

Testimony to the Committee on Public Works concerning Parking Policy

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I'm Jack McKay, one of the six ANC Commissioners for Mount Pleasant. I am not speaking this afternoon for the ANC, which has yet to consider these proposed parking bills, but simply as a resident. I was a participant in the Mayor's Parking Task Force, and as an ANC Commissioner, I spend a lot of time dealing with parking problems. In the high-density neighborhoods of Ward One, parking is a huge problem.

Here I will address three specific parking issues:

- * First, the escalating RPP fees proposed in bill 16-536,
- * Second, the problem of cars "warehoused" on the street, which is not part of any bill; and
- * Third, the increase in minimum parking distance to an intersection proposed in bill 16-383.

The purpose of the escalating RPP fees is apparently to reduce parking congestion by persuading automobile owners to give up their second or third cars. But the parking problem in Ward One is itself a strong deterrent to automobile ownership. Residents complain to me of having to search for blocks to find a spot, and then pay parking tickets when they cannot find legal spots. Already, 43% of the households in Mount Pleasant, and 48% in Ward One, get along without owning even a single car. Of residents who rent their homes, and hence are most likely to depend on curbside parking, 57% own no car.

One must conclude that anyone who owns cars in this part of the city either has off-street parking, or considers his cars a true necessity. The proposed escalating RPP fees will in fact do nothing to reduce car ownership and parking congestion. These higher fees will simply be a burden on people who need a car and have no off-street parking of their own.

Bill 16-536 also calls for increasing RPP fees to even higher levels, "in order to manage demand and reduce parking congestion". It should be evident, given the ownership costs that we already bear, that RPP fees would have to be enormous, hundreds of dollars, before many people are persuaded to give up a car. Because we homeowners with garages will be able to avoid such heavy fees, while low-income people in apartments will not, this is a pernicious proposal, a regressive tax that will hit apartment renters hard while we homeowners with garages may have to pay nothing.

I suggest that this notion of escalating RPP fees be dropped. It won't work.

On the second point, many residents have complained to me about the loss of the 72-hour parking duration limit. Today there is no limit, and cars are "warehoused" on our streets for months on end. We need a policy that directly addresses such abuse of curbside parking space. The 72-hour limit was too short, causing problems for people taking vacations or business trips. But some limit is needed, perhaps four weeks, so that cars don't become permanent, gutter-blocking street fixtures. The parking bills under consideration do not include such a provision, and should.

On my third point, I have already testified in favor of reducing the minimum parking distance to an intersection from the current 40 feet to a more reasonable 25 feet. I have found corresponding regulations for 31 states, and not one requires 40 feet to an intersection. In Virginia, for example, the limit is 20 feet to an intersection. Why should the District demand twice this distance?

Twenty-five feet to an intersection is deemed sufficient for the rest of the United States, and ought to be sufficient here. In our congested inner-city neighborhoods, we need the parking space that will be gained by this more reasonable distance to an intersection, and I and my neighbors would like to see bill 16-383 made law.

This ends my comments, thank you.