



PARKING IN ANN ARBOR

Introduction

Parking isn't a sexy subject, but it is a constant source of frustration. If you work or shop near downtown or campus, you plan your trip around parking (take the bus? take a bike? walk? take the car? do you have change? can you use one of the new kiosks or should you park in a structure?) Perhaps you avoid downtown because parking is a hassle and you can shop elsewhere and park for free — parking is part of your decision.

Parking is also an issue for members of Council, the Planning Commission, the City staff, and sometimes even the Parks Advisory Commission. A proposed project should include parking — but how much? Should the City allow a developer to pay into a fund instead of providing parking? How much should the City charge for parking, and who should collect the money? How much should the City fine people who park too long, or illegally? Who should write parking tickets and where should that money go?

Many of these issues affect you, even if you never shop downtown. Income from tickets currently goes to the City's General Fund. Income from parking fees currently is collected by the DDA under a contract with the City — which is up for reconsideration. Newly approved residential developments, like Zaragon 2 (at William and Thompson) never planned to provide enough parking for all their tenants, relying on public parking (such as the new Library Lot underground parking structure) to provide for overflow. Increasing downtown residential housing may, in the short term, increase demand for parking downtown and may, in a longer term, increase the demand for local mass transit. This will also add to the demands on public funding.

It isn't all about downtown, of course. If you commute to Detroit or cities east or west of Ann Arbor along I-94, you might be hoping for commuter rail. If you commute north toward Howell, you might be looking forward to WALLY, the Washtenaw / Livingston commuter rail project. Or you might want better bus service within Ann Arbor itself, so you could go to the doctor, the library, the grocery — without taking 3 hours for each trip. Alternative transportation matters, especially for younger workers and an aging population.

WHO TOOK THIS SURVEY?

Residents and organizations that received the survey

Before I created the survey, I wrote a background paper on parking. I sent this paper with a link to the survey to about 200 individual and neighborhood organization e-mail addresses. Included in the survey universe were residents of the First Ward, of course, but also the Director of the DDA (Susan Pollay), and the

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heads of the Main Street Area Association, State Street Area Association, and South University Area Association. I included these last four because the survey included questions about downtown parking and the DDA and because the First Ward includes all of these business districts.

Responses

I received a total of 56 responses. Although I don't really know how many people read the background paper on parking; I estimate about 25% of those who received the background paper took the survey.

If you didn't read that background paper, I've posted it on my website (www.sabrabriere.org/mywords.php). I've attached the survey instrument to the end of this paper.

SURVEY RESULTS

I'm have not filled this paper with a ton of graphs. I hope that keeps the report readable. If you would like to receive the raw data or a set of the graphs, please ask.

35 respondents indicated that they cared a lot about parking; 20 said that they cared some. One left a comment that "(I) couldn't answer question #6 because I think it's a huge conflict of interest that the mayor and several council members are on the DDA. DDA should be a Downtown Advocacy Team, not Development Authority."

Residential Parking Permits

Parking impacts all near-downtown neighborhoods. It isn't just that the people who live there cannot always find a place to park. These older neighborhood lots often don't have driveways with private parking. As a result, when the plumber or electrician needs to park the truck, there's no where on the street to park it. When the moving van arrives to deliver your belongings to your new home, there's no place for it, as the street is completely filled with cars — some of which haven't moved for months.

Residential Parking permits help those who live in the neighborhood by allowing them to purchase a permit for on-street parking. Others can still park, on alternate sides of the street, or for limited times (usually 2 hours).

8 people stated that the Parking Permit program should not be extended to any additional neighborhoods. 6 others say that it should only be implemented in those neighborhoods that are primarily owner-occupied. 27 believe it should be available to all neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, whether owner-occupied or primarily rental. 13 respondents said they needed more information on the program.

