

Bismarck, N. Dak.
**PARKING
SURVEY**
September 1956

PREPARED BY
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BISMARCK PARKING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Study of Parking as it related to the needs of the City of Bismarck

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F O R E W O R D

For many years there has been wide interest and considerable speculation - but few concrete facts about our parking problem in Bismarck. What parking is now being provided - what parking can reasonably be provided? Will the lack of parking in our downtown business district cause people to shop at other trading areas? What can be done to resolve this matter?

To businessmen, labor, and to the public at large - these questions are of challenging importance to the entire community since our economy is closely geared to the automobile.

The work of this citizens committee is published to bring out the facts and data so that this community can better resolve its parking problem accordingly.

March 13, 1956

Members of Parking Advisory Committee
Bismarck, North Dakota

Gentlemen:

As you know, you have been appointed by the Board of City Commissioners to act in an advisory capacity to make study and to make recommendations regarding a parking program in Bismarck.

The Board of City Commissioners feels that parking will be of great economic importance to our city affecting not only business institutions and their employees, but the entire community. It is estimated that a 40% increase in motor vehicles will occur by 1965. It is possible that street parking may have to be curtailed to accommodate traffic. The economic impact of the automobile has not only been tremendous in the past, but promises even greater changes in the foreseeable future.

Since the Board of City Commissioners is aware of the importance of this matter and before any further steps are taken in the direction of providing more off-street parking, it would like the advice and consultation of a number of our citizens. You, therefore, have been appointed in this capacity.

Factors that may be considered by the committee are as follows:

- (1) Inventory and analysis of present parking facilities
- (2) Private versus public parking facilities
- (3) Economic impact of parking upon the community
- (4) Traffic
- (5) Financing of public parking lots
- (6) Free versus pay parking lots
- (7) Employee parking - customer parking
- (8) Property acquisition
- (9) Other pertinent factors and consideration

Conclusions and recommendations.

A copy of excerpt of book published by the Urban Land Institute is enclosed herewith for your consideration.

All City Departments have been required to give your committee full cooperation and I'm sure that they will be glad to supply information and help that you will need.

Knowing the caliber of persons on this committee, I'm most confident that you will do a fine job in this behalf.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Evan E. Lips
Evan E. Lips, President
Board of City Commissioners

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Bismarck similarly to many other cities has been increasing in population and size at a more accelerated rate since the end of World War II. Motor vehicle registrations and use have increased sharply. This has caused more demand for better highways and parking facilities. It is a paradox that the parking facilities in our downtown districts do not proportionately increase with the demand for parking, but tend to become curtailed or restricted. The parking of automobiles is a major factor of urban transportation and without parking facilities travel would be pointless, and the present day heavy dependence on motor vehicle transportation creates problems which make the seeking of remedial action imperative.

The compelling force behind the parking problem is the trend away from public transportation to the private car. What makes the parking problem complex is that people come downtown for many reasons: there is the "drop-in" parker, who makes a bank deposit, makes a phone call, or buys a tube of toothpaste; - there is the shopper parker, who desires to shop in several stores averaging between one and two hours; - and there is the all day parker. To care for these varied groups, five methods have been used:

- (1) Municipal ownership
- (2) Special authorities - those created by the city empowered to issue bonds
- (3) Corporations composed of downtown merchants with a stake in adequate parking
- (4) Parking garages built by individual department stores
- (5) Commercially operated garages or parking lots

The first step taken by most cities in providing adequate parking was to set up meters at the curb. This privilege has been denied by the people of North Dakota to their cities. However, in most states the parking meter has come a long way - its first purpose to encourage a turnover in parkers has changed so that many cities are now financing parking lots and parking garages from the revenues of parking meters.

The fact that parking meters are banned in North Dakota makes it difficult to finance parking lots on a revenue basis by the charging of parking fees while still offering the most desirable parking free at the curb.

Nevertheless, we still have the parking problem and must find, with the means at hand, the solution of our problem.

1. PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Automobiles have increased in Burleigh County and in Bismarck by 157% in the past ten years. It has not only been the increase in population but the increase of automobiles per capita that has brought about a great change in not only transportation but shopping habits, merchandizing operations, and a definite re-ordering of downtown functions.

