

# VCU PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION FORUM Q&A

*The following questions were submitted on the forum registration form or were posed during the live event on April 21, 2021, but were not addressed.*

## PARKING RATES

- 1. Is it possible for employee parking rates to go down, or can we receive a supplement for parking?**
  - a. When calculating parking fees, we consider the cost to provide our services, maintenance needs, and cost of inflation. It is improbable that parking rates would decrease, as vendors regularly increase rates for service and the department incurs this increase.
  - b. The budget does not permit a parking supplement at this time. We do, however, have alternative transportation options that may be feasible for you. You can view these options at [commute.vcu.edu](http://commute.vcu.edu).
- 2. Is it possible to freeze parking fee increases with the upcoming fiscal year?**
  - a. While we would like to be able to have the option to freeze rates, we cannot at this time. We request the minimum needed to continue providing our services and maintaining our parking facilities within the next fiscal year.
- 3. Will there be an increase in parking?**
  - a. Parking fees are analyzed annually, and any rate increase accounts for the cost of providing our services, maintenance needs, and cost of inflation. We have proposed an increase of approximately 2% for FY22, or \$2 per month.
- 4. What does the parking fee go toward?**
  - a. Parking fees cover operational costs, maintenance, and technology used to support the parking system.
- 5. Are there any efforts being taken to lower the monthly fee for full-time employees?  
Thank you.**
  - a. Each year, we evaluate the cost of our operations, maintenance needs, and technology costs. We use this data plus the cost of inflation to determine parking fees for the upcoming fiscal year. Calculations do not indicate that we can lower prices at this time; however, we carefully evaluate the necessity for increases and only request them when necessary.

6. **Is there any way to incorporate a more equitable subscription system that is based on salary ranges, such as ODU's tiered system?**
- a. We are familiar with this system; however, it is not currently under consideration at VCU at this time. To ensure a system like this would work, a higher administrative overhead would be required to accommodate the creation of zones as well as the salary retrieval process. This system would also pose challenges monthly considering the university's decentralization. In addition, the current costs to sustain our operations has been calculated precisely, taking into account the average number of subscribers, maintenance costs, etc., and, considering our current figures, those holding salaries on the higher end of the spectrum would pay substantially more than they are now monthly. Those on the lower end would actually not experience a significant reduction at all. Overall, we came to the conclusion that this system would not be the most equitable solution for our subscribers at VCU.

## PARKING OPTIONS/ SUSPENSION

### TELEWORKING OPTIONS

7. **Will reduced rate (\$8.00) day parking passes be offered in the Fall '21 semester?**
- a. Yes. We do not plan to eliminate this offering.
8. **Is there an intention to allow employees to purchase a reduced-cost annual parking pass for employees who may not be required to return physically to work on-campus five days a week?**
- a. At this time, we plan to continue with our existing [temporary permit options](#). Employees who hold permits within the decks could relocate to the A Lot or O Lot (if space is available) on the MCV Campus. The remote lots are less costly than decks. Another option would be to consider our daily permits, which offer the maximum flexibility for those who come to campus less than five times in 2 weeks.
9. **Can parking subscriptions be reduced for staff who are on a hybrid work schedule?**
- a. We cannot reduce subscriptions for monthly permit holders. Those who only need to campus on a part-time basis should consider using our visitor parking locations, two-week temporary permits, or daily permits (\$8 each). You can learn more about these options at <https://parking.vcu.edu/parking/faculty-and-staff/options-and-rates/>.
10. **Is it possible for an "only if there are open spots" type of parking pass for a lower cost? They would have no guarantee of a spot every day, but since so many**

people work from home or in shifts, there are many parking spots in the parking deck open all day long.

- a. This tactic would be difficult to implement and manage operationally. There would be no mechanism to prevent a user with this permit type from parking in a different space if the “limited spots” have been taken. VCU operates on a facility level, which means we can generally guarantee a permit holder’s parking space in their assigned facility. We only sell what we reasonably believe we can accommodate.

**11. Will there be any options in the future for a one-week parking pass for employees who work every other 3rd week, meaning a 2-week pass would not apply to them?**

- a. We will evaluate the need for weekly passes and examine occupancy levels, but this is a possible offering shortly.

**12. For employees commuting to the office in the fall ‘21 semester for two days per week, what is the most economical parking option; - two \$8.00 day passes (if still offered)?**

- a. Yes, you would pay \$32 bi-weekly instead of \$42.

