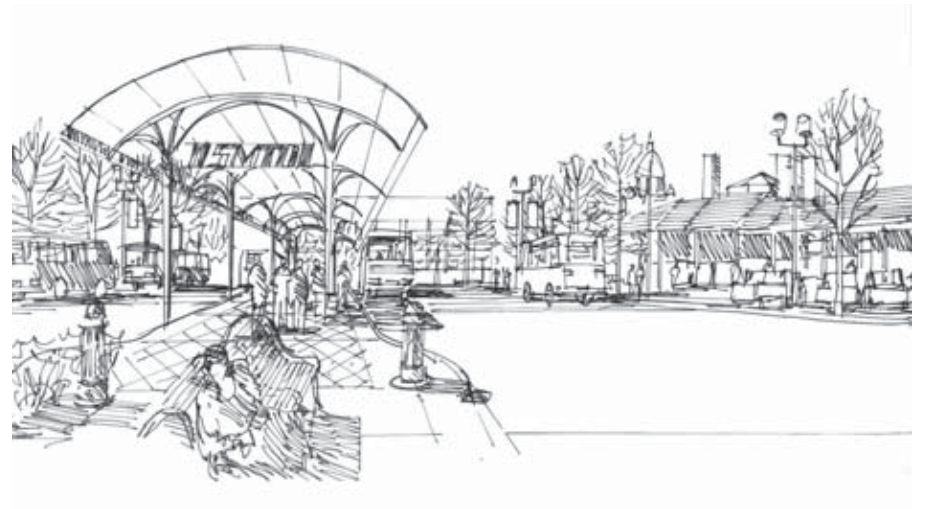


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## TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

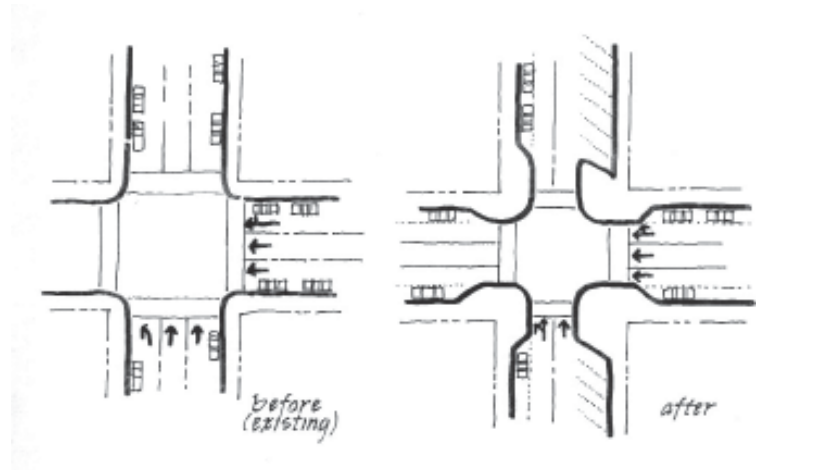
A healthy downtown requires a supporting transportation infrastructure that includes a balance among roads, parking, transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel. Today, Springfield is principally reliant on its roads and parking systems. While reliance on the automobile will continue for many years, a better balance among travel modes will be necessary to complement the changes that are being added to the city's rich historical heritage in preparation for the 2009 Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration.

## CIRCULATION

Many citizens expressed concerns about how vehicles and pedestrians circulate in the downtown area. They found the one-way street system was confusing and caused them to go out of their way to reach their destination. Signing was inconsistent or of poor quality so drivers and pedestrians do not know where to go thus compounding the out of direction travel associated with the one-way streets system. Speeds in the downtown are considered too fast. And in combination with the wide streets, present an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians.

**One-way Street System** - The existing one-way street system is intended to facilitate smooth flow and reduce stops and delays, particularly left turns. Conversion of some or all of the streets to two-way operation would substantially add to the confusion in the central downtown, would noticeably add to the number of stops at intersections and the delay experienced by everyone. Yet improvement can be made in the existing one-way system.