Registration of motor vehicles in Burleigh County are shown as follows:

1937	- - - - -	6,112
1938	- - - - -	5,994
1939	- - - - -	6,434
1940	- - - - -	6,574
1941	- - - - -	6,994
1942	- - - - -	6,289
1943	- - - - -	5,664
1944	- - - - -	5,366
1945	- - - - -	5,460
1946	- - - - -	6,531
1947	- - - - -	7,704
1948	- - - - -	10,431
1949	- - - - -	9,966
1950	- - - - -	10,959
1951	- - - - -	11,184
1952	- - - - -	11,595
1953	- - - - -	12,734
1954	- - - - -	13,357
1955	- - - - -	14,040

The increase in motor vehicles is indicative of the growing parking problem and shows a relationship with parking needs in Bismarck. The off-street parking requirements of the Bismarck Zoning Ordinance give an excellent criteria for determination of parking needs. The Zoning Ordinance established one space for each 200 square feet of ground floor area in the CA or CB Commercial Districts, plus one space for each 400 square feet in a basement or above the ground floor. This standard as well as other standards in this ordinance were set up after studying the Highway Research Board Bulletin No. 24 "Requirements for Off-Street Automobile Parking Facilities in the Zoning and Other Local Ordinances." The Highway Research Board is a branch of the National Research Council.

The criteria used in the Bismarck Zoning Ordinance as compared to the Community Builders Handbook prepared by the Community Builders Council of the Urban Land Institute establishes a ratio of three square feet of parking space to one square foot of gross building area for shopping centers as compared to a one to one ratio in the Bismarck Ordinance. The Urban Land Institute is the research organization of the National Association of Real Estate Boards.

In applying parking requirements to the downtown business district, a figure of 60% of requirements has been used to be conservative in arriving at the net parking need. In applying this computation the following is the result:

Total parking spaces needed on basis of 60% of parking requirements		3,780 spaces
Less:		
Curb spaces now provided	1,420	
Off-street spaces provided (private)	464	
Parking lots	1,263	<u>3,147</u>
Present parking deficiency		633

It is predicted that a 40% increase in motor vehicles will be accomplished by 1965. A present production rate of 8,000,000 motor vehicles last year is being maintained and even with a drop to 6,900,000 motor vehicles this year, it is predicted that a production rate of 10,000,000 motor vehicles a year will be accomplished by 1961. In making application of these statistics to the local situation, a need of expanded off-street parking facilities is quite apparent.

The statistical chart entitled "Families and Motor Vehicle Registration, Burleigh County, 1930-1955" shows very graphically the increase of motor vehicles and is indicative of the increase in demand for parking facilities.

Future Parking Requirements: With the growth of Bismarck in the next ten years there will undoubtedly be an increase in the demand for parking facilities in the central business district.

Population statistics for Bismarck (federal census and city assessor's estimates) show the following trend:

1930	11,090
1940	15,496
1950	18,650
1955	23,300 (assessor's estimate)

While population is on the increase, family size has increased, and there has been some increase and broadening of economic activity, there is no reason to presume that Bismarck's population will undergo a great increase unless the following changes occur:

- (1) Industrial Development - this is an unknown quantity. Discovery of oil in North Dakota led to an immediate influx of population estimated to be at more than 12,000 persons in 1954.

Bismarck, as the headquarters for the oil search, received many new residents and the establishment of the refinery at Mandan has brought in additional people to Bismarck. Discovery of new oil fields on the east side of the Williston Basin would almost certainly bring a sudden influx of population. Establishment of new processing plants for crude oil and gas would have a like effect. However, it is impossible to predict such developments and it is therefore impractical to plan municipal parking facilities to satisfy need which might or might not come as a result of them.

