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STATE OFFICE BUILDING

**Study of the allocation of spaces in the
State Office Building parking ramp**

**Joint Task Force on Parking in the
State Office Building Ramp**

November 5, 2001

2001 Minn. Laws First Spl.
Sess. Chap. 10 Art. 1 Sec. 12

Subd. 5

Report to the House and Senate State Government Operations Committees

Pursuant to 2001 Minnesota Laws 1st Special Session, Chapter 10, Article 1, Section 12, Subdivision 5, the charge of the Joint Task Force on Parking Spaces in the State Office Building Ramp is to:

study the allocation of spaces in the State Office Building parking ramp. Members of the task force must include a representative of the house majority, the house minority, the senate majority, the senate minority, the legislative coordinating commission, the legislative reference library, the revisor's office, and the secretary of state. A report must be presented to the chairs and lead minority members of the house and senate state government operations committees, by October 15, 2001. In developing the report, the task force must examine the issues of proportional representation based on full-time staff housed in the State Office Building, safety, fringe benefits, recruitment needs, and staff seniority, and may consider other appropriate issues. The report must include a transition plan for any recommended changes, and may include recommendations regarding the creation of additional secure parking spaces.

The task force met on September 24, October 1, October 5, and October 10, 2001. The task force consists of Michele Timmons (Revisor of Statutes), Chad Thuet (Legislative Coordinating Commission), Holly Gustner (Secretary of State), Elizabeth Lincoln (Legislative Reference Library), Shawn Peterson (House Chief Sergeant-at-Arms), Sandy Dicke (House Minority Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms), Sven Lindquist (Senate Chief Sergeant-at-Arms), Daniel Wolf (Senate Minority Chief of Staff). Others attended several of the meetings: Marilyn Hall, Robbie LaFleur, and Greg Hubinger.

The task force meetings were open and informal. The task force agreed to operate by consensus, and elected Chad Thuet as chair. Members were encouraged to bring ideas to the table. The task force met with the state's parking coordinator, Bernie Steele, to gather information about the history of Capitol complex parking. The task force also reviewed several reports on Capitol complex parking from previous years.

Proportional representation based on full-time staff housed in the State Office Building.

The task force began its work by examining a summary spreadsheet of current State Office Building tenants parking. A copy of that spreadsheet is included in the appendix. The review of that spreadsheet suggested that a fairly proportional representation currently exists in the ramp from each of the offices housed in the State Office Building. Of the 398 usable parking spaces in the ramp, members of the Legislature occupy 145 spaces, and staff occupies 253 spaces. If the allocation were truly proportional, 61% of the staff in each office would park in the ramp. The breakdowns are:

- 58% of House staff who work in the State Office Building park in the ramp
- 86% of Senate staff who work in the State Office Building park in the ramp
- 32% of Legislative Commission staff who work in the State Office Building park in the ramp
- 53% of Legislative Reference Library staff who work in the State Office Building park in the ramp

- 51% of the Office of the Revisor of Statutes staff who work in the State Office Building park in the ramp
- 64% of the Office of the Secretary of State staff who work in the State Office Building park in the ramp
- 13 additional spaces are reserved: handicapped (9); barber shop (2); plant management (1); and emergency purposes (1).

If all 579 State Office Building employees wanted ramp parking, an additional 181 spaces would be required.

Legislative staff, who work in the State Office Building but do not park in the ramp, park in Lot AA, Lot B, Lot C, and Lot X. The state has purchased property on one end of Lot AA and plans to expand the lot in the near future.

After the task force reviewed these facts, there was no consensus on making recommendations on altering the existing proportional representation.

Safety.

The task force spoke at length about safety issues. Safety issues exist for all those who work in and visit the Capitol. Since the events of September 11, 2001, all offices have become more sensitive to safety issues. This led the task force, in their charge to focus on staff ramp parking allocation, to examine staff safety and building access more closely.

Three specific safety issues were raised. One is the danger in crossing Rice Street at Aurora. Crossing at the signal at Rice Street and University could reduce this safety concern. The second is that safety is always a concern for legislative employees who are often required to work very late hours. The third is the concern in crossing University in general. Staff is advised to always cross University at a street light to minimize the risk in crossing the busy avenue.