The one-way system should remain but should be managed differently than it is



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today. The city has recently installed a very flexible and sophisticated traffic control system in the downtown core. Further timing plan refinements are under way and these should give a higher priority to reductions in stops and delays and emphasize moderating progressive speeds. Existing staff should be augmented to provide the necessary maintenance and refinement time required by such equipment.



Capitol Avenue should be converted to a one-way street west of Ninth Street. The section in front of the Fire and Police Station at Ninth Street should be designed with an eastbound contra-flow lane from the west edge of the Station to Ninth Street. This conversion is accomplished by eliminating the parking, leaving two westbound traffic lanes.



**Curb Extensions** - Throughout the downtown core sidewalk extensions should be constructed around the parking. These will provide further traffic calming, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, and provide an area for way-finding elements that will facilitate pedestrian circulation. The combination of these improvements will enhance pedestrian safety.

**Signage and Way-finding** - Vehicle and pedestrian signing should be completely revised and updated. Vehicle signing should be easily recognizable by using a combination of bold symbols, colors, and a unique sign silhouette so drivers can quickly recognize intended directions. These signs can achieve this objective if they are not confused with traditional traffic signs. An effective signing system could minimize extraneous circulation on narrow neighborhood streets in the Enos Neighborhood as visitors travel between Lincoln's Tomb and downtown.

The city has initiated a pedestrian way-finding system with brass plaques imbed-

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ded in the sidewalks on one corner of each downtown intersection. This or some complementary way-finding program should be expanded to more effectively link the Lincoln sites and other historical landmarks in downtown Springfield. For example, if sidewalk plaques are used, they should be sufficiently durable to withstand weather and street/sidewalk maintenance, be a distinguishable shape and be located so they are aligned along the natural walking path of pedestrians. The area provided by the curb extensions will facilitate their protection. These pedestrian way-finding elements are critical to the experience of visitors unfamiliar with the downtown area.

## **PARKING**

Almost everyone thinks parking in downtown was insufficient. In fact, there are over 29,300 parking spaces in the downtown and they occupy over 40% of the buildable area. During the midday, it is estimated that 15% to 20% of this parking is empty. This impression is aggravated by the over 70% of the off-street parking that is reserved for employees and visitors of individual businesses. This means that parking cannot be shared even when spaces are empty. The problem is not insufficient parking but poor and unguided management of the parking resource and unrealistic expectation of users.

Furthermore, the lack of appropriate parking guidelines has caused a proliferation of surface parking lots in the downtown. Until the recent adoption of landscape guidelines for parking lots in the downtown, the majority of surface parking lots contained no perimeter or interior landscaping. These patterns result in a pedestrian streetscape where inlets of harsh asphalt and/or a sea of cars negate exquisite architecture.



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“Convenient” parking for most Springfield residents means that their space is within one block of the place they work and within 50 feet of the store where they shop. This is an unrealistic expectation. Nonetheless, improvements to the parking system are in order to make downtown a more usable place.

Existing parking perceptions may be aggravated by the increased demands for parking created by the new Lincoln Library and Museum, including the increased parking needs for buses and recreational vehicles.

It has taken a long time for parking conditions to deteriorate to this point and therefore it will take a long time fix it. The remedy for these varied aspects of this parking problem must be addressed on several levels.

**Parking Ramps** - Off street parking should be consolidated into ramps or structures. The city is the appropriate agency to take the lead in facilitating this change. This can be accomplished by requiring all new development within the downtown to provide parking for its occupants. Such requirements should be appropriate for the downtown, which could be 50% to 75% of the requirements for a similar suburban use. Recognizing that building structures, lot sizes and other constraints often preclude integrating parking in the structure, these parking requirements could be met in a variety of ways including:

- Pay the city an “in lieu of” fee to construct parking. This fee would be less than the market cost associated with actual construction of the parking by the developer because the parking would not be reserved for any specific building owner. For example, if the cost of a typical ramp parking space is \$12,000, the building owner might pay \$8,000. The City would then provide the parking.