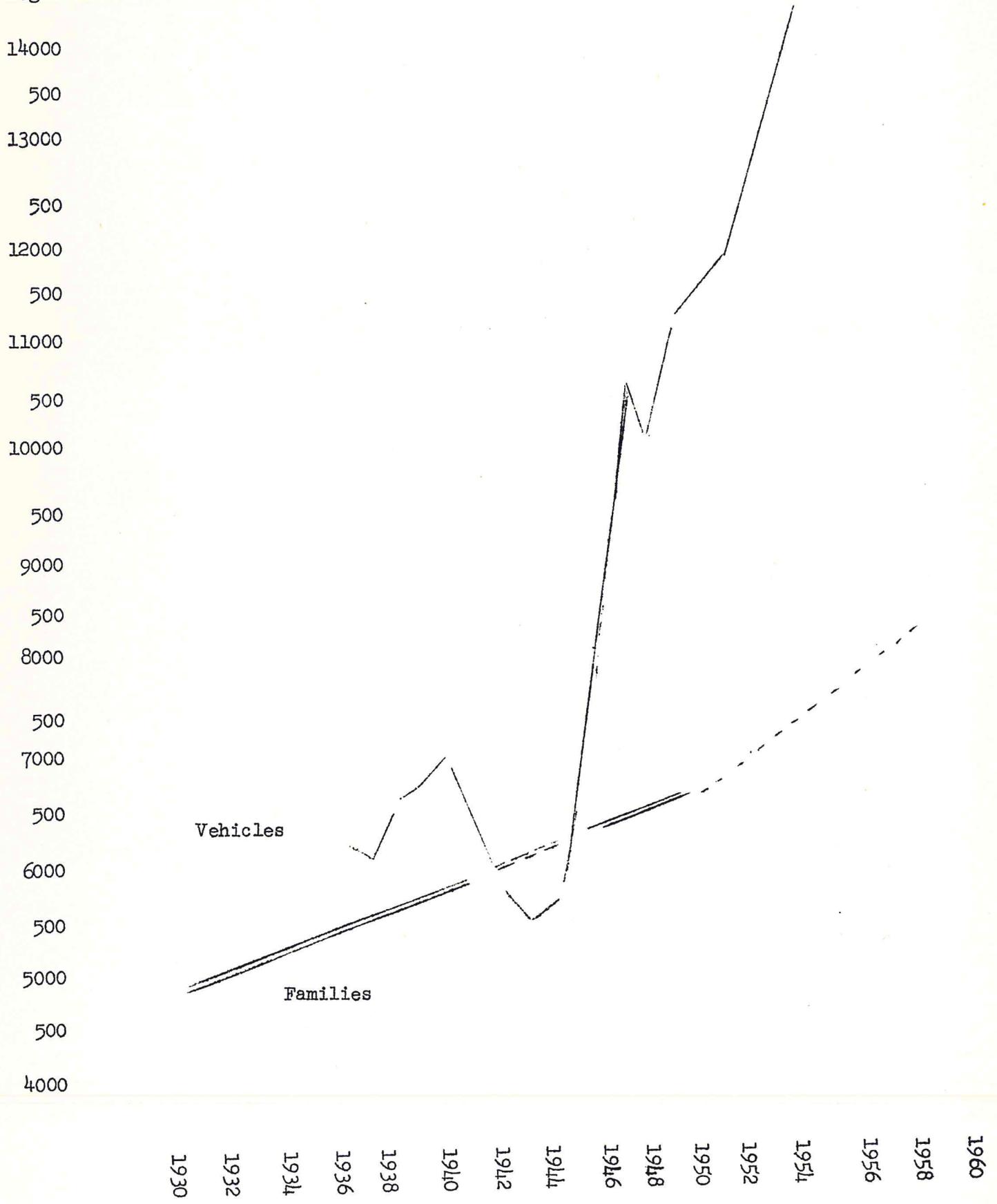
The number of persons employed at Garrison Dam, which was an important Bismarck business factor, has declined from a high of nearly 3,000 to approximately 1,500. Conversely, the greater utilization of trucks for commodity distribution is adding to Bismarck's importance as a distribution center, thus adding new population.

Lignite - which almost surrounds Bismarck, is described as North Dakota's richest unexploited natural resource. Eventually, lignite may be put to extensive commercial uses, leading to the establishment of new industry. Uranium mining and processing from lignite ore is still in the research stage.

- (2) Irrigation - may lead to an extensive agricultural development and possibly to processing plants for farm products, such as sugar beets. Intensive agriculture will require significant increase in labor forces devoted to agriculture with increase to the municipalities that serve irrigated areas for goods and services.

Families and Motor Vehicle Registration
 Burleigh County
 1930 - - 1955

Families and Vehicles
 Registrations



Another factor in forecasting parking needs in the trend toward the "two car family", which will have to be taken into account in this behalf.

Based upon known factors and review of the potential of population, industrial development, and other factors, a possible increase in parking demand can be anticipated of 1,000 to 2,000 car spaces in the next ten years.

II. PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE PARKING

It is generally true throughout the United States that cities have entered the parking business much against their will. Prior to World War II the downtown parking lots and private garages pretty well satisfied the parking demand.

However, the number of automobiles on our streets and highways have increased tremendously since 1946 creating a high demand for parking. Two factors have changed the private parking situation - parking lots would be established on vacant land, function a few year, and then be sold as a building site. This resulted in few parking spaces and a greater demand for parking. The second factor has been that downtown property has risen in value as cities became larger - in many cases downtown property values raised so high that private operators struggled with great difficulty in competing for land. The private owner who wants to construct a parking facility found it almost impossible to assemble sufficient land at one location - he found it necessary in most instances to deal with many different owners. If any one of the owners became unreasonable, the entire project failed to materialize.

The City, however, by exercising the right of eminent domain, could condemn the land, the land needed for parking and could, therefore, assemble sufficient land at a suitable location. In many cases, the municipally owned facility is leased to private operators, who pay a rental fee. Therefore, private enterprise still carries the ball in the parking business.

III. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PARKING UPON A COMMUNITY.

It is generally recognized today that the most serious threat to the downtown business district is the rapid rise of the outlying shopping center which provides adequate off-street parking. There can be little doubt that the number one attraction of the shopping center is that it provides plenty of customer parking. It would seem that the only way that the threat of the shopping center can be minimized is by the central business district providing some type of comparable parking facilities.

As to individual business, banks, grocery stores, and even department stores have found that adequate parking was essential to maintain and to increase their volumes of business. While this has not exaggerated in Bismarck it is quite true in cities of 25,000 persons or larger throughout the United States.

IV. TRAFFIC

The impact of transportation - the growth on the fringe areas and the trend of people to live farther from the hub of their community has been powerfully influenced by transportation. In our own community the extension of the bus transit service has enabled families to live further from their employment - in the trade territory, the bus, train service had other forms of public transportation have been historically an important factor in broadening the economic market of this community.

However, the really decisive impetus came with the automobile - farmers and others living beyond the city limits found that distance was no longer a serious drawback in by-passing the small village and coming to a larger shopping area. Likewise,

the automobile has changed the shopping habits of people living within the community, who are by-passing public transportation, and driving their own automobiles to work and to shop. Incidentally, 70% of the nations's families are now motorized - it is estimated to be 90% in North Dakota.

This has created a greater demand for parking and considerably increased traffic in the central business district.

With the increased flow of traffic today it is extremely important that all means possible be used to utilize streets to the fullest amount to move traffic easily and efficiently. Traffic control should be directed solely toward the orderly and efficient movement of motor vehicles. Many communities have placed restrictions upon delivery trucks during peak periods to ease the facilitate the movement of traffic.

The Traffic-SubCommittee has reviewed curb parking regulations, truck parking on street, truck deliveries in the central business area, and the matter of loading dock situation in which trucks using these facilities obstruct the flow of traffic, study has also been made in enforcement of parking regulations in the central business area.

V. FINANCE

Review of Presnt Financing:

Bismarck has acquired the following public parking lots in the past three years:

Parking District No. 1

- A. Lot north of Fleck Motor Sales
- B. Lot west of Capital Laundry
- C. Portion of lot behind the World War Memorial Building
plus paving of entire lot \$48,000.00

Parking District No. 2

- Lot at Sixth Street and Broadway Avenue 4,000.00

Parking District No. 3

- Northeast corner of block between Fifth Street and
Sixth Street on Front Avenue 20,132.00

Parking District No. 4

- On Third Street (former Oscar H. Will Company property
175' X 140') 131,300.00

Total public investment in parking lots \$203,432.00

To date these lots have been financed by creating a special assessment district, issuing of bonds to pay the cost of such improvement and the levying of special assessments against the properties within the districts that specially benefit from the improvement.

Parking Lot District No. 2 was assessed against the benefited property and spread over a period of two years to finance the lease payments and the necessary improvements,

however, the City entered into a sub-lease agreement with Mr. Marshall Sandison and the income from this sub-lease was sufficient so that certification and collection of the second installment was not necessary to retire the outstanding warrants.

The amount levied against the benefited property in Parking District No. 1 was spread over a period of five years in equal annual installments.