Designing and implementing a parking plan

13 respondents thought that a citizen's committee should decide on a parking management plan; 6 wanted City staff; 4 wanted the City Council and 27 wanted the DDA Board and Staff to make the decision. While that's not a resounding vote in favor of the City Council's ability to manage this task, it clearly supports the DDA as the body with the most knowledge of parking management.

What you said: parking if you are handicapped

More than one respondent was handicapped, and made certain I heard about lack of City sensitivity.

Please add Handicapped Parking options. Sometimes they are very hard to find, even in a structure. (Need access to elevator and/or close to business.)

(Parking in an underground parking structure) Depends where the handicapped stalls are located.

I am handicapped, & access, i.e. grabbing a ticket from a machine, is impossible for me. Access determines where I park.

I cannot reach & extract the ticket from the machine. Both the structures & the surface lots are inaccessible to me. :(

(Drive around the block to find a space now) Uses too much gas, but there is no choice. We need more handicapped spaces at meters.

What you said re: trust in the DDA

Currently the DDA uses parking revenues to pay for building efforts that I don't support including the underground parking structure that many people don't support, no one in fact that I have talked to. So I think the parking revenues should pay for parking maintenance and that some \$\$ should go directly to the city to use as it sees fit - what would happen if the city was in charge of parking. I wish the city was because I don't feel that the citizens have any voice in what the DDA does, at least with City Hall we have a voice. I don't trust the DDA, I think they do whatever they think is right for the city, but it may not be what the citizens want so they are imposing their own vision of the future.

Paying for Parking and Parking Fines

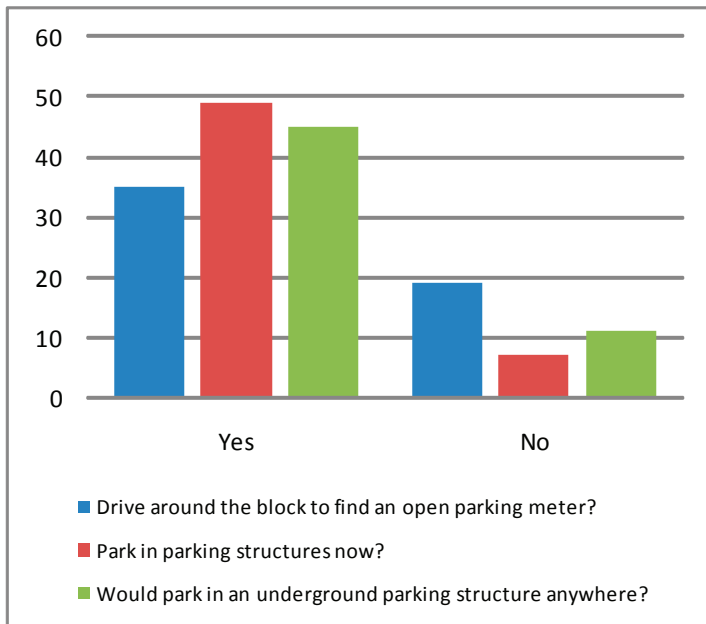
I asked about when the City should enforce on-street metered parking, and received 56 responses. 40 people believed on-street parking should be free after 6:00 pm (23 thought no one should pay before 9:00 am). 7 endorsed paying until 9:00 pm. The others fell somewhere in between, including one who volunteered that parking should cost as long as businesses are open (novel idea).

Almost everyone (50) agreed that money collected in parking fees should pay for parking maintenance and new parking, if needed. 14 responses indicated that they supported using parking fees to help the City's budget needs. Several left comments, though, that opposed providing funds to the City for the General Fund. Another proposed that parking fees should be set at a level sufficient to maintain the system and no greater, while still another suggested that any additional funds raised be used to maintain streets. Two suggested additional funds go toward alternative transportation; one proposed funding business improvement incentives such as paying for foot and bike patrols for downtown.

