

## Neighborhood Parking

Report of the 2000-2001 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury

### SUMMARY

A review of curb markings and parking signs shows a lack of scheduled curb marking maintenance, uneven enforcement of regulations, misuse of curb markings, and a general lack of review of curb marking programs to make them more effective, significantly reducing the number of viable street parking spaces. Many curb zones are no longer needed, oversized, unclear, or not effectively used or enforced. The Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT) needs to improve enforcement programs and efforts to keep the curb marking program up-to-date with the needs of a growing city.

The Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) recognizes and supports the City's "Transit First Policy" and Traffic Calming Program. Such efforts promote smart growth and livable streets for the City of San Francisco. However, through neighborhood surveys, meetings with neighborhood association leaders and discussions with both academic and city planning professionals, we have identified several approaches that can provide more efficient on-street parking while maintaining the Transit First philosophy.

To promote more efficient parking, the CGJ recommends that DPT:

- Establish an ongoing maintenance program by neighborhood to review, update, and repaint curb markings, eliminating those no longer needed. This should be organized similar to the DPW pothole program so that all areas are reviewed and adapted to the needs of the neighborhood. Elements of this program follow below.
- Review bus zones and, where possible, reduce oversized zones. Increase the number of bulb and bar stops in consultation with the Mayor's Office on Disability, and allow parking in zones at times when not needed by buses.
- Evaluate yellow zones and, where possible, convert to early morning deliveries only. Evaluate and eliminate yellow and white zones in areas where commercial establishments have closed or do not require them any longer.
- Establish a proactive, ongoing program to meet with neighborhood merchants associations and residential groups to discuss solutions to parking and traffic concerns specific to individual areas.
- Concentrate enforcement efforts on double-parked commercial vehicles.
- Develop proposed regulations for consideration by the Board of Supervisors that motorcycles park perpendicular to the curb and make it illegal for motorcycles to parallel park.
- Expand the use of marked angled parking (where applicable).

The CGJ further recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

- Consider the Parking and Traffic Commission recommendation to the Board that they in turn recommend to the California State Legislature an amendment to the California Vehicle Code allowing local jurisdictions to set standards to allow parking in driveway areas, but which also considers the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and any health or safety risks.

### INVESTIGATION

Numerous construction operations, such as the Bay Bridge retrofit, the Central Freeway construction and many other new building programs, are adding substantial stress on an already strained traffic and parking situation. The Transit First Policy may provide many long-term solutions to alleviate the traffic and parking situation, but smaller short-term horizon efforts are urgently needed.

The significant increase in parking and traffic problems in San Francisco continues to degrade the quality of life of the resident and visitor. It is difficult to get around town during the extended rush hour, or to find parking in many of our mixed residential and commercial areas.

With a budget in excess of \$54 million, DPT's mission includes raising the quality of life for San Francisco residents and visitors by establishing programs to enhance the movement of people and goods throughout the City. DPT is organized into seven operating groups, including enforcement, parking, traffic engineering and traffic operations. The City's Transit First Policy, combined with the needs to handle increased car, truck and pedestrian traffic and parking in the major business sections of the City, remains the cornerpost of many DPT programs.

The CGJ surveyed ten San Francisco neighborhoods (both residential and mixed commercial/residential; Ingleside, Lakeshore, West Portal, Noe Valley, Mission, Union Street, Stockton Street/Chinatown, North Beach, Marina, Hunters Point) to evaluate what problems might be observed and what improvements might be made to increase availability of parking.

These surveys included curb marking programs, residential permit programs, metered parking, enforcement, and use and traffic flows. In addition, the CGJ conducted interviews with City personnel, neighborhood association members, academic institutions and other professional experts in the fields of municipal parking and traffic. Our findings were consistent among all of the residential/commercial areas surveyed.