Parking District No. 3 and Parking District No. 4 are now in the process of being assessed against the benefited property. It is recognized in Bismarck that parking lots cannot at this time pay for themselves from the cost of operation out of revenues so it is proposed that the assessment be spread over a period of 20 years in hope that sufficient income will accrue so that it will not be necessary to certify and collect all installments.

To date the special assessments have been made against the central business district (residential areas are not assessed for business parking lots) and are based on the requirements of the off-street parking section of the Bismarck Zoning Ordinance. Bismarck adopted an entirely new zoning ordinance in 1953 which required off-street parking with the construction of all new buildings. Shortly thereafter an amendment to the zoning ordinance was adopted excluding the central business area from the provisions of the off-street parking requirements of the zoning ordinance since it was realized that in a built-up area such as the core of the city compliance with off-street parking requirements would be both unreasonable and confiscatory. Therefore, only the portion of the central business area where off-street parking requirements do not apply are assessed for the cost of acquiring and improving parking lots.

The off-street requirements of the Bismarck Zoning Ordinance have been adhered to for all new construction in all areas, both business and residential, outside of the central business district. In levying the special assessments for the present parking lots the Special Assessment Commission determined that the most fair and equitable method of determining the amount of benefits would be to use the requirements of the off-street parking of the Bismarck Zoning Ordinance. The entire assessment district was surveyed and land use map developed. The off-street parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance were then applied to each parcel of land. This resulted in a certain number of required units per tract. Each tract or business that provided parking for its customers or personnel was credited for the actual amount provided. The net resulting unit requirements (a total of approximately 5,300) were then divided into the total amount to be assessed over the district to arrive at a unit cost. The vacant lots in the downtown area were assessed nothing under this method although there is a potential future benefit to even this property.

This method of assessment has its faults because of the constant change in land use, however, we feel it is more equitable than the normal means of determining the amount benefited such as square foot, front footage, proximity, etc.

OTHER METHODS OF FINANCE

1. Privately Owned Parking Lots

Private enterprise has been encouraged and in many cities has been very successfully in operating parking lots. It is doubtful because of its size and the fact that parking meters on public streets are unlawful under North Dakota law, that private business would invest in this type of venture in Bismarck.

2. Publicly Owned Parking Lot Utility - Financed by Revenue Bonds

The City has the power to create a separate parking lot utility such as

the waterworks Department to acquire, improve, and maintain parking lots. Historically, publicly owned utilities are financed principally by indebtedness and it would be questionable for the same reason as pointed out in privately financed parking lots if a program of revenue could be worked out that would attract loan money.

3. Publicly Owned Parking Lot - Financed by General Obligation Bonds

Ad valorem taxes may be used as a method of financing parking lots. When capital funds are needed, bonds are issued on the basis that all property in the municipality will be taxed ad valorem for their payments; the improvement considered to be of general benefit to all property and the tax paid by the property owner is his proportionate share of the cost of the improvement without regard to any service, utility feature, or special benefit. The issuance of general obligation bonds by the City of Bismarck is subject to state limitations and the amount of general obligations bonds that may be financed is limited by reference to the assessed values of taxable property.

4. Publicly Owned Parking Lot - Financed by Special Assessment Bonds
This is the present method of financing.

Special assessment bonds are used to finance the lots now owned by the City. An explanation of financing by special assessment bonds and how the benefits are determined was made at the beginning of this chapter. Special assessment bonds are issued when certain properties are the recipients of special benefits not accruing to other property. Since only those specially benefited are required to pay. This is considered a fair method of allocating costs.

5. Publicly Owned Parking Lot - Financed by Combination of Special Assessment Bonds and General Obligation Bonds

This method has been used by some cities. North Dakota law allows a maximum assumption of 20% ad valorem tax on such a combination.

VI. FREE vs PAY PARKING LOTS

The Parking Advisory Committee as statement of policy has taken the position that pay parking in Bismarck is to be recommended. The rate of charge to be commensurate with the location of the lot and such that will be reasonable to allow fullest utilization of available parking facilities.

It may be a number of years before revenue from parking lots will pay the debt amortization and interest as well as cost of operation. In the meantime, it will be necessary to "subsidize" the parking facilities via the special assessment method to the benefited areas of the central business district.