**13. I don't intend to work on-campus when we return in the fall. I'm wondering if there's a way to share my parking space with someone else who's working a hybrid schedule?**

- a. We are currently working on an addition to our carpool program that would allow this capability. We will announce these plans in the coming weeks.

**14. Are there discounts for hybrid workers, rather than paying full price for a space that one may use one or two days out the week?**

- a. Yes! We have daily permits on sale for both campuses that you can purchase in advance. Daily passes are \$8 each. When you compare that to the roughly \$42 it costs to park bi-weekly, you’d be able to park up to five times within two weeks before the monthly permit becomes the more economical option.

**15. People who are only on campus 1-4 times a month--is there something in place, so we are not paying full price for parking? Yes, there are daily passes, but those add up to almost the same price.**

- a. If you are only coming to campus one to four times per month, with the \$8 per day daily permit, you will end up paying a maximum of \$32 per month versus \$84 per month for a monthly permit.

**16. Is there a possibility of having a flex day - 2-week parking pass to choose the days to match the pricing of the 2 weeks per day price as opposed to the \$8/day?**

- a. Due to the process by which parking permits are allocated in each facility, we cannot accommodate this level of flexibility at this time. Once demand normalizes, we may be able to explore this option further.

## **CANCELLATION/SUSPENSION/REIMBURSEMENT**

**17. Parking fees are currently deducted from every paycheck. I haven't used my assigned parking garage since early last year. If I cancel my registration, what will happen when I return to campus?**

- a. When you return to campus, you would need to contact us to see which parking facilities we have available at that time. We cannot guarantee you would receive a parking assignment in your current facility.

**18. If I cancel my parking, can I be put on a list to sign up for parking in the same parking deck if we return to in-person working? I cannot walk far, and moving to another parking deck would not be possible.**

- a. We cannot accommodate this specific waitlist service offering. If there is an ADA issue, you can apply for a handicap placard or work with the ADA/Accessibility office for accommodations for parking.

**19. I have been paying for parking since March 2020 yet haven't been on campus at all during the past year. I park in the RTD deck, where there seems to be enough space available, but I am concerned about canceling my parking pass and then not being able to park in the deck when we return to campus. It just seems like a lot of money to spend every month on something I am not using.**

- a. We understand your concern and the magnitude of this decision. However, there is no way for us to "reserve" spaces in facilities. RTD does have a significant number of vacancies right now; however, you would have to determine to cancel, accepting the risk of not being placed in this facility in the future or continuing with your existing subscription.

**20. I have been working from home since March of 2020 and have continued to pay for parking each month despite not using the facilities. Will VCU offer any reimbursements for that? I work on the medical campus and park in 8th St. Deck. I work until 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. at night when on campus and am scared to cancel my subscription because I'm worried I won't be able to get parking close to my building when we do return. I don't want to have to walk blocks at night in downtown Richmond to get to my car, and the escort service is unreliable.**

- a. We do not plan to offer reimbursement for the non-use of parking facilities. We understand the concern of canceling your parking subscription; however, it is not

feasible to reserve parking spaces, as there may be new subscribers on campus who need a parking space.

- b. Additionally, as an auxiliary unit, we do not receive state funds to support parking, so we operate only on revenue. Should space be available and someone wishes to use it, we sell it.

**21. Can you be refunded all or part of your parking fee if you worked from home for the past year?**

- a. We are not offering refunds for unused parking. You always have the option to cancel your parking if you are not using it. Please note, we cannot guarantee that you would receive the same parking assignment when you return to campus if you decided to cancel.

**OTHER**

**22. Will faculty be able to obtain a monthly parking permit at one of the nearby parking garages?**

- a. Please contact our office at [parking@vcu.edu](mailto:parking@vcu.edu) or 828-7275 to determine the current options that are available.

**23. I am a part-time graduate school instructor working for the Center for Public Policy. Will I be assigned to a particular parking garage? Will I have (as I do now) a parking card hanging from my mirror that automatically triggers the garage to open?**

- a. You will have the option to select your facility based on current availability. However, you will be assigned to one location with reciprocal parking privileges.
- b. Yes, you will receive a parking hangtag for your vehicle.

**STUDENT PARKING**

**24. Is there any potential for graduate students, particularly TAs, to have a higher priority for obtaining parking permits, similar to the faculty and staff?**

- a. No, at this time, this priority system is not under consideration.

