

## **EVALUATION OF SHARED USE PARK AND RIDE IMPACT ON PROPERTIES**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

*Shared use park and ride* typically involves property owners making their parking lots available to commuters for parking personal vehicles so that they can access public transit or use a carpool/vanpool to travel to their final destinations. However, the benefits of shared use park and ride facilities located at commercial retail centers have not been widely documented. Transit agencies usually perceive shared use park and ride arrangements as mutually beneficial to the transit agency, through savings in land and development costs, and to the park and ride parking lot providers, through increases in customer sales and customer base. However, potential shared use park and ride providers often feel that allowing shared use park and ride on their property may not be cost beneficial. The objections include that allowing park and ride service will create problems such as increased liability, vandalism, and litter, and that it will result in the use of parking spaces by park and ride commuters instead of by potential shoppers (i.e., that commuters using the parking lot will use parking spaces that might otherwise have been used by potential customers). Very little research has been done in this area since the early 1980s.

### **OBJECTIVES**

This study attempts to document the impacts of shared use park and ride at retail centers by examining the following issues:

- whether a “Shared Use Park & Ride” influences the shopping behavior patterns of users
- whether a “Shared Use Park & Ride” generates retail revenues for shared use park and ride providers
- whether a “Shared Use Park & Ride” generates ridership for transit service providers

Researchers developed a survey to investigate the spending habits of park and ride users at businesses situated near the park and ride locations, specifically regarding the following:

- frequency of use of the park and ride service
- reasons for parking at the park and ride
- alternative mode choices if the park and ride were non-existent
- shopping done the previous day
- alternative shopping choices if the park and ride did not exist
- frequency of use of the stores near the park and ride
- amount spent at stores in an average week
- benefit of the availability of the park and ride

The surveys were conducted at seven shared use park and rides in the following communities: Brandon (Hillsborough County), Tampa, Jacksonville, Ft. Lauderdale, Gainesville, and Miami.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The results indicate that the park and ride users at the survey sites are, indeed, shopping at the shopping centers when they park at the park and ride. Sixty-nine percent of the 68 respondents from the smaller park and rides shopped at the shopping center at least once a week when using the park and ride, spending a weekly average of \$37.79 per shopper. Forty-four percent of 70 respondents from a hospital shuttle park and ride shopped at the shopping center at least once a week when using the park and ride, spending a weekly average of \$25.06 per shopper. Fifty percent of the 124 respondents from the football shuttle park and ride shopped at least once a football season when using the park and ride, spending an average of \$72.09 per shopper each football season. These weekly averages could translate into annual expenditures of \$1,965.08 per shopper for users of the smaller park and rides and \$1,303.12 per shopper for users of the hospital shuttle park and ride. Furthermore, a significant proportion of those users would not have shopped at the retail center if the park and ride lot did not exist. Overall, 42.9% of the 70 shoppers would have either made their purchases elsewhere or would not have made the purchases at all if they had not used the park and ride at the subject shopping center. These results show that the shared use park and rides studied actually increased the shopping centers' customer bases.

Another major finding was that the presence of park and ride lots did have an impact on modal choice. Almost half of all of the survey respondents reported that they would have driven their cars all the way to their destination if the park and ride lot had not been there. This significant modal shift from automobile trips to using transit indicates that the presence of a shared use park and ride does generate ridership for transit service providers.

Further research conducted on a larger scale and with direct transit agency involvement would help to identify parameters for an ideal park and ride location and operational considerations, and it could provide an account of all types of shared use park and ride facilities. Surveying property owners hesitant to participate in shared park and ride facilities might provide a better understanding of partnership issues and benefits. Future research should explore the shopping centers' point of view, in terms of how much profit they hope to make from this type of arrangement in order to make it worthwhile for them.

## **BENEFITS**

The research findings suggest that shopping centers might benefit if they are willing to allow their properties to be used for shared use park and ride. They also suggest that transit agencies may be able to provide concrete research data to prospective shared use park and ride providers to prove that such facilities offer economic benefits in the form of an increased customer base and new revenues. Transit service providers may benefit from saved expenditures on park and ride facilities, increases in ridership, and customer satisfaction for providing more park and rides. The local community benefits from access to public transit, mitigation of traffic congestion, and efficient use of parking facilities.

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