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- Agree to support a Employee Transportation Management Program that includes:
  - Purchase a monthly Springfield Mass Transit District pass for employees who choose to ride the bus.
  - Subsidize employee parking costs for those who carpool
  - Provide flex time and telecommuting for employees
  - Provide a guaranteed ride home program

It is encouraged that these parking ramps be constructed with ground level retail and above grade residential units so their appearance is more pleasing and the activity contributes to the vitality of the downtown area.

Several general areas where these structured parking facilities would be most effective include:

- Under the half block south of Jefferson Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in the Vista Corridor (including under Jefferson Street).
- In the area east of the new Lincoln Library and Museum
- In the Capitol Campus as new buildings are constructed or reconstructed.

The city has a variety of financing options including TIF funds, Community Development Block Grant, and other funding combinations based on the location, size, shared purposes and other timing factors. It has a parking enterprise fund so tax-exempt bonds can be issued. In any event, monthly parking rates should be gradually increased considering the high occupancy observed in the larger central ramps and lots. This will not only increase base revenues but will also make room for short term and tourist parking that generate proportionately higher revenues per stall. It would also enable the city to pay for new parking ramps with parking revenues. As parking fees are increased, parking citation fees should also be incrementally increased.

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**Surface Lot Landscaping** - The appearance of existing surface parking lots can be improved through retroactive surface parking lot landscape requirements. These requirements would provide a buffer along the lot edges adjacent to sidewalks. Internal landscaping and lighting would not be required but lots would likely require remarking to compensate for the reduced width within the landscaped edge treatment. This treatment would soften the edge of surface parking lots while they gradually convert to structured parking facilities. Since these are retroactive requirements a grace period of up to five years from adoption should be applied. Additional staff added to the city staff and paid for through TIF funds should provide maintenance. The timing will coincide with the 2009 Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration provided this is implemented within the next year.

**On-street Angle Parking** - Expand the angle on-street parking to increase the supply of on-street parking proximate to businesses and restaurants. These spaces should be back-in spaces instead of head-in spaces because they are safer for both the person parking and the through traffic on the street. Essentially the cars backing into a space must stop first before they back into the space, like when they parallel park. Likewise, when they leave their parking space, they can see oncoming traffic instead of backing into the moving traffic lane like they do with a head-in angle-parking pattern. Seattle has used this parking pattern very successfully on downtown streets with much higher traffic volumes.

This angle parking should only be used on moderate volume streets (9,000 vehicles per day or less) where two lanes in the direction of parking can be maintained but can also be considered on low volume two-way streets (less than 5,000 vehicles per day) with one lane in each direction. This parking design should be carefully evaluated if considered for application on higher volume, higher speed roads like Fifth or Sixth Streets. This angle parking will also complement efforts to moderate speeds by narrowing the effective width of the driveway.

