University of Washington - Seattle

Short description:

Case Study on the U-PASS (universal pass) programme, which provides card holders with a range of transportation options.

Handbook topics:

Travel Demand Management: Mobility Management and Planning for Wide Network Operations: Collaboration/Coordination

Location:

University of Washington – Seattle USA

Dates:

1989-Present

Description:

The U-PASS program, based in the University of Washington's (UW) Seattle campus is an exemplary example of successful travel demand management strategies, wide network collaboration, and parking management. The U-PASS program began through talks between university officials of the forecasted development, population growth, and travel demands in the area. Recognizing the importance of sound planning for this predicted growth, a task force, the General Physical Development Plan (GPDP) was formed in 1989 to oversee what types of transportation incentives and disincentives (i.e. parking rate increases) should be implemented to manage travel demand in and around the university. In 1990, the task force pitched the U-PASS as a "universal pass" providing cardholders with a range of transportation options and incentives with one form of identification, the U-PASS. The U-PASS Program began as a three-year pilot program in 1991 with a budget of $17.4 million.

Today, U-PASS, is representative of the strong collaborative partnership between the University, the City of Seattle and transit providers, King County Metro (Metro) and Snohomish County's Community Transit (CT). provides an array of transportation options for a quarterly fee to eligible students ($35 in 2003) as well as faculty and staff ($48.96 in 2003). Several of the transportation alternatives and programs included with a U-PASS includes the following:

- Full fare coverage on Metro Transit, Sound Transit, CT and Sounder commuter train service,
- Free carpool and vanpool parking,
- Vanpool subsidies,
- Discounted "occasional" parking permits,
- Local merchant discounts,
- Ridematching services,
- Reimbursed rides home for faculty and staff, and
- Evening neighborhood shuttle service.

Benefits:

The U-PASS has had multiple successes in reducing vehicle trips and parking lot occupancy, as well as increasing transit ridership. For instance, in 2002, record sales showed that nearly eight-six percent of the total student population participated in U-PASS. Since 1991, U-PASS through transit ridership has been able to eliminate about 91 million vehicle trips to or from campus. The program is continually monitored and evaluated for effectiveness through surveys, traffic counts, parking utilization studies, and individual U-PASS component monitoring. The UW Transportation Office produced the 2001-2002 U-PASS Annual Report and determined that U-PASS had done the following:

- Prevented the need to build 3,600 new parking spaces saving considerable capital cost,
- Reported 86% U-PASS user satisfaction, a 13% increase over Year 1992, and
- Reduction of 33% in parking permit purchases since October 1990 indicating that users are finding another way to school or work.

In addition, 2002 traffic counts indicate that the morning peak period traffic was 18 percent below the 1983 traffic levels. As a result of U-PASS's success, several similar programs have emerged in other UW university campuses as well as in Harborview Medical Center. Metro has also developed FLEXPASS for metropolitan Seattle employers and commuters using the U-PASS as a model.

Lessons learned

Managing traffic demand through pricing has been documented as a key component of U-PASS Program success. Besides quarterly and daily parking rate increases, UW has developed a number of flexible parking features to compliment other U-PASS program components and alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel including the Pay Per Use Parking (PPUP) program. Basically, PPUP participants are tracked each time they use the West Campus Garage and are subject to a variable parking rate structure. Removing the volume discount provided by a quarterly parking pass, the variable rate method favors infrequent users. In other words, the more you park, the higher the fee.

Contact details:

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References:

Reference:

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Luten, Kevin et. al. Mitigating Traffic Conditions: The Role of Demand-Side Strategies. FHWA-HOP-05-001. October 2004.