

Jake Wenger
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Solutions to UB's Parking Woes

Similar to many American cities, the University at Buffalo has experienced problems with its on-campus parking. Many have complained about the amount of time it takes to find a spot, as well as the lack of parking throughout campus. Regardless of what solutions may work and which ones may not, there is clearly a need to address the growing problem of UB's parking accessibility, especially for commuter students.

Recommendation 1

One possible solution that could help to alleviate congestion on-campus during peak hours would be the introduction of sensors into UB's parking lots. Taking inspiration from the sensors that SFpark plans to incorporate in San Francisco (SFpark, 2011), these sensors would be incorporated into all commuter lots (and eventually for all of the parking lots on UB North) at the entrance(s) and exit(s) of each parking lot. The sensors would track how many cars enter the lot, as well as how many exit. In doing so, the number of available parking spaces can be tracked for each lot, and when a lot becomes full, the lot will be designated as 'closed' and an information sign will light up to let drivers know that the parking lot is at full capacity. The lot will also be physically closed off only for drivers trying to enter the lot, in order to not confuse the sensor tracking system. Additionally, the sensor-tracking system can be paired with an app provided by the university that notifies students as to which lots are full, and which lots are available, as well as having an interactive map via the app that can better visualize for commuter students as to which lots they can park in.

Finally, to elaborate on how a parking lot would go from being designated as 'full' back to being 'available for parking,' as mentioned prior the sensor-tracking systems will keep track of the number of cars that leave and enter a lot. Though research would

have to be done to determine the optimal availability at which a lot can be opened again, once a closed lot reaches a certain x amount of available spots, the automated tracking system will change the status of the parking lot from 'full' back to 'available parking.' For example, if a lot has 100 spots and all are full, the lot will reopen once 10 of those spots become available again.

Recommendation 2

Another solution that I have personally seen suggested in numerous classes prior is the construction of parking garages throughout campus that are designated *only* for commuters. According to an article from WIVB 4 that dates back to 2017, there were 16,700 permits that were handed out by the university, yet only 1,000 spots on north campus are available for students, (Mongiovi, 2017). While not all of the 16,700 permit-holders were probably commuters, this highlights the lack of student parking available at UB, with the consequence really affecting those that have to commute to class. By replacing a few current lots with multi-level commuter parking that would be located adjacent to the academic spine, the number of parking spots will be increased, but only for those that have to commute to and from UB North. This results in two things, the first of which is accomodating commuter students so that there's little reason for them to be late to class. The second is that while some feel constructing infrastructure geared towards the automobile increases its use among the local population, designating these parking garages solely for commuters merely accommodates a demand that already exists, and prevents an increase of automobile use by students who live on campus.

Jacobs Lot

There's both negatives and positives to the Jacob's lot. Like all the lots on campus, Jacob's lot experiences congestion - however, this congestion backups onto Augsburger Rd., leading to longer travel times for those commuting to class, as well as

delaying any shuttles passing by the parking lot. On the topic of shuttles, Jacob's lot also doesn't have direct access to the North Campus Shuttle route.

However, there are positives as well. Jacob's lot does have sufficient lighting, as seen in the pictures below. There's also easy access to an emergency blue light phone if need be, and unlike other lots on campus, Jacob's lot is adjacent to the academic spine (being situated next to Jacobs and Park Hall).

By incorporating sensor-tracking technology and notifying commuting students about full and open lots, Jacob's lot could see a reduction in the amount of congestion that it currently sees. And eventually, if the school pays to replace some lots with parking garages, Jacob's lot could be a prime candidate for a commuter-only parking garage, given its location relative to the academic spine.



Bibliography

1. Mongiovi, R. (2017, February 18). UB students frustrated over too many parking permits, not enough parking spots. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from <https://www.wivb.com/news/local-news/ub-students-frustrated-over-too-many-parking-permits-not-enough-parking-spots/>.
2. SFpark. (2011). "SFpark Overview," produced by *SFpark*. Access through <https://youtu.be/bzUGs02Zy40>