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Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2003 5:20 PM
To: Town Council
Subject: parking on campus

Dear Mayor and Town Council members,
In light of the planned upcoming changes in the construction of UNC parking decks, I wanted to share my thoughts with the council about my concern that UNC is not terribly long-range in its plans for accommodating parking on campus.

Attached is a letter (pdf format) to the council members with my thoughts on this. The contents of the letter are repeated below. For a campus that is currently trying a PAY AS YOU GO parking plan, go to Carnegie-Mellon's website:
<http://bizservweb.pc.cc.cmu.edu/parking/Pay+As+You+Park/default.aspx>.

Thank you for your time. My letter follows:

5/23/2003

To: The Chapel Hill Town Council

RE: UNC's new plans for 2 parking decks.

A few weeks ago I came to the presentation in the Town Council Chambers given by the university concerning their revisions to the parking plans for campus. They have replaced one parking deck with two, one of which is on North Campus behind the Paul Green Theater.

I suggested that the university might want to look at these new constructions as the perfect time and place to try a "pay as you go" parking plan, where there could be card readers that would allow the driver the option of "occasional" parking. For example, an employee could pay for 12 days a month, or 5 days a month. Or, an employee could pay for MWF or TTH parking. Or a host of other methods that would not require the purchase of a full-blown valid-every-day parking permit. Unfortunately, I find the University parking planners unable to embrace or to even consider any type of possible creative solution to the parking woes on campus.

The university is guilty of what I call a "no-incentive" program by only offering a one-size-fits-all parking plan. One can only purchase a permit that can be used every day--there is no option for those who might wish to purchase a permit for one or two days a week, or 5 days a month. Then, once the permit is purchased, there is no incentive to use occasional alternative transportation methods. If one has paid for parking every day, then why not drive every day? The parking staff will tell you it's because the employees want a fulltime permit, but since they have never offered a one-, two-, or three-day option, they don't actually know that. And while some forms of part-time parking (such as purchasing 5 days a month) might only be possible by building a card reader and gating a lot or deck, others would be easy to implement now. MWF could have a MWF on the card, TTH could have TTH. No rocket science involved. Such a system might have employees asking themselves how much they really need to drive,

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and opting for a lesser permit. If there were people driving only occasionally, they would open up spaces for others, thus delaying the possible need for even more parking facilities down the road.

Also, I think the pay scale is extremely unfair. Why should an employee making over \$100,000 pay only \$3. or \$4. a month more than an employee making \$25,000? This is especially unfair when the lower-wage workers include many housekeeping employees who have to arrive at work much earlier than public transportation is running. It also does nothing to encourage those at the higher end of the pay scale to consider transportation alternatives.

As long as there is nothing to shake up this daily dependance on cars, we are doomed to continue to try to "fix" the problem of unsafe roads by widening existing roads (whether it is to accomodate cars or bicycles) and building more parking facilities, which in turn brings more traffic and more congestion to the streets, and starts the cycle all over again.

I urge the Town Council in its discussions with the University to encourage them in every way not only to throw answers at how to accommodate more cars, but to REALLY look hard at creative solutions which could result in FEWER cars that need accommodation.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,
Heidi Perry