



CIRCULATION ELEMENT WHITE PAPER NO. 6

RELATIONSHIP OF PARKING SUPPLY AND TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ALTERNATIVES TO AUTO USE IN THE BUSINESS TRIANGLE

INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that the City's daytime commuter population is slightly greater than the resident population of 34,000 and the daytime population total swells to roughly 300,000 when tourists, shoppers, employees, visitors to professional offices, and local service users are included. Much of this influx of commuters and tourists is focused in or near the Business Triangle area. The focus of this white paper is to explore the issues of parking and traffic circulation in the Business Triangle, including whether there is a possible need for alternative means of transportation.

BACKGROUND

Over the past few years, the City has conducted several circulation and parking studies for the Business Triangle area. These studies include the following:

- A study of the existing one-way street system, which resulted in a decision to maintain the status quo.
- A very recent study of the free parking program, which resulted in a decision to modify the previous two-hour free program.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

Parking

The City currently owns and operates 15 off-street parking facilities serving the Business Triangle, with a capacity of roughly 4,400 spaces. Five of these structures (approximately 400 spaces), located between Little and Big Santa Monica Boulevards, were originally intended to be temporary, however their parking will likely need to be replaced in the area before they can be displaced by improvements on this corridor. Recent parking utilization studies indicate that for both weekday and weekend conditions, the off-street parking peak period is roughly between noon and 3 p.m. At other times, there appears to be an adequate supply of off-street parking. It should be noted that upon completion of the Montage Hotel project, significant additional off-street public parking would be available in the Business Triangle.

In addition to off-street parking, there are currently, about 550 metered on-street parking spaces serving the Business Triangle, as well as spaces in private commercial and office buildings in the area. About 83 percent of the on-street parking spaces are limited to one-hour parking, while the remaining 17 percent are limited to 20 minutes. A relatively small amount of these spaces

are not available for use at certain times since they have also been designated for use as valet spaces. As a result of a recent study of its parking fee policy in the public structures serving the Business Triangle, the City modified the previous two-hour free program to a one-hour free and \$1 per half-hour thereafter. A key issue in the decision to charge a minimal fee was the need to generate additional revenue to allow better maintenance and security in the City's public parking facilities.

It has been suggested that many of the parking spaces available in the private buildings in the area are not used by employees and/or customers during peak hours because their rates are considerably higher than the modestly priced parking available in City parking structures. A comprehensive parking management plan could assess the amount of parking available, its utilization, how pricing structure impacts utilization, and what strategies would maximize use of the existing inventory. Such an analysis could identify any localized or area deficiencies.

Some have suggested "shared parking" as an approach, however, the current mix of uses and the hours of operation do not make this a feasible approach to increase available parking at this time. The unresolved issue is whether or not there is adequate parking to serve the Business Triangle.

Traffic Circulation

The City instituted a one-way street system in the Business Triangle in 1974. This one-way street system, coupled with later Wilshire Boulevard median modifications, has reduced impacts of traffic in the Business Triangle on residential streets to the south and at the same time has reduced vehicular access to the Business Triangle, especially from south of Wilshire. In general, with the one-way street system, internal traffic circulation is good and traffic congestion within the Business Triangle is not a serious issue, although there is anecdotal evidence that there is significant recirculation traffic due to motorists looking for parking spaces during the peak midday period.

Pedestrian Circulation

The City of Beverly Hills actively promotes walking as a viable means of transportation. Recently, upgrades in urban design and pedestrian amenities have been completed in the Business Triangle, including mid-block signalized crosswalks and widened sidewalks with streetscape improvements. The Business District also features some diagonal pedestrian intersection crossings (with an exclusive pedestrian crossing phase) and an ordinance limiting ground floor street frontage of businesses not considered to be pedestrian-friendly. The City's pedestrian facilities include sidewalks, stairs, pedestrian promenades, and paths in the City's parks. These facilities are a critical component of the overall circulation system, as nearly every trip begins and ends on foot, regardless of any other travel modes that may be used. While not all trips utilize pedestrian facilities, they are essential in allowing the safe and orderly movement of pedestrians through the City's public spaces.

Regional Transit Service

The Business Triangle is currently served by Metro Rapid Bus Lines 714 (Beverly Boulevard/Santa Monica Boulevard) and 720 (Wilshire Boulevard), with Line 704 service to be instituted upon completion of the Santa Monica Boulevard Transit Parkway (slated for June 2006). These three lines will serve the Business Triangle via stations/stops at Wilshire Boulevard/Santa Monica Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard/Canon Drive and Wilshire

Boulevard/Beverly Drive. Headways for most Metro Rapid lines are generally three minutes during the peak hours. While this regional bus service is substantial, it is not likely that it will be adequate to best serve the City's long-term interests.

Applicability of Alternative Travel Modes

The possibility of alternative transportation modes such as a shuttle bus system to serve the Business Triangle has been suggested. Given the relatively small area of the Business Triangle and complex circulation patterns caused by the intersecting grid patterns and the one-way street system, it makes sense to look first at the viability of a pedestrian-oriented approach.

To do this, we need to look at pedestrian access to and within the Business Triangle via regional public transit and automobile (using public parking facilities). Figure 1 presents the results of this analysis, wherein 1/8-mile and 1/4-mile walk-mode radii were assumed from regional transit stops and public parking facilities, respectively. As can be seen, there is almost total coverage provided by the regional transit stops, as well as collectively from the 15 public parking facilities.

While this level of analysis is very preliminary, it does seem to suggest that regional transit access, coupled with dispersed public parking facilities, leads to a pedestrian-oriented focus rather than a shuttle system for travel within the Business Triangle.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Based on the tentative analysis presented for the parking and circulation issues discussed herein, coupled with information provided in White Papers 1-5, the following actions are indicated for consideration by the City's decision makers:

- If a Santa Monica Boulevard Corridor improvement program involves a need for the land currently occupied by the Santa Monica 5 public parking structures, develop a plan to replace these approximately 400 public spaces as an integral component of the project. (Figure 1).
- Undertake a comprehensive parking management plan for the Business Triangle to assess the amount of parking available, its utilization, how pricing structure impacts utilization, and what strategies would maximize use of the existing inventory. Identify any localized or area deficiencies.
- Evaluate current "way finding" from a motorist and pedestrian viewpoint, and develop appropriate policies/solutions as warranted.

In conclusion, the nationwide trend favors the development of outdoor, pedestrian-oriented environments such as exists in the Business Triangle. The focus of the General Plan Update should seek to make the Business Triangle even more attractive to residents, commuters and tourists through supportive land uses, regional transit access and adequate parking.



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FIGURE 1
GOLDEN TRIANGLE AND VICINITY PEDESTRIAN
ACCESS FROM PUBLIC PARKING & REGIONAL TRANSIT