

July 6, 2021

City of Salem
Attn: Planning Commission
555 Liberty St. SE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Planning Commission:

The Salem Area Mass Transit District Board of Directors requests the Salem Planning Commission take action to reduce parking minimums in the Unified Development Code (UDC) updates being made in response to HB 2001 requirements.

While the current draft makes progress, Salem has the opportunity right now to inspire decades of development that will lead to better health outcomes, increased livability, lower cost housing, and community prosperity.

HB 2001 is a statewide mandate that large cities make development code adjustments in order to create more opportunities for affordable housing choices. In particular, it encourages duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, and cottage clusters. Additional, affordable units are urgently needed in Salem. By allowing for generally smaller units, closer together, they also greatly contribute to our city's walkability. Transportation and housing choices are inextricably linked. Creating safe, walkable, dense neighborhoods, gives people a choice about how they want to live, travel, and interact with the community.

In our region, transit primarily serves people who walk to and from it. Having more places to live, more neighbors to connect with, and more local businesses to invest in, within a walkable distance, helps boost transit, and vice-versa.

Parking minimums may seem logical, at first. People who do choose to drive to their destination will need a place to park. However, they force developers to build a fixed number of parking spots — even if residents may not need or want them. This has numerous negative consequences such as unused parking lots, stormwater mitigation challenges, and more expensive development overall.

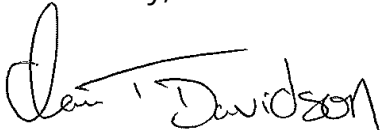
The new housing types required by HB 2001 will only be developed when and if the market supports it. When the development that makes the most financial sense on a parcel is a single-family home that will be the end outcome. The same is true of parking. If a developer decides to invest in off-street parking for new units, there is no restriction. Eliminating parking minimums simply gives developers and residents a choice. At the same time, it gives transit a boost, reduces the environmental impacts of hardscaping, and creates more affordable housing opportunities. A market driven approach makes sense.

To build on the current draft UDC update, we recommend:

1. Removing parking minimums entirely for all HB 2001 housing types. Duplex parking requirements seem particularly excessive; many of them have sufficient frontage for on-street parking for their residents. But we also should encourage removal of parking minimums for higher density forms of middle housing, which transit can serve even more effectively.
2. Extending the multifamily parking minimum waiver zone for units from 1/4 mile around the Core Network to 1/2 mile. The Core Network is our best service, and once transit is reliable - i.e. with headways of 15 minutes or less—people are more willing to walk up to 1/2 mile to reach transit. With our increasing service levels from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund employee payroll tax, we expect to continue to improve service in the foreseeable future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian T. Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ian T. Davidson
President, Board of Directors

cc: SAMTD Board of Directors
Allan Pollock, General Manager