VII. EMPLOYEE PARKING - CUSTOMER PARKING

The City of Bismarck has acquired several lots in the fringe of its central business district - this has been an alternative to securing high-cost land for off-street facilities. These lots should be able to reduce traffic congestion, since they tend to siphon off cars from which workers and some shoppers would drive into the central area. This releases curb and off-street spaces for short-time parkers like the shopper. The parking lots on the "fringe" are an essential feature of the parking program if we are to keep the motor vehicles of downtown employees off of the streets - it is not enough to preclude curb spaces, but it is necessary to find a parking spot for the employee to park his car.

The parking lots now in existence and those in the planning stage immediately adjacent to the central core of the business district will provide space for customer parking.

VIII. PROPERTY ACQUISITION

With the acquisition of the following sites accomplished:

- (1) Lot at Third Street and Front Avenue- 48 car spaces
 - (2) Lot at First Street and Thayer Avenue- 54 car spaces
 - (3) Lot at rear of World War Memorial Bldg. 88 car spaces
 - (4) Lot at Third Street and Rosser Avenue- 88 car spaces
- and with the proposed acquisition of:
- (5) Lot at Sixth Street and Broadway Avenue 63 car spaces
 - (6) Lot at Fifth Street-Sixth Street south of Front Avenue 321 (one block) or 150 (half block) car spaces
 - (7) Leasehold interest - N. P. Parking Lot 73 car spaces

should go a long way in supplementing and augmenting parking needs in Bismarck at this time.

However, in looking to future needs on the basis of a ten (10) year program - additional parking lots will be needed on the fringe areas and may be acquired as the necessity requires. The lots already acquired adjacent to the central business area may be "ramped" as the need materializes and the demand for parking increases to make this a practicality.

A definite limitation faces our City regarding its ability to finance parking lots. Therefore, this Committee is hesitant to recommend acquisition of more land than is actually needed at this time. This, of course, is fully covered in the finance section of this report.

Education:

One of the most neglected and under-rated phases of promotion of off-street parking has been the lack of public education in this respect. Merchants, for instance, in many cases are unaware of the economic impact that adequate parking makes on their business. The same is true of the employee whose economic sustenance depends upon the success of his employer in the conduct of his business.

We cannot forget the shopper in any education program - but the shopper may forget the merchant or merchants, whose business is so located as to be difficult to reach because of inadequate and poor parking facilities available.

The success of any public program is dependent upon understanding of the businessman, the employee, and the shopper. The follow-through of the work of the Parking Advisory Committee must and should be dedicated to the education of the public to insure the success of the program and the operation of a workable off-street parking program.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

(1) Property Acquisition:

- (a) Acquire Sixth Street and Broadway Avenue property. (140' x 125')
- (b) Acquire leasehold interest in Northern Pacific plaza (73' x 300')
- (c) Acquire entire block between Front - Sweet; Fifth-Sixth Streets if possible. (300' x 300'). Otherwise, acquire North ½ of block (300' x 140').

- (2) Finance - use the special assessment method as the only present satisfactory means of acquiring and financing parking lots. Consider incorporating a proximity factor in determining the assessments and benefits when lots are acquired that benefit a local area

and not the downtown business district as a whole. Recommend that North Dakota cities make strenuous effort to allow use of parking meters so that this revenue can be dedicated at least in major part to the financing of off-street parking lots.

(3) Traffic

(a) A re-study be made of use of "Denver scramble" system - it is the conclusion of Traffic Sub-Committee that this system has not substantially alleviated the traffic control problem.

It is recommended that present system be modified to control traffic similar to regular stop light control, but with no right or left turns permitted.

Synchronization of traffic signals also should be considered:

(b) Better enforcement of parking regulations be made in the central business district. Recommend that two additional policemen be added for traffic and parking control.

(c) Recommend that the City of Bismarck request cooperation of transit firms and other to restrict deliveries in the central business district using streets to load and unload during peak periods. Peak periods suggested : 11:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. and 4:30 P.M. to 5:30 P.M.

(4) Education - use all means available to educate the public on the parking program.

(5) Public vs. Free Parking - Recommend that reasonable charges be made for off-street parking commensurate with the location of the lot to the central business area. Lots dedicated for employee parking made nominal charges to encourage employees to use these facilities.

(6) Private versus public parking - since municipality has the means and authority to acquire parking lots, we believe that so far as private entrepreneurs are not able to provide necessary parking to meet the public need this should be done by the City of Bismarck. Operation of such acquired parking facilities should be done so far as economically practical by private operators by means of bidding or other lawful means in the public interest.