Parking fines currently go to the City's General Fund. These fines aren't just for overstaying a meter; they're also for parking in a handicapped zone, or too close to a hydrant, or blocking a driveway. In fact, the fines cover a number of situations. If paid quickly, the fines are relatively mild for overstaying a meter; hazardous and nuisance parking fines are more expensive. Right now, the fines are evaluated periodically by staff and adjusted to reflect comparable fines in other cities. 33 people felt that fines should be adjusted to park safely and legally; 14 suggested that fines should be lowered to encourage visitors to feel comfortable and happy to come to Ann Arbor. 2 responded that fines should be set to raise revenue for the City. Those who left comments were comfortable with the fines as is.

Structured Parking

Most people surveyed prefer to park on the street, if they can. 35 respondents will drive around the block to find an open parking space, at sometime. 7 people simply won't park in a structure. 49 others do, but of those, several had reservations.



What you said: parking in parking structures

Only if I have to.

Only if necessary.

Only as a last resort. I'd rather walk a few blocks than circle up a parking structure.

Yes, but infrequently. I choose to park on the periphery and walk to the center of town or take the bus or use my bicycle in good weather.

If I have to do so but it's my third choice behind walking downtown. The reason I drive is to drop off passengers not able to walk.

Except on rare occasions, I find that I can usually locate a space on the street, then a lot, then a structure

I would avoid UG structures though I park willingly in above-ground ones.

What you said: parking in underground parking structures

As long as it is well-lighted and safe underground is the best place for parking - I park underground every day

But I think the Library Lot was a very poor decision

But we must create a perception of safety.

I detest underground parking structures as they are dark and creepy. They represent the dangerous big city to me. I would never choose to park there.

I do not feel safe, especially the library lot - too many druggies and alcoholics hang out around there

I would if I had to but I don't want to and would avoid it whenever I could

Library lot seems totally unnecessary.

When asked about underground parking structures, like the one now being built next to the Library downtown, opinions vary widely. 11 people believe they would never park in an underground parking structure, anywhere. 45 others say they would. Safety and lighting are general concerns.

Support for Alternative Transportation

It's not all about parking, of course. Parking is part of a larger transportation issue. People who live in Ann Arbor need to be able to move around the City, stopping to work, shop, run errands, dine out, go to the theater, visit friends, and go home again. People who don't live in Ann Arbor need to do the same things. Maybe they use their cars — then they need to park them somewhere. Maybe they bike or take the bus. Maybe they are looking for a new way — one that isn't available yet.

Where should the City invest energy and dollars in developing options for driving and parking? I asked you to rate alternatives.

“[W]e need LESS parking downtown not more. That is the long term value. LESS PARKING. Stop putting in parking.”

22 people rated bike lanes as very important; 14 as somewhat important; 9 were neutral; 6 said ‘not really important’ and 3 declared them ‘not at all important’.

“I also want the laws enforced for bikes...I had another bike today going the wrong way on the road down a one way street today - I almost hit him.”

Dedicated fast bus routes would use special lanes, have fewer stops, and make commuting easier. Some cities have been using them as part of a transportation system for years.

19 people rated these bus routes as very important; 17 as somewhat important; 13 were neutral and the remaining 8 responders didn't think these bus routes were an important investment for the community or just didn't know enough about them.

“[W]e already have the infrastructure so this is an inexpensive way to increase the use of public transportation and provide much-needed services to those in our community who do not own a car.”

22 people thought street cars or light rail would be a very or somewhat important for the community (10 / 12). 20 were neutral and 10 checked either ‘not very important’ (5) or ‘not at all important’ (5). One person commented that these were ‘highly unlikely’ while checking N/A.

