Parking problems: On the need for a large-scale integrated management approach

Researcher: Melanie Lambrick
Supervisor: Kevin Drummond
Date: March 18th 2010

Research Aims:

This paper addresses the following research questions: What are the main problems associated with parking policies in North America? How can parking management strategies improve these problems? What is Montreal doing to address its parking problems? Is Montreal’s approach to parking management working? Why or why not?

Key results to date:

The main problems associated with the current state of parking in North America are:

- traffic congestion
- environmental deterioration due to excessive amounts of impermeable paved surfaces that add to urban heat island effects
- poor street environments with little space for lively activity and community
- urban sprawl
- increased dependence on automobiles.

Parking management strategies such as increased pricing and rezoning can improve/mitigate these problems by:

- reducing automobile dependence
- encouraging active and public transportation use
- improving the quality of urban environments
- discouraging further demand for parking.

The City of Montreal has implemented several key strategies that are recommended for any comprehensive parking management plan. These include:

- placing caps on the amount of available parking
- taxing parking spaces with revenue earmarked for mass transit
- raising parking meter rates
- redeveloping current parking spaces for other uses
- improving the accessibility and scope of the entire public transit network
- improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists
- encouraging the design and operation of streets as high-quality public spaces.

Montreal’s approach to parking management includes many of the recommended policies that are (understandably) limited to the municipal scale. Provincial transportation initiatives, such as the Turcot Interchange redevelopment project, which enable increased car volumes in the City, are not aligned with Montreal’s parking management approach. As a result, the positive effects of the City’s initiative are reduced.

These research findings suggest that the scope of parking management programmes, and transportation planning programmes more generally, consider and align multiple policy levels.