



January 13, 2015

Council File 14-1529

Honorable City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Honorable Members,

The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council requests that the following Community Impact Statement be added to Council File 14-1303, regarding the City Council's effort to install on-street blue curbs to create disabled parking spaces.

COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council ("DLANC") opposes installation of on-street blue curbs to create disabled parking spaces because disabled placard abuse will undoubtedly negate the intended benefits of creating additional disabled parking spaces.

To be clear, DLANC supports the City's efforts to improve mobility and access to disabled persons, but believes that creating additional on-street blue curbs without first addressing the rampant and escalating misuse of disabled placards, obviates the benefits sought by the Motion.

According to the California Vehicle Code, Section 22511.5, "A disabled person or disabled veteran displaying special license plates issued under Section 5007 or a distinguishing placard issued under Section 22511.55 or 22511.59 is allowed to park for unlimited periods in any of the following zones . . . in any metered parking space without being required to pay parking meter fees." Unfortunately, the benefits guaranteed by Section 22511.5, that is free unlimited parking in metered spots, has attracted and led to widespread and systemic abuse of disabled placards.¹ According to reports, there are roughly 2.5 million disabled placards currently in use, about 10 percent of all licensed drivers.² A recent study conducted by students at UCLA, however, found that in downtown Los Angeles, at various times, up to 44 percent of metered parking spaces were

¹ See Interview with UCLA Professor Donald Shoup, available at <http://la.streetsblog.org/2011/08/24/interview-with-donald-shoup-los-angeles-making-strides-with-expresspark/> ("The main problem we already have in L.A. is the widespread abuse of handicapped placards. A disabled placard in California is like a "free parking" pass for the entire state. One of our students just finished his Masters thesis on placard abuse in downtown. He surveyed one block on Flower Street where there are 14 metered parking spaces. Most of the spaces were filled most of the time with cars that had disabled placards. For five hours of the day, all fourteen spaces were occupied by cars with disabled placards.")

² See <http://www.govtech.com/transportation/Using-Analytics-to-Spot-Fraudulent-Use-of-Disabled-Parking.html>; see also <http://abc7.com/archive/7072930/>.

occupied by cars with handicapped placards – and those vehicles stayed in those spots, on average, 70 percent longer than the cars without placards.³ Disabled placard abuse not only makes parking far more difficult in urban areas, such as Downtown Los Angeles, but also removes much-needed parking revenue from the City and may impair retail business due to limited parking.⁴

To address disabled placard abuse, DLANC recommends that the City consider adopting a two-tiered system that takes into account different levels of disability. In a two-tiered system, drivers with severe disabilities receive special placards that allow them to park for free at meters, while other drivers with less severe disabilities receive ordinary placards and must pay to park at meters. One state that has utilized a similar system is Michigan. Before reforming its disabled placard system, Michigan had issued 500,000 disabled placards that allowed all users to park free at meters. After Michigan enacted its two-tier reform, only 10,000 drivers applied for the special placards that allow free parking at meters. Illinois also adopted a similar two-tier placard reform after the Chicago learned that free parking at meters for disabled placard users was costing the city \$22 million (about 25% of total meter revenue). To qualify for a placard that allows qualified drivers to park for free at a meter, drivers must have their doctor attest that they cannot do one of the following: (1) feed parking meters “due to the lack of fine motor control of both hands;” (2) feed meters because they need to use a wheelchair; (3) reach above their heads “to a height of 42 inches above the ground;” or (4) walk more than 20 feet due to an orthopedic, neurological, cardiovascular or lung condition.”⁵ Adopting a similar two-tiered system in the City could greatly assist in curbing disabled placard abuse and make significant gains in addressing the issues discussed herein.

This Community Impact Statement is based on the action taken at the regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting on January 13, 2015, when the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council adopted the following motion by a vote of ___ yes, ___ no, ___ abstaining and directed that a Community Impact Statement be filed reflecting its position.

Motion: “The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council opposes installation of on-street blue curbs to create disabled parking spaces because disabled placard abuse will undoubtedly negate the intended benefits of creating additional disabled parking spaces.”

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Patricia Berman
DLANC President

Eric R. Garcia
DLANC Community Impact Committee Chair

³ See <http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/MeterPaymentExemptionForDisabledPlacardHolders.pdf>.

⁴ See <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/oct/22/opinion/la-oe-shoup-disabled-parking-abuse-20121022> (“In 2010, a UCLA survey of placard use on several blocks in downtown Los Angeles found that cars with disabled placards occupied most of the curb spaces most of the time. For five hours of the day, cars with placards occupied every space on one block. The meter rate was \$4 an hour, but the meters earned only 32 cents an hour because cars with placards consumed 80% of the meter time.”).

⁵ See http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2013/december_2013/new-illinois-state-law-limiting-disabled-placard-use-goes-into-e.html.