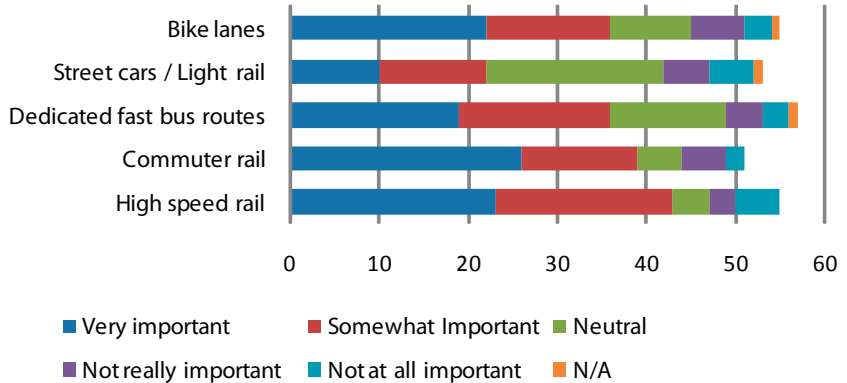
“I don't really feel qualified to compare fast bus routes, light rail & street cars. Where would they run? Which are most cost effective?”

26 people believe commuter rail is ‘very important’ for community investment. Another 13 checked that it's ‘somewhat important’. 7 people selected ‘not very

What you said: alternative ideas

Here's the thing: Bike lanes are politically attractive because they pander to the alt-transport lobby. I'm a part of that lobby. But our climate means that there's a very low maximum return on investments in cycling infrastructure -- no matter how easy it is to ride your bike in Ann Arbor, for 6 months of the year people won't do it, because it's too cold. Instead of putting extra Act 51 money into bike lanes, we should put it towards winter maintenance of snow removal at sidewalk entrances to the roadway at curb cuts--everybody has to be a pedestrian sometime. We can't change the climate, but we can use Act 51 funds to help mitigate it for peds.

Importance you place on mass transit as an investment for the future



important' or 'not at all important'. 5 people were neutral.

"...we need to continue to expand our economy by attracting more business and if we can do that without dramatically increasing the number of cars in the city everyone wins..."

Support for high speed rail through Ann Arbor was also strong. 43 respondents checked either 'very important' (23) or 'somewhat important' (20). Not everyone is convinced, of course. 4 people were still neutral, and 8 people checked either 'not very important' (3) or 'not at all important' (5).

"...too expensive, not feasible, not sufficient ridership ever, another pipedream that costs too much..."

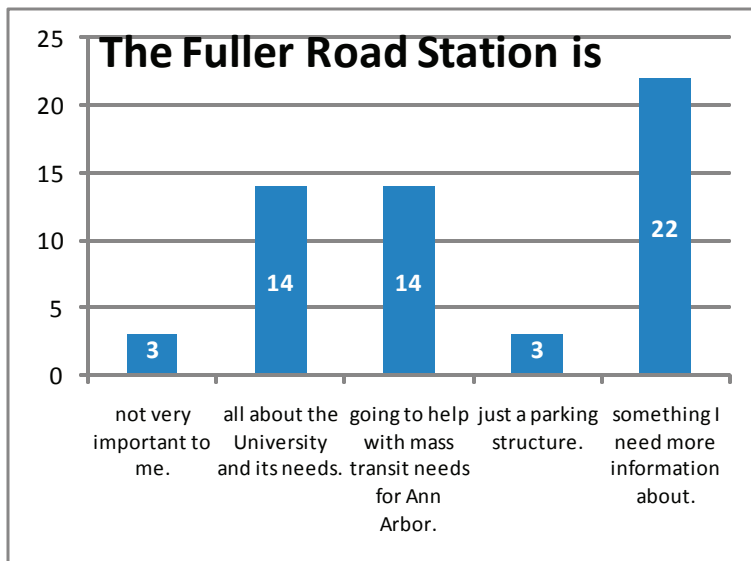
I've included a graph of the responses, as this was a complex set of questions.

Would **you** ride the train? I asked whether respondents would take either commuter rail or high speed rail trips, if they were available, going either east or west. 49 respondents said 'yes', and 6 said no. One who responded **NO** also commented 'casual trips only,' which I took as a qualified 'yes' response.