**25. Why are students only allowed to park on floors 5 and 6 of Jefferson Street Deck when we are paying 413 dollars a semester, and the first floor does not ever reach capacity?**

- a. Housing residents are only allowed to park on the top two floors of parking decks due to the nature of their parking habits. In general, housing students do not move their vehicles daily while commuters and faculty/staff do. We aim to

maximize parking efficiency throughout our facility, and this is one way we try to do this.

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATES/CLOSURES

### HENRY ST.

1. **When will the VCU Henry Street parking decks complete the renovations-- East and West buildings?**
  - a. Renovations are being completed in the coming weeks; however, due to the low demand for parking on the Monroe Park Campus, those decks are not destined to open until around August 1, 2021<sup>†</sup>. The closure allows us to conserve funds on lighting as well as wear-and-tear on the parking deck.

### LAUREL ST. DECK

2. **Is the Laurel Street Parking deck going to open on the first business day of July 2021?**
  - a. This facility is projected to open on August 1, 2021; however, we will evaluate this date based on-campus parking demand at that time. Keeping the facility closed if we have the space to do so allows the department to conserve funds on lighting and wear-and-tear on the deck.

### OTHER

3. **When will the Cary St. parking deck be available?**
  - a. This facility is projected to open on August 1, 2021; however, we will evaluate this date based on-campus parking demand at that time.
4. **When is VCU going to build a parking garage on A Lot for VCU/VCU Health employees?**
  - a. An A Lot parking deck will not happen. VCU does not own the A Lot; we lease it. 300-400 Oliver Hill Way will be developed in the coming years to commercial space, and we will eventually lose A Lot for parking.
5. **Will we still have the existing parking decks in the near future?**
  - a. We have no plans to eliminate any parking decks in our inventory at this time. We will have to increase or decrease spaces in leased facilities as demand warrants, but there are no plans to eliminate any deck parking.
6. **Can M and R lot remain open? If the expense is too great, can the amount of transportation increase as an alternative to closing the lots?**

- a. In considering the underutilization of the O Lot, construction of I Deck, and the D Deck construction concluding, it may no longer be feasible to retain this option.
- 7. Do you plan to keep O Lot after I lot is complete?**
- a. VCU Health System has secured a 10-year lease on the O Lot location. The O Lot should remain in the VCU parking system for at least this length of time.
- 8. If I park in O Lot now, when I Deck is finished, will I be transferred to parking in I Deck?**
- a. If we relocated you from the I Lot to the O Lot due to the construction of I Deck, you will be have the first opportunity to move to the new I Deck. We cannot, however, provide the monthly cost for the new I Deck at this time.
- 9. Will A Lot parking be removed as an option with the addition of the shopping and museum planned in both areas of A Lot? Timeline for this? Alternative parking location?**
- a. We are aware of the planned development and are monitoring it closely. We are also actively looking at additional parking options. Currently, the new I Deck, which should open in summer 2022, is our most viable option. If we have the opportunity, we will vacate the A Lot before having the lease canceled. This development remains top-of-mind for leadership.

## MAINTENANCE

- 26. Are there any plans to upgrade the lights in the SS Lot?**
- a. We will evaluate the lighting levels and consult with our contractor to determine if the city can install additional lighting.
- 27. Will the GG parking lot get repaved and striped in the near future? The lot is completely void of lines that show people where to park.**
- a. We are aware of the concerns; however, this is a partially-leased facility. We are working with the owners to have this addressed in the coming months.
- 28. What is VCU Parking doing to address the ongoing sanitation and safety issues in the Times-Dispatch Deck? The building's management is unresponsive and uncaring, and on top of the human waste in the stairwells, the trash cans are vile, and there is no security at all. I don't like paying for parking access to a totally unmonitored health hazard.**
- a. Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We have forwarded these concerns to the owners of this facility, and they have advised us that the RTD maintenance team will address these issues immediately.

**29. Will D Deck renovations ever get finished? What process was involved in selecting the contractor to renovate D-Deck?**

a. We are projecting D Deck to be completed by June 2021.

**30. Will there ever be surface improvements to the A Lot? It's such a mudhole on rainy days.**

a. We lease the A Lot and do not use departmental funds to improve facilities we do not own. Also, considering that the A Lot is being planned for redevelopment in the coming years, it is not feasible to have this facility paved.

**31. Can lighting in the N Deck be improved? The lights that are working are too dim, and often many of them aren't even working.**

a. Before the pandemic, we were in the process of embarking on a multi-year plan to upgrade our facilities to LED lighting. Once we are fiscally able to do so, we plan to relaunch this project, with N Deck being the first deck upgraded. In the meantime, lights are being fixed as we find them, and VCU Facilities Management replaces the burnt-out bulbs and repairs the electrical shorts.

