

Walters, Mark

Agenda Item #58

From: Matt Hollon [matt@glenrose.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 24, 2004 10:48 AM
To: cidg@galindogroup.com; Wynn, Will; Goodman, Jackie; Slusher, Daryl; Thomas, Danny; Alvarez, Raul; Dunkerley, Betty; McCracken, Brewster
Cc: Cynthia.Medlin@sbcglobal.net; Sullivan, Dave; jay_reddy@dell.com; jbnnewton0813@yahoo.com; jmvcortez@hotmail.com; Moore, Matthew; cidg@galindogroup.com; Adams, George; Larsen, Katie; Glasco, Alice; Hersh, Stuart; Riley, Chris; Walters, Mark
Subject: Re: Car Sharing under UNO

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I wanted to strongly support my fellow Commissioner, Mr. Cid Galindo, in his advocacy and advice concerning shared parking for UNO. We will be missing a key opportunity if we move ahead with "business as usual" in this unique case. The City has already chosen to encourage much higher density in this UT campus area, and for many good reasons. We welcome the people, the vitality, and the environmental efficiency that this will bring. But we do not welcome a proportionate share of additional parking spaces, vehicles, and gridlocked traffic. Car sharing programs have clearly demonstrated their ability to provide people with access to vehicles. Fewer vehicles means fewer parking spaces and thus more space and resources for things we care a lot more about. But car sharing programs also result in their participants driving LESS (the extra steps required to get into a vehicle make other options that much more inviting), so that translates to fewer cars on the streets. And, with a denser West Campus, that is a prospect we all would benefit from (less traffic, noise, pollution, frustration, accidents).

Car sharing seems "outside the box" (even though it has been used successfully for some time in other areas). And thus it will take a bit of extra effort to move this forward in Austin. But the time is now to help this work-- BEFORE money, space, and time is spent building unnecessary and wasteful infrastructure on cars. Let's send the message that we welcome the people but have thought through ways to discourage the extra cars. I urge you to embrace this very practical and sensible plan.

Sincerely,

Matt Hollon
 City of Austin Planning Commission

----- Original Message -----

From: Cid Galindo
To: will.wynn@ci.austin.tx.us ; Jackie.Goodman@ci.austin.tx.us ; Daryl.Slusher@ci.austin.tx.us ; Danny.Thomas@ci.austin.tx.us ; Raul.Alvarez@ci.austin.tx.us ; Betty.Dunkerley@ci.austin.tx.us ; brewster.mccracken@ci.austin.tx.us
Cc: Cynthia.Medlin@sbcglobal.net ; sully@jump.net ; jay_reddy@dell.com ; jbnnewton0813@yahoo.com ; jmvcortez@hotmail.com ; matt@glenrose.com ; matt.moore@Newurban.com ; cidg@galindogroup.com ; george.adams@ci.austin.tx.us ; Katie.Larsen@ci.austin.tx.us ; alice.glasco@ci.austin.tx.us ; stuart.hersh@ci.austin.tx.us ; chrisriley@rusklaw.com ; mark.walters@ci.austin.tx.us
Sent: Monday, August 23, 2004 1:03 PM
Subject: Car Sharing under UNO

August 23, 2004

Mayor and Council Members,

I appreciate Council's interest in the Planning Commission's efforts to establish a mechanism to encourage car sharing under UNO. After reviewing the transcripts from your last discussion on the subject, however, I

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am concerned that one of the most important benefits of car sharing was not factored in.

Car sharing impacts affordability not only in terms of the cost of housing, but in terms of the cost of car ownership as well. By spreading the cost of car ownership among the residents of a particular residential project, living in West Campus becomes that much more affordable for those residents. Our focus ought to be on affordable living, not just affordable housing.

This is how it could work: A typical small residential project of 50 residences might have a fleet of 5 vehicles, including 3 economy cars, a pickup truck, and a van. Residents get on-line to reserve a specific vehicle for a specific time, then use a smart-card to access it and operate it (this technology is well-developed and in operation all over Europe and several American cities). Each participant in the program pays an initial deposit and a mileage and/or time based fee for the use of the vehicle. Pricing is higher during peak demand times and lower during off-peak times. This creates the incentive to minimize vehicle trip times and to plan them during off-peak hours, thus reducing pollution and congestion. Residents, however, still enjoy the convenience and flexibility of car ownership, and are not dependent on the fixed routes and schedules of existing bus transit.

I believe staff's concern about potential abuse of the car sharing provision is unfounded. Any residential project that does not offer sufficient parking would be at a significant competitive disadvantage if it did not provide alternative transportation such as car sharing. Any project with only 40% of recommended parking would be practically compelled to offer it. If necessary, an annual fee could be required to cover the cost of periodic inspections and enforcement.

The 20% solution proposed by staff is only practical for residents who never have a need to travel anywhere they can't reach by bicycle or transit, and therefore has a very limited market. I do not believe it would be chosen voluntarily by main stream developers.

Car-sharing offers the opportunity to create a new transportation paradigm for the West Campus Community; and car-sharing under UNO, as recommended by the unanimous vote of the Planning Commission, offers the private sector the opportunity to make it happen without direct public subsidy.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and thank you for your continued interest in this issue,

Cid Galindo
City of Austin Planning Commission
411 Brazos Street, Suite 99
Austin, Texas 78701
512-472-5129

July 27, 2004

Mayor and Council Members,

During your July 29 Council meeting, several proposed changes to the UNO overlay will be presented by staff on second reading. I urge to consider in particular staff's recommendation to remove the incentive for implementation of car sharing programs from the parking requirements section.

Car sharing is an innovative way to achieve meaningful reductions in the cost of housing, without public subsidy. By introducing an alternative to the usual one owner-one car model, car sharing reduces the need for parking spaces while still providing the convenience and flexibility of car ownership at a fraction of the cost. Thus the benefits are two-fold, lower housing costs and lower car ownership costs. Furthermore, this is proposed as an optional program; no developers would be required to implement car sharing. However, developers who believe the market would support this innovative approach to personal transportation in a dense residential environment would have the opportunity to put their capital toward making it work, again without public subsidy.

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The car sharing recommendation was approved unanimously by the Planning Commission. I am disappointed to report, however, that it did not receive the support of all city departments for reasons which I believe were not fully vetted. I urge you to be diligent in probing staff about their reasons for deciding not to support this recommendation of the Planning Commission.

Respectfully,

Cid Galindo
City of Austin Planning Commission
411 Brazos Street, Suite 99
Austin, Texas 78701
512-472-5129