Fuller Road Station

The survey indicates, therefore, that this sample of citizens supports community investment in commuter rail and high speed rail because it will benefit Ann Arbor — and they would use a new, improved rail system, at least part of the time. But there is a difference between the concept of commuter rail and the impact of this type of activity in the community. Is there support for the Fuller Road Station, as currently planned? The City Council will be making further decisions about developing the Fuller Road Station within the next few months.

Respondents could select more than one answer. 14 checked that the Fuller Road Station is all about the University's needs; 14 checked that it is going to help with Ann Arbor's mass transit needs. 3 said that it's not very important to them; 3 said it's just another parking structure. *22 said that they needed to learn more.*



What you said: Fuller Road Station

A rip-off of the City. It is an unnecessary project, also.

Definitely needs more exposure to the citizens. I heard about it in a Sierra Club newsletter.

For my lifetime it's a UM parking structure but in the very distant future it might help with mass transit in AA.

Whether the FS Transit Station should be built is another question entirely.

It could be useful if planned properly.

It is an essential part of an overall Parking/Transportation Program in Ann Arbor

Not aware of this until I read your information

Seems like it's premature without knowing more about rail's future.

Something that the city should absolutely do and should have pitched to the public as an alternative to Wall Street; the city should also have included the soccer field to the east of the parcel in the plan to give greater design flexibility and should put it to the voters so that we can say, "Look, there's a clear community consensus for this!" I think it would pass, if our community leaders have any kind of leadership skills at all.

Public Land / Public Involvement

Since I've been on Council, the City has proposed several projects on public land that have resulted in public controversy. Whether you support or oppose the construction of the underground parking structure and what might be built on top of it at the Library Lot or want to see the Fuller Road Station built or approve of a public/private partnership for a driving range at Huron Hills Golf Course, each of these proposals (not all have been approved) has failed to find community consensus — or even complete community awareness.

I asked you to tell me how the City should develop public land. I offered several choices; respondents could select more than one choice.

23 respondents suggested City Council should seek a public referendum on any development on public land before proceeding.

30 respondents indicated that Council should hold public meetings to discuss options with the public before making any decisions.

18 said the City Council should meet with business leaders and opinion leaders before it makes any decisions.

7 would encourage City Council to rely on City staff's advice before making a decision.

27 believe City Council should look at all financial considerations thoroughly.

23 indicated that Council should make a master plan (for all public land) and follow it.

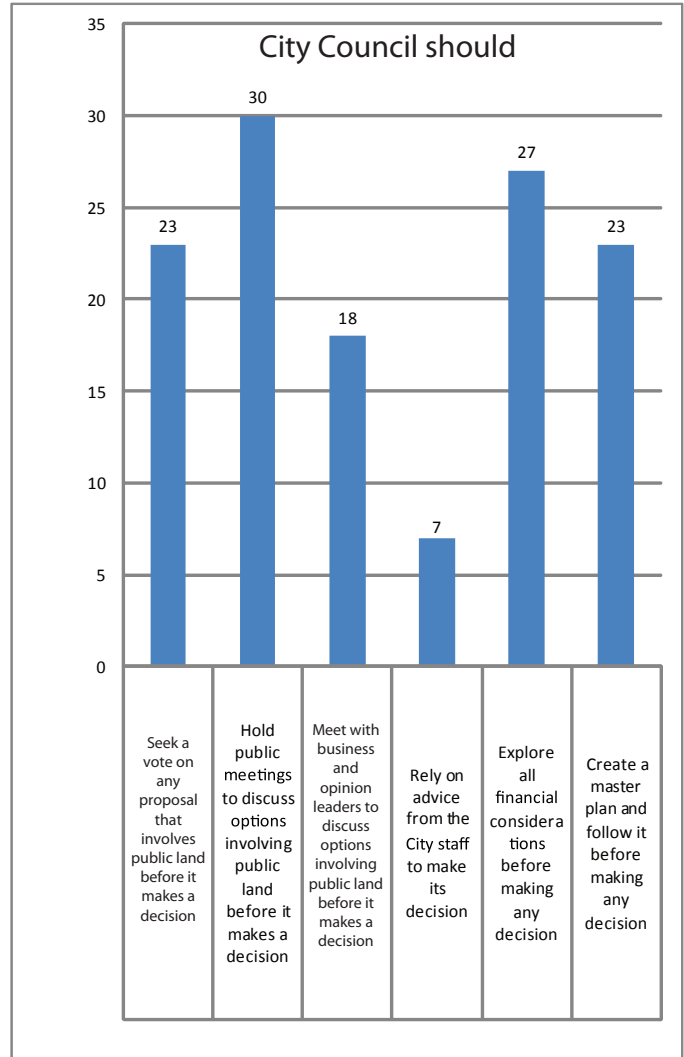
“Definitely make a master plan a priority and STICK TO IT. This lot by lot, block by block stuff has to stop.”

