



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MAY 8, 2019

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of a Resolution to Temporarily Reduce the Parking Fees Collected at City Parking Facilities During the Metro Platform Improvement Project. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of a resolution to temporarily reduce the parking fees collected at City parking facilities during the Metro Platform Improvement Project.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council adopt the resolution (Attachment 1) to approve the reduced parking fees after 5PM at City lots and garages for the duration of the Platform Improvement Project.

**BACKGROUND:** Currently the City owns and has a contractor operate four parking garages and three surface parking lots in Old Town. These are listed in Attachment 2 and the location is shown in Attachment 3. The hourly rate at these facilities is currently \$2.50/hour.

With the upcoming Metro Platform Improvement Project that will close all Metrorail stations in the City during the summer, staff have been working with the community to identify mitigation strategies. Once such strategy recognizes that there will likely be some increase in the number of people who drive to Old Town and seeks to encourage parking in off-street facilities rather than on-street and within the residential areas. To accomplish this, staff has proposed a temporary change to the parking rates at City parking facilities.

Data-gathering associated with the Old Town Area Parking Study has identified more than 8,300 publicly-accessible parking spaces (on-street, garages and surface lots) in the 85-block area between King Street Metrorail Station and the Potomac River, and between Princess Street (to the north) and Duke and Wolfe Streets (to the south). Adding privately accessible parking spaces in Old Town to this figure brings the total parking in Old Town to nearly 10,000 spaces. Data has demonstrated that Old Town does not have a parking supply problem: It has proximity, rate and availability problems. The OTAPS also collected occupancy data for on- and off-street parking and found that off-street parking was often very underutilized. Attachment 4 provides

a utilization summary of City parking facilities from the 2014 OTAPS data collection and Summer 2018 garage utilization data from the City's parking facility operator.

**DISCUSSION:** Currently metered parking is available near all the City-owned garages and surface lots at the rate of \$1.75 per hour. Parking is permitted for 2 to 3 hours depending on the location. As this is less than the hourly rate in the garage, there is less incentive to park off-street. Between May 24 and September 8, 2019, staff proposes eliminating the hourly rate and reducing the maximum rate in the evenings and weekends when these facilities have traditionally been less occupied. (Staff recommends that Council adopt a resolution without specific dates but stipulating the rates changes could be in place for the duration of the shutdown.) No rate changes are proposed for the daily, weekday parking rates when the parking facilities are typically better utilized. The proposed changes are as follows:

- All garages and surface lots except for the Courthouse Garage:
  - After 5PM weekdays and all day on weekends - Maximum flat rate - \$2
  - Before 5PM weekdays - no changes to hourly or maximum rates
- Courthouse Garage:
  - After 5PM weekdays and all day on weekends - Maximum flat rate - \$1
  - Before 5PM weekdays - no changes to hourly or maximum rates

The rate is proposed to be lower at the Courthouse Garage than the others due to the lower utilization at this garage and higher capacity for parking (see utilization data from Summer 2018 in Attachment 4). The lower parking fee is intended to entice parkers to this garage. Overall the reduced rates at all the parking facilities will ideally encourage parkers to use off-street parking rather than search for metered parking or free parking in residential areas. Since this change is proposed to mitigate impacts of the Platform Improvement Project, the proposed change to the rates are only recommended for the duration of the Project which will start Memorial Day weekend and is anticipated to end September 8, 2019. After the Project is completed and the Metro stations are reopened, the current rate structure would return.

The Traffic and Parking Board considered this proposal at its meeting on April 22, 2019 and voted unanimously to recommend the Council approve a resolution to implement these temporary changes. They recommended collecting data as part of this change to use in evaluating future pricing decisions at City parking facilities. There were no speakers on this item.

This proposal is also consistent with recommendations from the Old Town Area Parking Study Work Group. One of the goals from the Work Group was to encourage better utilization of the garages in the area. A specific recommendation to support this goal included reducing rates at city facilities on evenings and weekends. Although the proposed \$2 maximum flat rate is still slightly higher than the \$1.75 hourly meter rate at all the facilities except for the Courthouse Garage, the reduced rate provides a lower cost and better value for people parking for longer than one hour. This will incentivize long-term parkers to use the off-street parking facilities and make the on-street metered spaces available for short-term parking. This temporary change will also allow staff to evaluate future parking rates to help manage parking.

Staff has coordinated with the Chamber of Commerce and Visit Alexandria on this proposal who are both supportive (see Attachment 5). Staff will be working closely with both organizations to help promote this change to ensure people are aware of the new parking rates and options for parking off-street. This general concept of reducing City parking rates originated with business leader Jody Manor and resident Virginia Rocen.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The adoption of this resolution will have a fiscal impact to the City since collected parking revenue will be reduced. Based on utilization figures from Memorial Day to Labor Day 2018, the proposed rate change could have a budget impact of as much as \$115,000. These figures assume the same utilization of the garages which do have additional capacity during the hours and days the rates are proposed to be reduced. This change will allow staff to evaluate future parking rate strategies.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Rates at City Parking Facilities

Attachment 3: Map of Parking Facilities in Old Town

Attachment 4: Utilization Data from City Parking Facilities

Attachment 5: Letter of Support from Visit Alexandria

**STAFF:**

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