peak. The additional revenue since the change in the parking rate was about four times higher. There wasn't a change in the demand, just additional revenue. When they looked at historic trends for parking, they saw a slight decrease in parking utilization in places like King Street and Broad Street, because people were making decisions to park off-street.

Some of the key take-aways from the existing conditions review included realizing that the solutions from the study had to be about more than parking capacity. It wasn't about building more spaces, but about managing demand, allocating demand, and deferring some of that demand through mobility and transportation improvements. The current parking management system was fragmented. They had more public off-street parking and on-street parking as a system, which the City manages and controls, than any other community they had looked at. The three peer cities they had brought in, none of them managed any off-street parking, so Charleston had an asset of having both. If they were managed in a coordinated way, they could begin to balance the demand and the access onto the Peninsula and throughout the community. So, taking that disjointed management structure, and bringing it under one umbrella would be very important going forward. They also heard from various stakeholders that there were mixed perceptions about how much parking the City had or needed. There were some people that felt there was plenty of parking and there were others in localized areas that felt the City needed more. So, they needed to demystify the management challenges and the perception of parking. There wouldn't be a single solution, but there were priorities that would drive recommendations. It would be a mixture of things they would need to do to get to where they needed to be.

There was a variety of things they had presented to the community and T&T as the guiding policy areas that they would need to look at such as consolidation of parking management, improving transit, considering mobility solutions, improving communication and how people could find parking, using policies and technology to do better data-driven decision making, enhancing how they used their supply, right-sizing the policies and practices so they were consistent with the community vision, and how they could invest the money they made from the parking system. The most important thing would be how they would consider the consolidation of the parking management program. Right now, they had on-street that was under T&T and off-street that was under Real Estate, and the financial aspects of parking were controlled by Finance. Bringing those things together, so that there was one coordinated decision making process and aligning the use of the spaces associated with those systems, would be important. All of the different entities, T&T, City Council, Real Estate, would be key to driving the solution. In the near-term, there were a few things they needed to do almost immediately. One of them was the off-street parking management contract and the re-advertisement of that contract. They would like to see a coordination and consolidation of all of the on-street management functions initially, so that they didn't have enforcement and management under one group, and collections of the revenue of another group. Establishing a Parking Management Taskforce would be important to look at everything together. From that, they had to start thinking about really bringing it all together and having off-street and on-street under one roof, hiring a Director for Parking and creating an organizational chart around that director that had components like technology, off-street and on-street management, and communications. Beyond that, they would look at how they collected the monies and how they spent that money associated with the Parking Enterprise fund, for the bettering of parking and transportation throughout the community.

The next set of recommendations was focused on transit and implementing/improving transit conditions as a means of getting people out of the single-occupant vehicle trips. Part of that would be working on transit off the Peninsula with groups like BCDCOG and Carta, and getting better access to the Peninsula. The secondary thing and what T&T typically had the most control over would be transit on the Peninsula, so investing dollars in improving the smaller scale transit that connected people between neighborhoods and transit stops. They could create a transit app that would allow commuters to make better decisions about how and when to take transit, so integrating payment and routing through Carta, but also integrating mode choice. When they

thought about on the Peninsula, improving service to get into some areas of the Peninsula that bus service could not, creating flexible, micro-transit opportunities, and creating mobility hubs. Improving bike/ped facilities would also help reduce the dependence on single-occupant vehicles. They could use some of the revenue generated from the parking program for bike/ped programs. They could adopt policies such as Vision 0 to reduce fatalities, since pedestrian and bicycle safety seemed to be an important theme. They could think about off-street bike paths that would separate the movement of cyclists and cars. Further down the road, they could think about creating car-free environments and creating street master plans that looked at the different forms of transportation. One of the other strategies was considering mobility as a service. They had seen this take off in the last few years with things like Uber and Lyft. To go with this, they would recommend designating curb space, clustering mobility services, and adopting policies that would govern the implementation of personal mobility and allow it.