“...begin working in earnest toward a master plan but don't hold up projects until it gets done as it may take council forever...”

“Since financial issues will always be involved, they must be a part of the plan and not left up to the voters to decide on each issue.”

“I have no confidence in city staff to make decisions. Business & “opinion” leaders - same.”

“...ensure it talks to as many people as possible, not just the loudest voices...”



What does the survey mean to me — and you?

If you've gotten this far, maybe you've had some thoughts about the survey results. What conclusions did you draw? Would you have selected different answers?

The first thing I'd like to do is escape the tyranny of small numbers. With fewer than 60 respondents returning the survey, I may not have an accurate snapshot of the opinions around the Ward or the City. I found the comments illuminating, and the information received valuable, if not always what I expected to hear.

The simple table on the right was the most interesting tidbit for me. The people who responded to this survey mostly try to be informed. They use email and the internet to keep up with events. They don't rely on blogs, but are willing to go to civic meetings or even watch Council meetings to stay current (and that's commitment!).

All the same, no matter how much these respondents work at being informed, they also told me that they still didn't feel very knowledgeable about parking management, the impact of parking fees on the budget, high speed /commuter rail and federal funding, or the Fuller Road Station — and potentially about other issues facing City Council. Many of these respondents feel that too many decisions are made by Council without enough public input before the fact.

Parking and transportation issues will be significant points of discussion in the next few years, as they have been in the past. **Will we need fewer cars — and therefore less parking?** Will our nation and our state commit to mass transit in the near future, reducing our reliance on oil and helping our world deal with global warming? (Yes, I believe we still need to solve global warming.) **When we approve residential density, do we need to approve more parking?**

Who parks downtown? Those who shop, eat out, go to the bank, visit their lawyer, go to the court, meet their accountant, get their hair done, go to the library. Those who live there, work there, meet friends there. **Parking downtown costs money**, so parking in the near-downtown neighborhoods becomes a free option. If you live in a near-downtown neighborhood without permit parking, whether you rent or own your home, you see the cars begin to arrive around 6:30 a.m. Some cars are parked on the street at the beginning of the semester and stay there until Thanksgiving or the semester ends. That's why residential permit parking is so attractive.

Where do people want to park? On the street, first, according to this survey. Not me. I like structures. I don't always have change, and I don't like to keep a tight schedule. I hate getting a ticket, and I've never really mastered parallel parking between two other parked cars. Parking structures are fine with me, because they'll take my money for however long I've stayed. Underground structures seem foreign to some, but we've had them on campus and in the city for some time — and no one noticed, I guess. I've been parking in them for years, without concern.

Who should make decisions? Not just City Council, the DDA, city staff, business and opinion leaders. There should be more community involvement. The public should also be involved in creating a parking management plan (24% agreed). The public should vote on the use of any public land (41%) and be engaged in public meetings on the use of public land (54%).

Where do you learn about City issues?

