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DC USA: WRN Proposed Transportation & Parking Management Strategy to Maximize Sales and Access October 12, 2004

Given that the DC USA retail center will have substantially less retail sales space than could be supported by market demand, the conventional customer access strategy of driving and parking should be fully reconsidered. Several other facts point to the need to implement an urban strategy that better builds on the assets of the site location, and avoids its constraints.

Customer access assets:

1. *Transit Access:* Metrorail station at the site, high frequency/high volume bus lines in front of or close to the site (14th and 16th Streets north-south bus routes, cross town bus H routes).
2. *High densities and low car ownership rates:* Households in the high density census tracts, especially within walking distance to the project have extremely low car ownership rates – between 41 – 70 percent own no car (see Table 1). Thus if resources were directed to enabling these households to transport large purchases home through a free or discounted home delivery service or other means, more purchases could be made. Parking at the site is virtually worthless to carless customers. The only way they could use this access investment (parking) is to borrow a car or rent a Zip or Flex car to carry purchases home. Free or discounted home delivery would be a much more attractive option than parking for nearby residents. These households are more likely to make more purchases because they live closer to the site and will have confidence that if they choose to purchase a large number of items or a large-sized item, they will readily have the means to bring it to their home.

The high household densities, and high walk, bicycle and transit access are the site's assets. Car access because of existing and new congestion on the road network limits the utility of parking. Thus adding to vehicle trips through large amounts of subsidized parking is unlikely to maximize the sale potential of the site. Rather adding alternative customer access (e.g. bicycle racks, bus & rail passes) and large purchase transportation choices (e.g. free home delivery & taxi vouchers), reduces private vehicle trips and increases travel choices for customers, many of whom do not own a car.

Proposed customer access strategy that fits the urban environment, site assets and constraints:

Given the site constraints of a congested road network that will make driving access difficult, parking should not be the leading customer access and large parcel transportation investment strategy. The site access assets are the large number of households living within walking and biking distance, the large number of nearby households which do not own a car, and the excellent transit access. Parking will remain one of several customer access and parcel transport strategies, but others are at least as important. Since perhaps half of all customer demand will be generated by households within walking distance, better accommodating their travel needs is likely to increase sales at a very low cost.

Customer Access & Large Parcel Transportation Plan:

1. Bicycle parking: offer secure, front-door bicycle parking, and guarded bicycle parking in the garage. At the P Street Whole Foods, a second bicycle rack was recently added to the entrance to address bicycle parking shortages during peak shopping hours. We suggest selling or allowing customers to borrow bicycle trailers and baskets and other equipment that aid with using bicycles for shopping. Also loaning or selling carts that can be used by pedestrians would aid them in transporting purchases.
2. Offer free or discounted home delivery to all customers.
3. Transit checks: offer roundtrip bus/rail passes to all customers with purchase.
4. Taxi coupons: offer taxi discount coupons for customers who purchase large items or large amounts of goods. Locate a taxi stand close to the exit.
5. House FlexCars and ZipCars in the garage. Offer discounted use to customers for large purchases.
6. Manage parking for priority customers: charge market rate parking in order to reduce overall demand for parking and reserve spaces for those who value them most. Offer parking discounts for customers who purchase large items or large amounts of goods. Far less parking will be demanded with this approach, thus the millions of dollars saved on reduced parking construction and maintenance costs can be used to fund the other customer access programs, and the Transportation Management Plan (TMP). Parking supply should be based on a model that accounts for all these other strategies rather than selecting an arbitrary number of spaces from nationally aggregated studies and arbitrarily reduced parking supply for transit-accessible locations. The cost of a consultant to conduct this analysis will be the equivalent of only one or two (unneeded) parking spaces.

Transportation Management Plan (TMP): A TMP is generally required by governments (Montgomery Co. Maryland and Arlington Co. Virginia, though not in D.C.) to reduce vehicle trips. The key element to the TMP is charging market rate prices for parking so that supply equals demand, and fees recover costs. Since driving customers will attempt to find free parking on nearby residential streets, decisive measures should be implemented to protect residents from spillover parking demand. The

most efficient approach to protecting existing low cost residential parking is to implement multi-space meters that charge visitors to park on residential streets in Residential Parking Permit (RPP) zones while maintaining existing privileges for RPP sticker holders. Multi-space meters are costly (\$6,000 per), and increased enforcement might require more parking enforcement officers. The TMP should commit to fund the upfront costs for new meters and enforcement. Revenues from meters and fines can be used to repay the investment, and fund the public realm initiative and other streetscape enhancements.

Table 1

Census Tract	Boundary Streets	Households with no access to vehicle
28.02	<i>DC USA site:</i> Park, 14 th , 16 th , Harvard	70.4%
37	Harvard, 14 th , 16 th , W St	64.0%
30	Park, 11 th , 14 th , Harvard	50.7%
27.02	Park, 16 th , Rock Creek Park, Harvard	41.6%

Source: 2000 Census – Table DP-4 Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000