Improving wayfinding, branding and messaging could go a long way in helping people understand how to utilize the parking system. A lot of communities were going into the process of creating branded parking signage that occurred at the parking facility. They recommended conducting a full program branding effort. So, as they consolidated parking practices within the City, they could think about how it was branded and communicated to the public. They could take that and develop it into a way finding strategy that helped people find available off-street spaces. As they thought about technology improvements in the system, they could think about ways they could transfer that information to people. They weren't recommending gaudy signs that said how many spaces were available, but rather transmit it through an app. They could take all of that through social and marketing campaigns through social media, print media, and television media. Data-driven policy was also a part of the program, so taking the policies that T&T had implemented with the on-street system and extracting data from that, so that when they made decisions moving forward, it would be done based on data. They had given the City metrics to look at from a data analysis perspective and how to evaluate and extract that data. When they were doing that, it became an ongoing process for the City to pull data from both sides of the system and evaluate how people were reacting to changes in policy and practice. So, the next time they changed rates, it would be done based on demand and they could look at different streets and decide if the prices should go up or down. Seattle had been doing this for about eight years, and they didn't get a lot of pushback on rate changes because it was a transparent process driven by data that the community understood. The other part of that was the data-driven pricing, and they did recommend that the City go to a demand-based pricing system, especially for on-street parking. So, the prices would fluctuate as people adapted to the changes. They had invested a lot of money for on and off street, so from an existing perspective, they should be getting as much as they could out of that investment and think about where they could take it next. Extracting money from the meters they had and getting real-time data, leveraging the new equipment, and exploring the use for mobile add-ons should be something they were focused on. From a proposed technology perspective, they recommended the implementation, in the short-term, of a mobile payment platform. It was a highly customer-service driven improvement that would be relatively low-cost for the City and provided more functionality and flexibility for customers to pay for parking. In the future, they recommended the implementation of license plate recognition for increased and enhance enforcement of parking spaces, primarily outside of the commercial areas where they were trying to manage neighborhood parking. They also recommended enhancing enforcement technology in the near-term to help the on-street parking program better manage parking through the application of citations. In the longer term, they should be thinking about technology driven data collection being able to extract data, and integrating multiple payment options.

Then, they could look at dynamic curb-lane management. The curb lane today was highly structured towards on-street parking, as it should be in commercial and retail areas, but if they could move it towards a dynamic environment where T&C's, pedi-cabs, commercial loading, all had access, the space could be utilized to the fullest ability. For this, they recommended maintaining a curb-lane inventory, defining priorities for different areas of the community, monitoring and changing uses of the curb space, and implementing curb management technology that could communicate how and when policies changed. They could apply that in passenger loading, commercial loading, transit, tourist space, and travel modes. Another area they saw opportunity for enhancement was the residential parking program. They could better manage what they were doing and improve utilization of spaces when those residential needs weren't at their peak. They recommended updating the policies so that they could be more flexible with how they applied residential permit areas, and could think about things such as parking benefit districts. The revenue from parking benefit districts could go back into the neighborhood to improve it. They also recommended the implementation of virtual permitting through LPR to help Law Enforcement know who was legally parked through license plate based enforcement. Right-sizing parking codes and ordinances was meant more towards the application of parking in the development side of the community, so reducing off-street parking requirements, creating things like fee-in-lieu's, expanding opportunities for shared parking, and doing a better job of controlling leased and reserved spaces would be helpful. They recommended concepts called modern mitigation, which look at transportation demand management improvements in lieu of parking, so that developers could pay into the development of other transportation facilities. Finally, they provided some guidance on parking investment, so when they should begin thinking about building parking, how they could prioritize the parking they would build, and what they would do with that revenue. They wanted to highlight that it wasn't a parking capacity issue on the Peninsula, but about allocating demand to the right places. They had done a comparison to other cities of similar sizes that looked at the replacement cost of parking, parking cost per household, and parking spaces per household. Charleston was on the far right side of the table and had more parking per household than some similar communities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Seattle, and more density per acre. The replacement per household was about \$42,000. When they talked about investment strategies, their recommendations were to figure out how to leverage the parking enterprise fund to implement the solutions of the study, as well as mobility and transportation solutions to manage access and parking on the Peninsula. New parking was not likely the most pivotal investment. They had created a score card in the report for them to use when evaluating new parking facilities and whether they met the needs of the community for more than just a space perspective, but also an investment and return on investment perspective.

Councilmember Wagner said that the other cities they had mentioned for comparison were larger and asked how they related. With Philadelphia, they had spent a lot of their money on transit and bus service. Mr. Wood stated that for Seattle, Columbus, and Charlotte, they had brought them in as expert panelists. They were selected less for the size of the community and more for the application of strategies that they had at the top for the process, such as progressive pricing, data-driven policies, and neighborhood parking area improvements. They wanted to focus on communities that had implemented similar strategies to learn how it had worked and what the challenges were. The comparison at the end of the report was data they pulled from a research study that Thinktank had done. The other cities had a lot more transit investment than Charleston would. Seattle was selected because its downtown area was constrained by the Puget Sound on one side and the Interstate on the other, so there was no more space for them to expand to, similarly to how

Charleston could not expand. One of the reasons they weren't keen on building more parking supply was because of that reason.

