



ASSOCIATION

January 24, 2011

Seattle City Council
600 4th Avenue, Floor 2
PO Box 34025
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Councilmembers,

We write to express our strong concerns regarding the Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT) plans to increase parking meter rates and extend metered hours in many neighborhoods, including up to \$4.00 an hour in Downtown Seattle, beginning next month.

On-street parking spaces are critical to supporting Seattle's small businesses and neighborhood business districts.

We appreciate the policy direction adopted by the Council last November, which required a data-driven approach in setting meter rates and moved the City away from a revenue-oriented approach. We support your policy objectives, which call for rates to be set in order to ensure parking availability, encourage parking turnover and support the economic vitality of neighborhood business districts.

However, we do not believe that increasing meter rates to \$4.00 per hour Downtown, or \$2.00 per hour in neighborhoods such as Fremont and the University District, is consistent with the policy objectives established by the City Council nor do we believe the proposed increases are supported by SDOT's

study. Further, charging for on-street parking until 8 pm in some neighborhoods will directly impact many restaurants that bring pedestrian-scale vitality to our business districts.

The results of SDOT's study demonstrate that occupancy levels in most Seattle neighborhoods fall below the threshold of 78% established by SDOT for a majority of the day. SDOT has indicated that their recommendation to increase rates is based on the occupancy levels at the point in the day when demand is greatest ("peak period".) Setting all day rates based on the one hour of the day when demand is greatest is the equivalent of the Seattle Seahawks charging Super Bowl ticket prices for regular season games. We believe this approach is fundamentally flawed and will discourage people from parking in neighborhood business districts.

We urge the Council to look closely at the study methodology and the basis for raising rates. The proposed increases in meter rates are not in keeping with the letter or spirit of your policy direction and will have harmful impacts on the viability of small businesses in Seattle. Consider for a moment that under this proposal Seattle would have some of the most expensive on-street parking of any city in the country.

The City's recent experience with the Pacific Place Garage demonstrates what can happen when parking rates are raised in a down economy and are not reflective of actual parking demand. At the Pacific Place Garage, the City implemented double-digit parking rate increases in September of 2008 and again in August of 2009. As parking rates increased, occupancy levels decreased. Empty parking spaces, whether in a garage or on-street, are wasted assets that have negative impacts on business and by extension, the City's tax base.

Therefore, we urge the City to delay implementation of any changes to meter rates and hours until these concerns are addressed and SDOT's study methodology is carefully reviewed. It is critical that the Council ensure the outcomes of this policy direction promote both the availability of spaces and the economic vitality of our City, and that any changes in rates or hours are consistent with the policy direction established by the Council.

Sincerely,

Kate Joncas
Downtown Seattle Association

Leslie Smith
Alliance for Pioneer Square

Tim Gaydos
Belltown Business Association

Tony Fuoco
First Hill Improvement
Association

Jessica Vets
Fremont Chamber of
Commerce

Louise Chernin
Greater Seattle Business
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Greater Seattle Chamber of
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Greater University Chamber
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Garrett Huffman
Master Builders Association

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Eugene Wasserman
North Seattle Industrial
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Pioneer Square Residential
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Seattle Hotel Association

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