

## **Last Stand Neighborhood Information Forum**

June 9, 2016; 5:30 pm

At the Eco-Discovery Center, 35 East Quay Road, Key West

### **10 Tools to Tackle Most Any City's Downtown Traffic and Parking Problems**

Cities small and large across North America want to get more people biking, walking and using public transit instead of driving alone. Why? Because car-centric places and the traffic and parking congestion they bring is bad for business and economic development, degrades our environment and is unhealthy for our citizens. Parking problems spill into downtown neighborhoods and exacerbate tensions. There just isn't enough room for everyone to drive and park in our downtowns anymore.

Streets and sidewalks take up 25-50% of a typical North American city's land. This is a huge community asset. How a municipality uses that asset says a lot about its priorities. If you use this asset to speed cars around you get one kind of place. If you use this asset to prioritize people instead of cars you get another.

Research shows there's no one single magic bullet that's going to fix traffic and parking congestion in any city's downtown. Rather, it takes a multi-pronged, holistic approach.

What are some of the ideas that make up a people first approach? What tools are useful for cities in going from car-centric to people centric? Here's 10 Tools that any city should consider doing to increase biking, walking and transit use and decrease traffic and parking congestion:

#### **1. Parking Garages**

If you need to build a garage for visitors, build it, and keep the congestion off the streets.

#### **2. Direct People to Parking With Good Wayfinding**

Direct people to garage parking with wayfinding signage so they aren't hunting all over the place for free on-street parking.

Now you can't stop after these first two things. If you want a vibrant, prosperous people-centered downtown you have to keep going.

#### **3. Transit**

Transit is the backbone of a city's transportation system.

- **Downtown Circulator.** To un-clutter a downtown you need better ways of circulating around it. Many cities provide smaller downtown circulators specifically for tourists and the folks who live and work close-in. Make the route

easy to understand. Provide frequent – no less than every 15 minutes – service, and make it easy to pay.

- **Maps and Info at Bus Stops.** Apps are great, but there is no substitute for putting a map and schedule at every bus stop. Brand the bus stop. Put amenities at the bus stop. Act like you actually care about these folks.
- **More frequency/Simplified system.** Successful cities have stopped treating transit as a human service agency and having it go everywhere but rather treat it as a first option for the majority of people to get around. When one provides 90-minute services frequencies on your buses, only those that have to use it, will. Simplify routes. Increase service frequency.
- **Vanpools and Carpools too.** Supplement transit with a robust vanpool and carpool program.

#### 4. **Bikeways Network and Bike Parking**

About 60% of the population would be willing to bicycle, if it were easier and safer to do so.

- **Build a network of protected bikeways and trails and low-stress streets** so that people of all ages and abilities can easily go anywhere by bike. Nothing is worse than a bike lane that just ends in the middle of traffic.
- **Provide ample bicycle parking** everywhere people want to go.
- And **teach people to share the road.**
- Slow the cars down by **redesigning the streets** so they aren't made for speed.

#### 5. **Carshare**

Studies show robust carshare programs increase the amount of walking, bicycling and transit. When you pay by the hour, people are more attentive to how often they drive, and as a result they drive less. People occasionally need the convenience of a car. What they don't want necessarily is the hassle of owning and operating it.

*For more information on carshare visit Bike/Walk Key West's [carshare page](#).*

#### 6. **Bikeshare**

Even if everyone seems to have their own bike. Even if easy and inexpensive for tourists to rent a bike, bikeshare works because it is in-between ownership and rental. It's about getting from point A to point B spontaneously. Research show it enables one-way trip decisions. You may walk or take the bus in and decide to bike out. It's priced so that if used for more than a couple hours it is much more expensive than a rental. Bikeshare is part of a transit system. Studies show bikeshare programs complement walking and transit and decrease driving. Studies show bikeshare is a gateway to more biking and even getting people to buy bikes.