Councilmember Moody thanked them for the presentation. His thoughts were surrounding a path forward. He knew they had a draft, and they would be asked to adopt it that night. Chairman Seekings said that was the ask from Mr. Benjamin, to adopt it and pass it to Council. Councilmember Moody said that he saw a few people that might have an interest in it and he would wonder what their comments were about it. He was concerned that they were moving this too fast. He liked it, but would like to hear more and his question was whether this was the right path forward. Mr. Benjamin stated they had met with those people many times through the process and had been diligent about making sure that they were wide open to any ideas and concerns. This was the first time they had looked at this in a comprehensive way in a long time, so they didn't want to do the process in a vacuum. They wanted everyone to have their voice heard. They welcomed the engagement during the implementation phase still. Councilmember Moody said that his concern was the management. It looked like they had plenty of capacity, just poorly managed. The next step to him would be developing the management piece. Chairman Seekings stated that they were adopting this as a policy statement of the Council, not as a charge for implementation without going back to the public and talking about the management part. They would be going to the public, to private enterprise, to think about how they would manage it. Mr. Benjamin said it was adoption and recommendation so that they could start the actual work. There were no ordinances attached to it, no standard policy. Some of the things might not work. They weren't taking up everything that other cities had done, but were figuring out what would work for Charleston. The ask today was the adoption of the plan and its recommendations to move forward with what implementation would look like. Councilmember Moody said he understood the policy piece, but his other concern was for places like Avondale and West Ashley. He had not digested all of that, and what worked downtown may not work there. Mr. Benjamin said there were three things that would work for all parts of the City. The first was the conversation about residential parking. They had talked to other cities about how the transfer to online would work. The other piece was in the rate structure. In the study, it gave a data-based analysis of how they could determine rate structure from community to community and what it would look like. That was applicable everywhere. The final piece was regarding garages and the measuring stick of how they could determine if that investment made sense for a community or not. They had asked the question during the study, even though it was mostly downtown, how the recommendations could apply to other parts in the City. Councilmember Moody said that in Avondale, there was no public parking there. Almost everything was private, and asked how they would control that. Mr. Benjamin said that was where the recommendations came in. They were purposeful about creating recommendations that were applicable when other parking needs became attentive. Mr. Wood stated that for Avondale, they wouldn't build a parking garage. They could implement street parking, but also implement shared parking with the private enterprise.

Councilwoman Jackson stated that they had authorized this study, and now they were handing it back to the leadership of the City to determine what they would do first. She didn't think they should belabor the vote. She did think that they should be saying committedly that this was not something they were going to put on the shelf for another twenty years. This was like a launching party. They knew they had a lot of things recommended and they could chip away at it and build something phenomenal. Mayor Tecklenburg wanted to acknowledge Mr. Limehouse being there, because without his support for 526, they wouldn't have that project. He wanted to thank Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Wood on the comprehensive report that they had done. It was a guidepost for specific matters to come back to Council, but it gave them many things to work on. The

technology that was available that other city's used was something he looked forward to. He didn't view the management as being bad, but it was bifurcated by the fact that they managed on-street parking with a different division than off-street parking. They wanted to get everyone on one page and moving in the same direction. Councilmember Moody said he wasn't trying to jab at anyone, but they could do it better than they were.

Councilmember Gregorie stated that when an ordinance was created, it wouldn't be Peninsula-specific, but would be city-wide and would perhaps address some of the concerns of his colleagues. They justified why they would reduce the number of parking spaces for development but asked if they could explain why that would work. Mr. Wood stated that the thought of it being community wide was right, but it should also be context sensitive, so the Peninsula should be different than other areas. For the removal/reduction of parking spaces standpoint, two pieces of evidence drove that decision. When they looked at occupancy data they collected for the private system, it was largely 50-60% utilized. So, they had required parking for developments like hotels that was not being utilized and not being returned to the public system. The spaces just sat there, not utilized. So, if they could build less spaces, it would create more developable land to create amenities. The second piece was that to do that, they had to provide the fee-in-lieu. Mr. Benjamin said they just had the convening on Complete Streets, and the consultants who came to do the training just finished a similar type of training in Richmond, who had launched their BRT. Their current approval process for developments included the developers coming before department heads and had to guarantee a certain amount of seats on the transit system. Councilmember Gregorie stated that the one thing he did not notice was anything regarding the City and number of cars that came to work in the City. He knew they looked at City garage facilities, and talked about incentives for businesses and employers. Mr. Wood said they hadn't specifically called out the City as an individual employer, but they had talked about reinvestment into transit passes and access for City employees and private employees. If they needed to call out the City specifically, they could.