AnnArbor.Com	57% (33)
Ann Arbor Chronicle	43% (24)
Watching committee/ commission and Council meetings	43% (24)
Blogs	7% (4)
Friends and neighbors	52% (29)
Email groups	30% (17)
Selected two or more:	89% (50)

Other: participating in the process (2); talking with staff, members of Council/Mayor (2); Ann Arbor Observer (2); Sabra's random updates (5); Main Street Association (3); Chamber of Commerce (1)

Miss the Ann Arbor News or other daily newspaper: 1

Have satellite and cannot get local TV: 1

Please let me know how to keep you involved.

Parking Survey

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Parking Survey

Page 1 - Heading

Parking
These questions are about parking downtown.

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

How much do you really care about parking issues in the City?

- A lot
 - Some
 - Hardly at all
 - Other, please specify
-

Page 1 - Question 2 - Yes or No

Downtown Parking
Should the revenues from parking pay for the cost of building and maintaining the parking system?

- Yes
 - No
 - Additional Comment
-

Page 1 - Question 3 - Choice - One Answer (Drop Down)

[Randomize]

Parking Revenue

- Should be used just for the parking system.
- Should go to the City to help with the budget.
- Should be used to hire more police and fire fighters for now, and worry about parking structures later.

Page 1 - Question 4 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

[Randomize]

Parking fines should be

- adjusted to encourage people to park safely and legally.
 - adjusted to increase revenue for the City as much as possible.
 - lowered to ensure more visitors are comfortable and happy to come to Ann Arbor.
 - Other, please specify
-

Hours when the City should enforce on-street parking - pick your favorite, please!

- 9 am to 9 pm
 - 8 am to 6 pm
 - 9 am to 6 pm
 - 9 am to 7 pm
 - 8 am to 9 pm
 - 9 am to 8 pm
 - Other, please specify
-

If the City has a plan for managing parking, who should create it?

- City staff
- the DDA staff and Board members
- the City Council
- A citizens committee

These questions are about Parking Structures

Do you think you would ever park in an underground parking structure anywhere?

- Yes
 - No
 - Additional Comment
-

Do you park in parking structures now?

- Yes
 - No
 - Additional Comment
-

Do you drive around the block to find an open parking meter?

- Yes
 - No
 - Additional Comment
-

Mass Transit

Do you think you would ride the train to Detroit (or points east) or Chicago (or points west) if high speed rail or a commuter line were available?

- Yes
- No
- Additional Comment

The Fuller Road Station is

- not very important to me.
- all about the University and its needs.
- going to help with mass transit needs for Ann Arbor.
- just a parking structure.
- something I need more information about.
- Other, please specify

The City sees the Fuller Road Station as an investment in mass transit and infrastructure. Please rate the importance you place on mass transit as an investment for the future.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Not really important	Not at all important	N/A
High speed rail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/> Additional Comment						
Commuter rail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/> Additional Comment						
Dedicated fast bus routes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/> Additional Comment						
Street cars / Light rail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/> Additional Comment						
Bike lanes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/> Additional Comment						

Miscellaneous questions - but still important!

The Residential Parking Permit Program

- should be extended to all neighborhoods surrounding downtown.
- should be limited only to those residential neighborhoods that are primarily owner-occupied.
- should not be extended any further.
- is something I need more information about.

Development on public land

The City proposes building a transit station with parking at Fuller Park. It also talks about privatizing some activities at Huron Hills Golf Course. It has already begun construction on an underground parking structure at the Library Lot. Do you believe the City Council should

- Seek a public referendum on any decision that involves public land before it makes a decision?
- Hold public meetings to discuss options involving public land before it makes a decision?
- Meet with business leaders and opinion leaders to discuss options involving public land before it makes a decision?
- Rely on advice from the City staff to make its decision?
- Explore all financial considerations before making any decision?
- Create a master plan and follow it before making any decision?
- Other, please specify

Where do you learn about City issues?

- From AnnArbor.com
- From the Ann Arbor Chronicle
- From watching committee / commission and Council meetings
- From blogs
- From my friends and neighbors
- From email groups
- Other, please specify