The CGJ also reviewed the material available from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute ([www.vtpi.org](http://www.vtpi.org)), which contains a large amount of information regarding possible solutions to transportation problems, and reviewed material from the Harmer E. Davis Transportation Library, Institute of Transportation Studies (at UC Berkeley) and the San Jose Downtown Association. While there are many studies that discuss future planning issues, there appears to be a relative lack of widely available published material regarding how to make existing parking programs more efficient.

The lack of scheduled curb marking maintenance, uneven enforcement of regulations, misuse of curb markings, and a general lack of review of curb marking programs to make them more effective, have significantly reduced the number of viable street parking spaces. Many curbed marked zones are no longer needed, are oversized, are unclear, or are not effectively used or enforced. The CGJ has identified several approaches that, we believe, can effectively add hundreds of needed parking spaces in the City.

For example, around 1996, the Department of Public Works (DPW) altered its approach to routine repair of potholes. Instead of traversing the City to fix the worst potholes, which resulted in a significant amount of time being spent on the road, DPW took a

street/neighborhood approach, whereby potholes were fixed area by area, thus maximizing the amount of time spent fixing holes as opposed to driving around.

As part of this effort, DPW developed a city-wide street database used to track needed pothole repair (for a sample, see Attachment 1). DPW personnel note that the database could be modified for use by DPT to track any needed curb marking maintenance. The DPW model would be useful relative to curb markings. Rather than drive around the City to paint the worst curbs, a neighborhood approach would be more efficient.

DPT should gather its experts and enforcement personnel and have meetings with neighborhood groups. These meetings will determine advisable curb zones for the whole neighborhood. Once these new markings are painted, then presumably only emergency work would be necessary for the next several years, thus creating a more efficient process.

DPT needs to improve its enforcement programs and its efforts to keep the curb marking program up-to-date and more in line with the needs of a growing city.

#### Noe Valley/24<sup>th</sup> Street Project Angled Parking

In our meetings in various neighborhoods, we learned that the Noe Valley Merchants Association requested angled parking on both sides of Castro Street on the 1300 and 1400 blocks, as well as on the 1500 block in front of James Lick School.

The City widened the streets on these blocks to accommodate this change, but then moved the overhead MUNI bus wires from the center of the street over to the side of the street so that buses could reach the curb. MUNI needs to move those wires back to center of the street for buses to run down the center of the street in order to have room for cars to park at an angle.

There was tremendous effort on the part of the Noe Valley Merchants Association to get the angled parking approved, which will result in at least eleven more parking spaces. They had gathered signed petitions from the businesses, as well as residents, to approve angled parking, and collected over 1200 signatures.

They also had a meeting coordinated by a member of the Board of Supervisors, DPT and MUNI to discuss parking and bus routes. The Supervisor told the merchants that the angled parking on the 1300 block would be ok.

MUNI officials also indicated that angled parking was a "done deal" on those blocks. However, after all this, the merchants association has been told that angled parking can't be done, because with the relocation of the overhead MUNI wires, the MUNI buses would not be able to get around the cars if they were parked at an angle.

A simple solution to this situation is to install MUNI bulb bus stops where angled parking is feasible. This would allow for easy access to MUNI and better neighborhood parking, and would allow the bus wires to be moved back.

#### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Finding: Many curb markings are faded and worn to a point where it is unclear if they are still active (see Attachment 2, Photo 1). In addition, yellow and white zones were observed in

front of businesses that seem to have little need for them (see Attachment 2, Photo 2).

Recommendation:

The CGJ recommends that DPT have written procedures for an ongoing maintenance program to review, update and repaint curb markings, eliminating those no longer needed. This should be organized similarly to the DPW pothole program so that all areas are reviewed and adapted to the needs of the neighborhood.

Required Response

Department of Parking and Traffic - 60 Days

2. Finding: Many bus zones are sized for articulated and/or multi-bus use, when only a single bus size stop is required (see Attachment 2, Photo 3). In addition, several observations were made showing that the buses do not pull into spots designated, loading or unloading customers in street lanes. MUNI policy is that buses pull up to the curb where such space is provided. In some cases, this amount of space is no longer required.

