



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 11117)

Report Type: Consent Calendar

Meeting Date: 9/14/2020

Council Priority: Transportation and Traffic

Summary Title: Continue Old Palo Alto RPP Pilot Program

Title: Approval of an Extension of the Pilot Phase of the Old Palo Alto Residential Preferential Parking Program for a Period of Twelve Months

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Transportation Department

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council extend the pilot phase of the Old Palo Alto Residential Preferential Parking (RPP) Program for twelve months ending on October 31, 2021.

Executive Summary

The residential preferential parking (RPP) program in the Old Palo Alto neighborhood is approaching the end of its designated “pilot” phase, designed to limit overflow parking to the neighborhood’s residential streets. While the new program has been largely successful by reducing the impact from non-resident parkers, at least anecdotally, staff recommends extending the Old Palo Alto RPP pilot for an additional twelve months to further evaluate the program, as the economic downturn related to COVID-19 has significantly impacted travel patterns. The additional review and evaluation time will also align with other efforts in the Office of Transportation to better define and evaluate parking management measures underway in the City. Staff will return to Council in Fall of 2021 with any recommended modifications.

Background

The City Council established the Old Palo Alto RPP Program as a one-year pilot program in Staff Report 10613 by adoption of [Resolution No. 9862](#) in October 2019. Permit sales for the Old Palo Alto RPP Program pilot began early November with soft enforcement (warnings with no citations) began in November, and full enforcement rolled-out late-November 2019. While

there have been minor issues, including high on-street occupancies (“bunching”) on streets near the program’s original boundaries, and complaints from visitors who desire to park near the California Avenue commercial district or Caltrain Station, residents have generally been supportive of the program implementation.

In March 2020, COVID-19 was detected and found to be transmitting via community spread throughout the region. To limit the potential spread of respiratory viruses and safeguard those at highest risk of COVID-19, the Santa Clara County Public Health Officer joined by the public health officers of all of the other Bay Area counties issued an order calling for residents to stay home and shelter in place except for limited essential activities. Service changes implemented because of the order included temporarily suspending city-wide enforcement of the Residential Permit Parking program. City staff acted to promote community safety and address existing and potential impacts on City services.

Discussion

In January of 2020, staff received RPP program feedback and collected preliminary occupancy data. Old Palo Alto residents provided favorable responses to the RPP program, citing a reduction in neighborhood traffic, improved visibility when driving, seeing a higher number of bicyclists, improved safety for bicyclists, and parking availability in their neighborhood. Staff also received concerns about parking overflow on adjacent blocks as non-resident parkers parking beyond the district and walking to their respective destinations, either their place of employment or the Caltrain Station.

The proposed Council action would establish a twelve-month extension of the Old Palo Alto RPP Program's pilot phase with no changes. Due to the lack of feasible parking data, staff cannot accurately assess the Old Palo Alto RPP program's effectiveness. The pilot extension will allow staff to consider program improvements and suggestions based on a study of the RPP program post-pandemic for a recommendation based on accurate traffic trends and parking demand. At the end of this extension period, staff will recommend a second pilot extension, dissolve the RPP district, or establish the RPP district as an ongoing program.

Policy Implications

The following Comprehensive Plan programs and policies are relevant to the Old Palo Alto RPP Program:

Policy T-5.5 Minimize the need for employees to park in and adjacent to commercial centers, employment districts and schools

Policy T-5.11 Work to protect residential areas from parking impacts of nearby businesses and uses, recognizing that fully addressing some existing intrusions may take time.

Policy B-1.2 Promote Palo Alto's image as a business-friendly community. Assume an active role in fostering businesses, including small start-ups, entrepreneurs, and innovative businesses.

Policy B-1.3 Engage with all stakeholders in the community, including businesses of all sizes, local retailers, the public, and City decision-makers in order to understand the challenges businesses and employers face.

Policy B-2.3 Recognize that employers, businesses and neighborhoods share many values and concerns, including traffic and parking issues and preserving Palo Alto's livability, and need to work together with a priority on neighborhood quality of life.

Policy B-3.3 Develop strategies for promoting businesses and employers that generate revenues that will support a full range of high-quality City services, including retain and attract revenue-generating businesses.

Policy B-4.2 Attract and support small businesses, start-ups, non-profit organizations, and professional services, which are vital to a diverse and innovative economy.

Resource Impact

No additional resource impact is expected during the pilot time extension as the continued operation of this program was included in the Adopted FY 2021 Operating Budget. Staff will continue to monitor the activity of this program and will bring forward any necessary budgetary adjustments as part of the annual budget process.

Timeline

Current parking permits expire on March 31, 2021 and new permits will go on sale at least 20 days in advance of that date.

Environmental Review

This program is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations since it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility the extension of this existing program may have a significant effect on the environment and Section 15301 in that this proposed resolution will have a minor impact on existing facilities.