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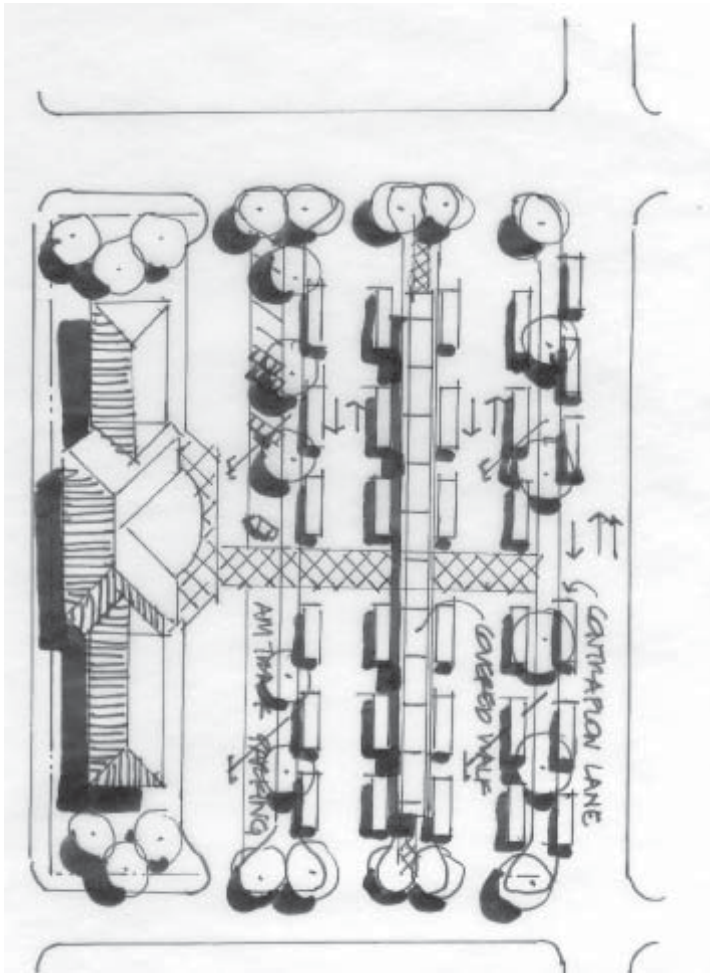
This style of parking spaces can be used by local visitors but should not be targeted for long-term tourist parking. An increased number of on-street parking spaces can also help address the evening parking demands to support evening restaurant and entertainment business. As the new performing arts center opens, off-street parking operators should test special evening rates or shared parking programs with individual businesses. The model now used by local parking managers with downtown churches could be an effective model. Such measures should reduce the concern about parking downtown in the evening.

**Bus and RV Parking** - The Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (SCVB) with the mutual cooperation of other historic venue managers does a remarkable job of scheduling and marshalling visitor buses for existing exhibits. The current program works very well for the character and size of the existing historic exhibits. The Lincoln Museum and Library has the potential to change conditions because the length of stay is likely to be longer than for existing exhibits. The proposed parking ramp on the north side of Madison Street, opposite the new visitors center in the Union Station, will not only provide parking for automobiles but also provide parking on the south side of Mason Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets for buses and recreational vehicles. A bus marshalling communications system should be provided as part of this system so buses can drop-off their passengers, park in this remote lot, and then be called by a venue when their party is ready to be picked-up.

**Restricted Parking Zones** - As parking pressures increase, it is expected that employees will gradually start to park in adjacent residential neighborhoods. To protect these neighborhoods, the City should explore the creation of Restricted Parking Zones (RPZs). RPZs permit residents and their visitors to park in the neighborhood but long-term parkers are cited. This type of program has worked



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successfully in many areas of the country where major employers, commercial districts, or transportation terminals generate spillover-parking impacts.

## TRANSIT

Springfield residents indicated they do not use transit because it is not convenient and it does not operate evenings and Sundays. Springfield Mass Transit District (SMTD) operates a traditional hub and spoke system that uses a timed transfer concept at the hub using downtown streets within the downtown. In addition, SMTD provides demand responsive service to the elderly, persons with disabilities and others requiring specialized service.

**Transit Terminal** - A off-street transit terminal should be developed in the vicinity of Third Street and Washington. This general location is considered prime because it is within easy walking distance of both the Capitol Campus and the heart of downtown. The Capitol building is just a few blocks away along a short section of Third Street and Broadway. The Old State Capitol is just two blocks to the east. In addition to providing convenient service, the off-street transit terminal removes bus transfer activity from the streets along with the complications and conflicts this presents to motorists and adjacent businesses.