## TRANSPORTATION

**32. With the coming of the new AOP building, across from N Deck, will the M/R bus route change?**

a. The AOP building will not impact the M and R Lot bus route.

**33. Why do the shuttles pass folks waiting at stops standing back from the street under the CHOR building when it is raining? it is very annoying that they cannot stop for 2 seconds and wait for folks to approach the street in the rain**

a. Buses should not be bypassing the CHOR building, as it is the main stopping point on the MCV campus. We ask our RamRide passengers to be present at the physical stop just before the bus arriving. This policy ensures that drivers are aware of passengers waiting to board the bus. If you continue to experience this, please jot down the bus/driver number and time of occurrence and report this information to [ramride@vcu.edu](mailto:ramride@vcu.edu).

**34. At 4:30-5 p.m., when I leave every day there are three A Lot buses to one M & R Lot bus. The M & R Lot subscribers literally stand through three A Lot buses waiting for one M & R Lot bus--very frustrating! Why wouldn't you provide the M & R lots one of the A Lot buses?**



- a. We constantly evaluate ridership per hour to determine how many buses to allocate on each route. Because the M/R Lots hold a more significant number of subscribers, additional buses are being assigned to this facility.

**35. When the AOP opens, will the shuttle stop move from CHOR to closer to the AOP?**

- a. The initial shuttle stop was relocated due to construction. When this construction ends, we will evaluate subscriber needs to determine a safe stop location.

**36. Can the larger vans be scheduled for M & R Lots daily during peak hours? ( 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.) and (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.)**

- a. Our new bus fleet launched on April 12. Due to COVID restrictions, capacity has been reduced to 18 people. Once COVID restrictions lift, the new bus fleet will carry up to 49 passengers.

**37. Improved transit and resource efficiency. 1. Please consider MOVING the pick-up/drop-off spot on the VCUHS campus. Presently, riders are picked up in front of CHOR, and GRTC "push" the buses, or so the drivers say. Why not utilize North 12th Street between Broad and East Marshall Streets? There is a light for buses to cross, and it would be much safer for riders-- security at night (not lingering on Broad Street) and safety (GRTC riding up behind the buses as riders get on/off). Route A buses could take North 13th Street to access 12th Street. Route M/R could take North 9th Street.**

- a. Due to the construction of the Children's Hospital, we had to relocate our bus stop off of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and received permission to temporarily use the 1000 block of Broad St. for our bus stop. Once construction concludes (expected to be winter 2022), we will move back to 11<sup>th</sup> St. 12<sup>th</sup> Street is not a viable option due to the route the buses need to utilize.

**38. Improved transit and resource efficiency. Please consider SCHEDULING the pick-up/drop-off spots at parking lots, which would help ensure a steady stream of buses for passenger pick-up/drop-off. Every day (and, I mean, every day), the busses come in clusters. Riders will wait upward of 20 minutes at either end of the route (CHOR, lots A, M, R) for a bus only to see three at one time (especially lots M/R). This is frustrating and ridiculous. If buses departed either end of the route at a specified time, then they would not cluster. Right now, the first bus fills up with passengers, followed by the second, only to have the third bus trail behind empty (zero passengers). What a colossal waste of resources--wear-and-tear (vehicle), gas (vehicle), staffing (drivers). No transportation company allows its drivers to either creep and speed only to clump in either direction.**

- a. We agree. We need to manage expectations and put in place a more transit-style system. In doing so, we will switch to timetables. To do this, we need to have stopping points where our buses can sit both at the parking lots and the stopping points on the MCV Campus. Since we are using Broad St. as a stop temporarily,

we cannot do this. Once we return to our usual stopping point on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, timetables for RamRide will be instituted.

**39. Can you please evaluate the M & R Lot service? There's an insufficient amount of shared transportation for both lots in the morning/evening peak times. We get the small buses, and they can't accommodate patrons. Meanwhile, four to five A Lot buses go down and back up on a loop with a handful of riders, sometimes one person on the larger fleets, before one M & R Lot bus comes.**

- a. We are working with our transportation vendor, RMA, on a strategy to help mitigate this, and you should notice improvements soon.

**40. Are the shuttle drivers allowed to be on personal calls when they are driving? There have been a couple of times very recently that both morning & afternoon M/R lot runs, they have been using earbuds not actually holding the phone.**

- a. No, this should not happen. Drivers are not permitted to be on an active call while in motion, per our transportation vendor's policy. If you notice a driver on their mobile device while driving (even if via earbuds), please contact us at [ramride@vcu.edu](mailto:ramride@vcu.edu).