Recommendations:

The CGJ recommends that DPT review bus zones and:

Reduce the size of bus zones in order to free up needed parking spaces. Bus zones should be sized for only one bus unless they are terminal stops or service articulated or multi-bus use.

Where possible, and in consultation with the Mayor's Office on Disability, increase the number of bulb and bar stops while reducing the size and number of painted bus zones.

Evaluate the use of bus zones for car parking at the times when bus service has ceased (e.g. night and weekends), such as the #2 Clement and #53 Southern Heights bus routes.

Required Response

Board of Supervisors - 90 Days

Department of Parking and Traffic - 60 Days

Municipal Railway - 60 Days

3. Finding: Yellow and white zones are not being used properly. Many times delivery vehicles do not pull into open yellow zones and double-park while they unload, blocking traffic lanes (see Attachment 3, Photo 4).

Recommendations:

Regarding yellow and white zones, the CGJ recommends that DPT:

Evaluate neighborhood commercial areas to determine which ones can be changed to early morning deliveries only (e.g. 6 a.m. to 12 noon) creating metered car parking from noon on.

Concentrate enforcement effort on double-parked commercial vehicles.

Required Response

Department of Parking and Traffic - 60 Days

4. Finding: In many neighborhoods, angled parking can be accommodated (see Attachment 3, Photo 5).

Recommendation:

Expand and complete angled parking on streets where appropriate. For example, the Noe Valley/24<sup>th</sup> Street Project was partially completed; the angled parking element remains incomplete.

Required Response

Department of Parking and Traffic - 60 Days

5. Finding: Merchants associations have tried to work with DPT and the City to increase parking in their areas. However, not all these attempts have been successful. For example, there was tremendous effort on the part of the Noe Valley Merchants Association to get angled parking approved. However, after all this, the merchants association was told that angled parking could not be done.

Recommendation:

Establish a proactive ongoing program to meet with neighborhood merchants associations and residential groups to discuss parking and traffic concerns specific to individual areas. DPT should coordinate open forums to discuss solutions to commercial and residential parking problems.

Required Response

Department of Parking and Traffic - 60 Days

6. Finding: In residential areas motorcycles sometimes park parallel to curbs, when, if parked perpendicular to curbs, more parking space would be made available.

Recommendation:

Where not already in place, develop regulations for consideration by the Board of Supervisors that motorcycles park perpendicular to the curb and make it illegal for motorcycles to parallel park (see Attachment 3, Photo 6).

Required Response

Department of Parking and Traffic - 60 Days

7. Finding: Neighborhood parking could be alleviated to some extent by allowing partial driveway parking that does not interfere with pedestrian traffic. However, Section 22500(f) of the California Vehicle Code currently does not permit this option.

Recommendation:

Consider the Parking and Traffic Commission recommendation that the Board in turn recommend to the California State Legislature an amendment to the California Vehicle Code to allow local jurisdictions to set standards to allow parking in driveway areas, but which also considers the ADA and any health or safety risks.

Required Response

Board of Supervisors - 90 Days

SAMPLE DATABASE  
FOR STREET POTHOLE MANAGEMENT

ATTACHMENT 2  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF CURB MARKING ISSUES

1. Northpoint and Broderick Streets, faded red zone.
2. Greenwich and Pierce Streets, questionable need for yellow zone.
3. Union Street, oversized red zone.



1 - Northpoint  
& Broderick



2 - Greenwich  
Street &  
Pierce



3 - Union /  
Stockton &  
Columbus

### ATTACHMENT 3 PHOTOGRAPHS OF PARKING ISSUES

4. Stockton Street, truck double parked when open loading zone available.
5. Castro and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets, street widened for angled parking, but never implemented.
6. Toledo and Avila Streets, motorcycle parallel parked.



4 - Stockton Street



5 - Widened at 24<sup>th</sup> & Castro



6 - Toledo & Avila