One such concept plan could be constructed on the east portion of the same block at the existing AMTRAK station. This provides capacity for 24 SMTD buses in a simple off the street configuration. The bus capacity could be easily expanded to six more buses by taking over the parking lane and marking a contra-flow bus lane. There would be a synergy between AMTRAK and SMTD and ancillary convenience services including a newsstand, coffee shop, dry cleaner outlet, and/or other needs. While the illustration shows a design that emulates the historic cano-

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ped walkways of the traditional railroad, other services like a childcare could be co-located in an above grade structure or in several nearby locations within a block of the site. If the Union Pacific Rail lines are relocated to Tenth Street the AMTRAK station could be converted for expanded use by SMTD. If property acquisition is found to be impractical there appears to be several other sites in this immediate vicinity where a similar facility could be located.

**Downtown Circulator** – Circulator service should be developed. This should be a simple circulator service that runs on a fixed route around the downtown to serve employees and visitors alike. The core route could operate with three buses on five to ten minute intervals. There could be extensions added to this core route if more detailed review or employment center demands (city, county, Hospitals) warrant.

Although this service is not intended to be a dedicated tourist shuttle, the SMTD should work with the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (SCVB) to develop a special Visitor pass that would permit visitors to show the pass and ride the shuttle free of charge. The SMTD would then be reimbursed by the SCVB on the basis of pass sales. Both individual and family fares and passes should be explored. This pass concept might also involve collaboration with other historical sites, particularly if an admission fee is charged for entry. The existing tourist trolley operator can continue to focus on more tailored tourist bus tours.

**Night and Sunday Service** - While it may currently be impractical to provide fixed route-fixed scheduled transit service during the evening hours, the SMTD should explore alternatives that would more effectively adapt to the intermittent evening demand but provide a safety net for those who need to work late, desire to stay downtown, or the anticipated downtown residents who want to use the bus ser-



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vice during the evening. Options might include using the dial-a-ride demand responsive service, or contracting with the taxi companies for special evening service for pass holders.

**Monthly Pass** -The SMTD should develop a monthly pass for regular service riders to replace the current 17-ride pass. In addition to the discount, a monthly pass will promote transit ridership by providing the value of using transit for other than commuting. SMTD and the city should work together to promote the Employee Transportation Management Plan. Likewise, SMTD should continue to explore viable opportunities for cross-town service to minimize the inconvenience associated with transferring to another route downtown.

## RAIL AND AIR

The Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern Railroads operate on separate lines, Third and Tenth Street respectively. These rail lines provide a psychological barrier that separates the Capitol Campus to the west and the eastside neighborhoods from the rest of downtown. This barrier has created a set of development patterns that work against healthy neighborhoods and downtowns. More practically, the majority of rail crossings along both lines are at grade, which despite railroad signals, are an ever-present safety hazard. In the short term the railroads are expected to operate as they do today.

**Rail Line Consolidation** - Consolidation of the rail lines in the Norfolk Southern corridor should be a long-term objective. This alignment is more practical because there is adequate right-of-way to incorporate the Union Pacific trackage. The practical benefit will be to reduce the number of at-grade crossings from 35 to 17 and to concentrate federal highway funds along one rail corridor instead of

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diluting available funds between two rail lines. Shifting these rail lines outside of the center city has been explored and found to impractical within the context under current environmental laws.

While there are no geometric design reasons precluding this consolidation, the additional trains intensify the existing barrier between the downtown and the eastside neighborhoods. Accordingly, a series of measures will be required to occur concurrently or before such consolidation occurs. These measures are discussed in greater detail in the Neighborhood Framework section of this report.

Consolidation will permit the Third Street corridor to become the central connector of numerous trail fragments as discussed in the Downtown Connections section of this report.

**Airport** - The Springfield Airport is unique in that it has runway capacity to serve large jets. The city, county and state must work as one to ensure the airport secures the necessary federal funds to maintain these capabilities. As funds and market opportunities permit, upgrade the capacity and quality of air service. This air connection is key to economic growth and retaining a strong employment base.



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