Annual Public Hearing

Parking & Transportation Policies, Budget, and Capital Improvements

Wednesday, March 4, 2015

At 12 Noon, David Cowan, Parking & Transportation Advisory Committee Chair, convened the Annual Public Hearing on Parking & Transportation Policies, Budget, and Capital Improvements in room 245 of the Centennial Student Union, Minnesota State University, Mankato. 13 people were in attendance.

1) Cowan read a prepared statement concerning why the annual hearings were required by law and the procedures that would be in place during the hearing.

2) **Volunteers on Parking Panels.** Members of the Parking and Transportation Advisory Committee were acknowledged as well as members of the independent Parking Citation Appeals Board.

3) **Budget Plans.** Cowan then presented the “7 Year Plans – Parking and Transportation Fund” dated March 2, 2015. He reviewed the income and spending plan in place for 2014-15 as well the revenue and spending estimates for 2015-16 through 2021-22. He paid particular attention to the proposed continuation of the 3% annual permit rate in place needed to finance major lot improvements starting in the summer of 2016-17 (e.g., Lot 1 behind the old Gage Towers “footprint”).

4) **Capital Improvements.** Nate Huettl, Planning and Construction Department Project Manager, presented an overview of the repairs and lot improvements planned for the next seven years. It was noted that the Lot 1 proposed improvement is now estimated at $800,000 for that 477 stall parking lot. The three phases of that Lot 1 improvement cash flows and allows for changes should the University decide to use part of that giant lot for other purposes.

5) **Green Transportation Fee.** The proposed increase in the mandatory Green Transportation Fee was reviewed. The equivalent of a 1¢ increase to the existing 90¢ per credit hour (part of the overall Student Activity Fee) would yield $3,139 to the existing $273,200 now budgeted from that source. [The overall bus service budget is $426,517, with $32,000 from Residential Life, $19,000 from the University’s General Fund, and $102,317 from the Parking Fund.] It was noted that ridership over the past two years has more than doubled thanks to the “free” rides allowed City-wide with the presentation of the MavCard ID to a bus driver. (198,616 rides in the eight month Academic Year in 2011-12 to 401,608 for 2013-14.) Parking lot vacancies improved but permit sales fell as a result.

6) **Visitors Paylot Proposed Increase.** University Head Cashiers Jodi Orchard explained the need for the $1 increase in the existing Visitor Paylot rates (from $3 first hour to $4; $2 per hour thereafter). Kate Voight expressed concern that departments which now buy Visitor Paylot passes for their guests and visitors ($2.50 half day; $5.00 full day) may find themselves paying more in a time when budgets are being cut.

7) **Parking Fines Increase Proposed.** Sue Edstrom, Parking Services Coordinator, explained how a fine rate increase would provide an added disincentive to those who think of parking illegally. The rates haven’t been changed for some time (e.g. parking illegally in a Gold stall now costs $30 – the new fine would be $35 with an “early bird” payment of $30). 70% is the collection rate on the 10,000 fines issued each year according to Jodi Orchard, University Head Cashier.
8) **Written Responses Read for Public Record.** Cowan then read the written submissions he had received concerning hearing topics:

- **Gold Permit Drawing – Years of Service Factored In.** Kate Voight – The Spring Gold Permit Drawing would be changed to allow employees with 25 years or more to have an advantage. Of 1,000 Gold Permit Drawing participants around 10% would be affected.
- **Fines and Rate Increases Opposed** – Jerry Thompson
- **Create Gold Permit Stalls on the West End of Lot 16** – Sara Granberg-Rademacker.

9) **Proposals from the Gallery Considered.** The floor was then opened up for comments from those in attendance.

- **Scooter Parking in Bike Racks Advocated** – Bruce Jones asked that consideration be given to allowing scooters under 50 cc and 2 horse power to park in existing bike racks. Sue Edstrom reminded those present of new laws which would prohibit road worthy scooters from being treated as bikes.
- **Lot 23 Status** – Mary Hadley and Ron Fields advocated that Lot 23 be changed to a permit lot, though no rate was recommended. Fairness to other permit holders was cited as an argument and the need to build up funds to cover on-going snow removal and repair costs. It was noted that should Lot 23 become a permit lot there would be those who would have to find other places to park and the nearby neighborhood might become a choice creating a problem for law enforcement. [In 2007 the “free lot” was upgraded from a gravel surface to a 436 stall paved lot with improved lighting. A cost of $230,000 was absorbed at the time by the Parking Fund, which includes revenue from permit holders, parking fines, Visitors Paylot receipts, etc. The outcome of the April 9, 2013, Student Senate Elections referendum on the subject was overwhelming in support of keeping the “free lot” free, though its result was non-binding on an issue that affects all the campus’ constituencies.]
- **Dashboard Permits for Lot 7** – Kate Voight, a Lot 7 Gold permit holder, objected to continued use of Lot 7 by athletes involved in the strength and conditioning program between 7 AM and 9 AM on class days. Those approved end up parking very close to the Vikings Cross-Walk gate going across Stadium Road, notwithstanding signage and emails to park on the south fence-line of Lot 7. Lot 1 was proposed as the alternate space which has plenty of room but adds two blocks of walking for the athletes.
- **Regular Permits Holders Exempt from Paying for Motorcycle Permits.** Ron Fields advocated doing away with the present practice of making a regular permit holder buy a motorcycle permit if the motorcycle is driven to campus (existing motorcycle rate: $54 full value; $27 if other permit is owned). The regular permit should be able to be used on a motorcycle, Fields proposed.

10) **Hearing Adjourned at 1:14 PM.**