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The Burden of Requiring Car Parking at Transit-oriented Development Sites in Silicon Valley

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Introduction

People in Silicon Valley get around using various modes, and billions of dollars are spent building out and operating transit. Still, development near transit stations is primarily planned to accommodate single-occupancy automobiles. Car parking minimums set by cities require developers to build excess parking. This requirement can unduly increase the cost of housing, making development harder to build and preventing communities from prioritizing other potentially more valuable transportation modes.

The purpose of this research is to assist community members, developers, and city leaders in envisioning and creating sustainable, equitable, and vibrant places for people in Silicon Valley. Excess parking leads to more car use, which increases traffic, pollution, and takes away from other uses of space that could be more beneficial to the building's residents & the broader community more productive priorities.

Method of Analysis

The authors analyze 21 previously reviewed transit-oriented developments (TOD), including data on parking ratios, type of transit-accessible, housing type (affordable vs. market rate), and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures. The authors then look at the parking minimums, which were higher than the amount of parking proposed, indicating a desire to build less parking. This also helps the research team understand how developers reduce the amount of parking required.

Findings

Among the 21 TODs reviewed, findings show that on average, projects only provided 0.85 parking spaces per unit despite the base requirement being at least 1.25 spaces for studio apartments in most cities. Developers used rules allowing them to reduce parking when constructing affordable housing or when building near transit, especially near the most transit service, San José Diridon Station. Several developers took a proactive approach, offsetting

a reduction in required parking by implementing TDM measures. While such measures come with costs, they are cheaper than building parking. The research team's analysis shows that many developers want to build less parking than required, and the authors believe that reduced parking would create more sustainable, equitable, and vibrant places.

Policy/Practice Recommendations

Based on the authors' experience reviewing developments and the analysis in this report, the authors believe policy changes to parking regulation could reduce the amount of parking built, lower the cost of housing, encourage more sustainable forms of mobility, and improve the quality of life in many communities. The authors' recommendations are as follows:

- Eliminate Parking Minimums: Parking minimums are outdated and should be eliminated to reduce excess parking and take away the incentive to drive.
- Implement Parking Maximums: At transit-oriented developments, parking maximums should be considered to increase transit use and create a return on transit investments.
- Bicycle and Micromobility Parking Minimums: Developments should be required to provide ample bike parking and charging plugs to encourage sustainable trips.
- Require Unbundled Parking: Requiring parking to be rented independent of apartments would eliminate a car subsidy and stop penalizing those without a car.
- Future-Proofing New Parking: When developers build structured parking at TODs, it should be easily convertible to other uses as demand and travel patterns change.
- Require Transportation Demand Management Measures: TDM measures such as bicycle facilities, transit passes, and commercial/retail on ground floors encourage sustainable transportation choices and help create vibrant neighborhoods.

About the Authors

Alex Shoor is the Executive Director for Catalyze SV. He serves on San José Housing & Community Development Commission and the Advisory Board of the Silicon Valley chapter of New Leaders Council. Most recently at the communications and public engagement consulting firm Katz & Associates, Alex worked with the Valley Transportation Authority on the extension of BART into Silicon Valley. He has also been a policy aide for a Santa Clara County Supervisor and a Director of Government Affairs for a Bay Area nonprofit organization. Alex studied Political Science and African American Studies while earning a BA from Vanderbilt University and holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of Southern California.

Gavin Lohry was the Development Manager at Catalyze SV in 2020 and 2021. He is a recent graduate of the Master's in Urban Planning program at San José State University. Before attending San José State University, Gavin launched and managed operations for a regional bike share program, where he helped provide a sustainable transportation alternative for residents of San José, San Francisco, and East Bay cities. Before moving to the Bay Area, he worked on transportation and urban development issues in China and served as an Engineering Sergeant with the United States Air Force. Gavin also holds an AS in Construction Technology, BA in Business and Policy, MPA in International Development, and Certificate in Real Estate Development.

To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at **transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2116**

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