**41. Why are the buses not stopping at N deck? During inclement weather would be very nice (ice,snow,rain...)**

- a. We work diligently to provide sustainable transit services for our subscribers. Shifting services temporarily for inclement weather would give the impression that we could provide the service around the clock to this location, and at this time service to N Deck is not a consideration for bus service. Please stay tuned, as we consistently gauge the transportation needs at each of our parking facilities.

## ENFORCEMENT

**42. Why are you charged \$35 if you forget to hang your parking pass when you already pay for parking?**

- a. We require an active parking permit to be displayed on vehicles that are parked in our facilities. Without the permit, we do not know if the car is authorized to park in our facilities. If you forget your permit, please call us at 828-7275 or email [parking@vcu.edu](mailto:parking@vcu.edu) to alert us.

**43. Can there be more than one security officer at O lot?**

- a. We are monitoring the active security presence at O Lot and, if needed, will present a request to VCU Health System leadership.

# OTHER

## **44. Why have waitlists been discontinued?**

- a. Due to limited space availability and construction, we were rarely able to move people off the waitlist. Most waitlists held over 200 people, and many had been on the list for years. Due to this, we decided to eliminate the waitlist for the time being.

## **45. It would be very helpful to have numbers marked on each parking spot (as at the RIC) to help remember where one's car is parked. Is this being considered?**

- a. Our decks currently have marked level indicators. It would not be feasible to incorporate numbering onto our existing surface lots due to their smaller size.

## **46. Can parking be determined by the building the employee works in?**

- a. We utilize this process if we have the option on the Monroe Park Campus, also considering space availability and location. On the MCV Campus, parking assignments are being assigned by one's job title and schedule.

## **47. The parking spaces in A Lot Main are VERY close together, preventing the parking of vehicles if other vehicles are close or over the line. Is there any plan to reline the spaces to make them larger?**

- a. A Lot at Main St. Station is a leased facility. We have no control over the space sizes, and the vendor has no plans to expand the spaces at this time.
- b. Additionally, any plans for lighting? Main street station specifically is very dark in the evenings.
  - i. In regards to lighting, we will pose this question to the city, from whom we lease the lot, to see if they are willing to add additional lighting here.

## **48. Are there any plans to provide secure parking for bikes/e-bikes? I have the impression that many people would be willing to pay for it and switch from riding a car to work to riding an e-bike if a secure space was provided to avoid theft.**

- a. As we continue to enhance our alternative transportation plan, bike infrastructure is a top concern that is under consideration. We are currently evaluating alternate options to increase bike parking on the MCV Campus.

## **49. M & R Lot subscribers don't equally pay for the use of the lot. Will that change--a reduction for R Lot subscribers or an increase for M Lot subscribers?**

- a. The fee for parking in the M & R Lots is the same; however, VCU Health System subsidizes the cost for employees. This subsidy is not fiscally viable for VCU. While the individual may not pay for parking, VCUHS does pay the department directly.

**50. Will there be pricing differences for those that move from M/R to another lot/deck? Also, if M/R lot subscribers are forced to relocate, will we be grandfathered in with the amount we're currently paying for parking?**

- a. Pricing will vary based on the designated parking facility that you are assigned. An email was recently distributed to impacted subscribers noting all pricing for each facility.

**51. Are there cameras in O lot?**

- a. Yes, there are several cameras located throughout the lot.

**52. How will grandfathered carpool parking passes be honored in the coming months/years?**

- a. Carpool subscribers who were grandfathered into the program previously will continue to receive the same program benefits.

**53. Why did VCU get the City of Richmond to take away all the free parking on Parkwood Ave behind the field at the Cary Street Gym? Things are hard enough, and to lose that amount of parking hurts the VCU employees who can't afford to park in a parking deck.**

- a. VCU Parking and Transportation did not have any involvement in the removal of city parking.

**54. Who is in charge of changing the direction of the middle lane of the Jefferson St. deck? Can you please resume the old policy of the middle lane to exit at night? My truck is hard to navigate in the far right exit.**

- a. We have forwarded this request to our operations team who has now made this change.

**55. I've noticed that the parking attendants at ACC do not always double-check for pedestrians prior to waving cars in. Can you all please look into and promote this for safety?**

- a. We will pass this information along to VCU Health System, as we do not handle parking for the hospital.

