

PARKING STUDY TOPIC OF MEETING

June 12, 2017 at 4:00 pm | By AUSTIN MONTGOMERY Staff writer

BELOIT - Officials from Beloit and South Beloit will meet today to go over the results from a parking study conducted by a consultant hired by the Stateline Area Transportation Study (SLATS) group.

The study assessed parking needs for downtown Beloit and the northern part of South Beloit. Walker Parking Consultants concluded there's no major parking issue currently in the Stateline Area, but noted both municipalities should review parking policy and make changes to accommodate future growth as more visitors head to the area.

"The recommendations in these parking studies can assist the municipalities and property owners in managing the downtown parking system effectively to support those activities now and in the future," said SLATS Coordinator T.J. Nee.

The group also recommended creating formal agreements to allow public parking on private lots and create an employee parking permit program for certain city-owned lots to mitigate the use of parking between visitors and long-term users.

The study's boundaries in Beloit expanded east to Park Avenue, west to Fifth Street north of the Rock River and from south of the Rock River on the Fifth Street bike path, north to Barrett Place west of the Rock River and south to Clark Street and Charles Street.

"The consultant believes the parking situation is moving from a condition where simply providing supply will no longer be adequate, and that strategic management and improved enforcement is needed to ensure the parking system functions properly," Nee said.

There are 5,632 spaces downtown, with 1,055 on-street spaces, 973 off-street spaces and 3,604 off-street private spaces. Weekday parking peaks at 11 a.m., with nearly 2,000 spaces used. Weekend parking peaks at 9 a.m. with just over 1,200 spaces occupied, according to the study. Future projections add around 800 more vehicles parked during peak weekdays and over 1,000 for peak weekend days.

"As Beloit businesses continue to grow, and regular events go on, more visitors are coming here and need to park downtown," said City Councilor and Traffic Review Board member Sherry Blakeley. "We need to be prepared for the very near future."

An online survey taken by 109 Beloit residents found 82 percent of respondents said they rarely have a hard time finding parking in downtown Beloit. Complaints ranged from having to walk a certain distance to events and having to compete with long-term parkers, like downtown employees, for spaces.

Today's meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Vision Center, 500 Public Ave. A Rockton parking meeting will be held at 4:30 p.m. on today at Rockton's Village Hall, 110 E. Main St., to go over the village's parking assessment.

Major parking recommendations in the study:

- Develop a shared parking district for non-business hours, support business-to-business and consumer-to-business shared parking.
- Develop an employee parking permit program in the West Grand Avenue Lot for long-term parkers
- Introduce a three-hour limit in the Chester Square and Fourth Street lots and in certain stalls within city-owned lots. A limit should also be considered for the Ironworks lot to West Grand Avenue. The limit could also be expanded to include Mill Street and Broad Street.
- Develop an event parking plan for the Beloit Farmer's Market and use a template for other downtown events.
- To better enforce parking, the city should consider purchasing License Plate Recognition Equipment (LPR) to determine whether parking policy is regularly violated.

Major policy recommendations:

- Add 'parking' pages to city websites to allow for organized space of all parking info.
- Both municipalities review and use the National Parking Association's Recommended Zoning Ordinance Provisions to help setting ordinances related to parking.
- Beloit should consider more signage to identify parking areas and limitations to benefit drivers.