For more about bikeshare visit: [Cities Must Understand Bikeshare is Transit](#), April 17, 2015 and Bike/Walk Key West's [Bikeshare page](#).

## 7. **Educate and Encourage People About Options**

Providing good options, or infrastructure, like transit and bikeways and bikeshare is only half the battle. If people aren't aware it exists or they're unsure how to use it, they won't. Research show you get more out of the investment in transportation options infrastructure by educating people about it and encouraging them to use it.

- **Work through Employers/Hotels.** One of the best ways to do education and encouragement is through businesses. Especially hotels. A business influences their employees and their guests, with information, how-to-guides and passes.
- **Target everyone to share our streets safely.** Teach people behind the drivers' wheel to slow down and share our streets. Teach people on two wheels to obey the rules of the road. And people on two feet too.
- **Encourage visitors not to bring cars to your downtown.** But if they do, you want them to set it and forget it and use alternatives instead.

For more on Education and Encouragement see this article: [10 Steps to Take 100,000 Cars of DC's Roads](#), May 6, 2015

## 8. **Expand Transportation Options That Support Bike, Walk, Transit**

Research show that people who use taxis and TNCs (transportation network companies like Uber and Lyft) also walk, bike and use transit more often. Find a way to protect the public and expand the use of taxis and TNCs because they support the other options and enables one-way trip decisions. You may take the bus or walk in and then decide you need a cab or TNC back.

## 9. **Get Parking Right.** If you want to encourage more walking, biking and transit and to make a dent in traffic and parking congestion you need to get parking right. That means:

- **Encourage Turnover for Retail.** You don't want to price metered parking in retail areas so low that people park in a spot all day – there's other places for that and it doesn't help merchants. You'd want metered rates to be in line with what private garages are charging so as to discourage everyone vying for on-street parking. Parking prices should respond to demand. It should cost a little more on certain coveted streets. Perhaps it should cost a little more on at certain times of day, days of the week or seasons.

- **Discourage Cruising for Free On-Street Parking**  
Research indicates that in some congested downtown up to 30% of cars are cruising for parking. Good wayfinding eliminates some of this. And if you need to expand the area that's metered so there aren't close-in free spaces, do so. Given today's technology from multi-meters to pay-by-cell, it is easier than ever to designate pay for parking spaces.
- **Put New Parking Revenue Towards Transportation Options and the Local Neighborhood.** Cities that get parking right have often taken any additional new revenue generated from parking and put it towards supporting options to driving – which further reinforces your overall goals. In some cases they've put it into specific amenities in the neighborhood where the revenue was generated for things like new benches or bus shelters, bicycle racks, bikeshare stations, enhanced transit or even trash and recycle cans or other street furniture.

## 10. People First Streets

If you do all of these things you can turn over more of your streets to bicycling, walking and play.

- a. Encourage more street space for pedestrian only areas and places for people to sit, chat, eat and people gaze. It doesn't have to be entire streets. It can be parts of streets or even just parklets. Or alleys. Or for a weekend or a season.
- b. Encourage complete streets that prioritize pedestrians, bikes, transit and then cars.
- c. Develop a truck/delivery plan for the main street so it is less congested with delivery and trash and recycle vehicles at all times of the day. Coordinate the merchants and plan the hours.

This is a Key West specific bonus:

## 11. Encourage More and Better Inter-city Ground Transportation Options

84 percent of the people coming to Key West to visit get here by car. Airfare is expensive and the ferry and bus service is infrequent. Many of the people who fly in, whether to Miami or into our city directly, then get a rental car. We need to encourage people landing in other cities to take luxury coaches into the city, and encourage people landing here to taxi, Uber, transit, bike and walk, not rent a car. See # 7.

The bottom line is that if you want to decrease traffic and parking congestion and increase biking, walking and transit you'd want to consider all of these tools. They work together. They support each other. They build upon each other. And doing these makes cities more prosperous, healthy, green and happy.

For additional information please read: [10 Books About Fighting for and Building People-First Cities](#), February 21, 2016.