Councilmember Waring commended Mr. Benjamin and Mr. Wood. Their parking revenue, off-street, went up, but in some people's minds, they had become a less friendly City as a result. Many people came onto the Peninsula to entertain and then go back home. They used to be able to find parking spaces after 6 for free, and now people were coming back from dinner and finding tickets on their cars, which was not popular. He wasn't sure how they measured that in a City, but he would bet, if they did a survey for people off the Peninsula, they would come back with people saying it was too much of a hassle to go downtown. That wasn't good news for business owner's downtown. Because of that, many companies like Uber and Lyft were being used by residents now, and he wondered how that would affect parking revenue in the long-term. At town center in Mount Pleasant, they had deck parking that was free, and he was sure there was some sort of combination of parking. He was interested in that kind of method. He had been in Houston that had parking decks for the mall, which was of no charge for the user, as well. Those were some areas that they needed more information for. Mr. Wood stated that survey they did was for areas off the Peninsula and on the Peninsula, and they got some choice responses about the parking rate increase. One of the things they had talked about was incremental policy change. They had talked about extended parking times, so people would still have to pay, but could stay for longer. There were things they could do to improve the process for residents such as providing the residential parking permit process online and using that in conjunction with the benefit district, where they could share that space when it wasn't at peak demand, generate revenue that would be reinvested into that community, as well as accommodate parking for tourists. Over time, the

development community had come in and leased spaces and given spaces in City parking garages, and a lot of times those spaces went unutilized. If they could change that policy, they could create more supply.

Councilmember Shahid stated that they had talked about having a parking director, and they needed to make sure they were moving in that direction. He thought it was a perception problem, and they needed to do a better job at educating. Unloading for cars downtown, in the middle of the street, was a major problem. They had also talked about worship services and parking in the past, and that needed to be discussed as well. Councilmember White said that the concept of lowering the parking requirement for new development was a steep hill to climb. He asked if there was any current funding plan for implementation of the study. Mr. Benjamin said that his responsibility was to bring the study forward and then look for implementation funding. Some of the recommendations wouldn't take money, just reorganization and culture change. Some would have price tag attached such as the technology side. Councilmember White said that he just wanted to remind them that a significant portion of the Enterprise Fund was to transfer out to balance the budget. There was some great things that had come out of this, but if they didn't have a funding source, many of the recommendations wouldn't be able to get implemented. He didn't want them to think they could immediately tap into the Enterprise Fund to do that. Chairman Seekings said that one of the groups in the audience was the private sector, and this would be a private/public partnership going forward.

Councilmember Gregorie said that the document showed ways that they could generate revenue to help with the implementation. If they got into an agreement with Uber and Lyft, they would be taxed by the City. As he read the document, in addition to the Enterprise Fund, it showed areas that, if they did the consolidation and implementation, it would generate some revenue over and above what they received now for parking. Mr. Benjamin stated that there was specific percentage amount that the State demanded that came back to the City through Uber and Lyft. There were a number of T&C's other than Uber and Lyft, as well. For recommendations, there were short-term opportunities and long-term, as well. Councilmember Wagner said he had wanted to recognize the enforcement side of it, as well. Councilmember Griffin said they spent the majority of their time talking about traffic and drainage because they were the two biggest problems. They needed to implement a lot of the recommendations. He would like them to look at what the cost to benefit had been for lengthening the hours of the parking meters and raising the fee. He had a feeling that they had to pay the enforcement officers a lot of overtime. Chairman Seekings said it had raised the revenue by hundreds of thousands of dollars. Chairman Seekings thanked Mr. Wood and his team. They had done a number of nights of community engagement. The study was comprehensive and it wouldn't happen overnight. This gave them a lot to think about.

Mr. Benjamin stated that the part of 526 that SCDOT had been working on, specifically the interchanges and signals along Glenn McConnell and Cantrell, they had been waiting for three years. They would be starting construction on March 1st to improve pedestrian signals, camera activation, and response systems. SCDOT was paying for it, but the City would have to operate them and maintain. The design for 61 at Wappoo at moved forward with the County including extending sidewalk, four-way into crosswalks, and pedestrian signals. They had also sent the scope for Maybank and Riverland, so they were looking forward to that work.

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Wagner, the Committee voted unanimously to adopt the Charleston Comprehensive Parking Study and Recommendations.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker

Council Secretary