Fringe benefits and recruitment.

Most of the offices deal with this issue internally, and the group consensus was to continue this practice.

Staff seniority.

The task force discussed this issue at length. Each office handles seniority separately and uses seniority as a factor in allocating its spaces in the ramp. The task force discussed the option of allocating spaces using an overall seniority pool. The task force agreed that an overall seniority pool may be unfair to partisan positions affected by election turnover but length of service data was not available for all offices so this could not be analyzed.

Other appropriate issues.

The task force considered other issues: the continuing decline of available parking space in the Capitol complex area over time for staff, members, and the public, the history of the original allocation of parking spaces when the ramp was built, the parking situation prior to the construction of the State Office Building ramp, and adding an additional level to the ramp. The task force met with Bernie Steele who gave a summary of state parking issues, ramp construction costs, Capitol complex land acquisition, tentative future building and parking plans. The task force determined that both short-term and long-term recommendations were appropriate.

Short-term recommendations.

The task force was appointed to study the allocation of parking spaces in the State Office Building ramp. It became clear, as discussions ensued, that it would be difficult for the task force to recommend ramp parking allocation changes. The task force recommends no change in the allocation of spaces in the ramp.

The task force explored the option of recommending adding a level to the parking ramp. There were a number of factors that suggested this would be difficult including: preliminary indications that the ramp was not designed to accommodate another level; the cost of an engineering evaluation to determine the structural capacity for an additional level; and the displacement of ramp parkers during construction of an additional level. For these reasons the task force decided this option is unlikely.

The task force examined other options for increasing the number of spaces available close to the State Office Building. Lot D became the focus of its attention. Lot D is located just north of ramp and provides 86 metered public parking spaces. Lot AA, on the corner of Rice and Aurora streets, provides approximately 120 spaces for contract parking.

The task force recommends moving public parking from Lot D to Lot AA and moving staff parking to Lot D. Advantages of this change include:

- This recommendation would be advantageous to the public. It would immediately increase the number of public parking spaces by 33. As the state expands Lot AA, more public parking spaces would be available.
- This recommendation would be safer for staff. Staff are here daily and work late frequently and their safety is an issue. Making Lot D available for staff parking would help reduce safety concerns. Because Lot AA is not currently full, displaced staff parkers should not be an issue. The convenience factor makes this recommendation desirable as well.
- This recommendation could also reduce the risk of physical threats to the ramp and the State Office Building because fewer unknown vehicles will be parking close to the ramp and the building.

- Both Lot D and the ramp could be made more secure by the addition of a security arm controlling access to the lot and the ramp.
- This recommendation could be achieved with minimal cost. Potential costs would include additional signage, moving the meter machine from Lot D to Lot AA, and adding security arms.

Long-term recommendations.

Following the short-term recommendations, the task force discussed at length the overall shortage of parking in the Capitol complex. Previous parking studies (see references) have identified this shortage. Unfortunately, those parking issues have not been resolved. The task force recommends increasing Capitol complex parking and reducing demand for both the public and staff.

The task force recommends building a new parking facility for 1000 additional parking spaces. The advantages to this recommendation include:

- This recommendation would be advantageous for the Capitol complex. It would help to resolve long standing parking problems.
- This recommendation would be advantageous for the public. The Legislature's outreach efforts and the heightened public interest in the legislative process are inconsistent with the public's access to the physical setting. The Office of the Secretary of State's services would also benefit by increased public parking capacity.

The task force also recommends promoting programs to reduce parking demands in the Capitol complex such as vanpools, carpools, pre-tax transit expense reimbursement programs, and a reduced rates for bus cards.

The task force discussed possible locations for a future ramp. The list below is in order of preference:

- The church site on Aurora and Rice streets. (Bernie Steele indicated this church was for sale.) This location would leave Lot AA free for future offices and could easily be connected by tunnel to a building on Lot AA and to the lower level of the State Office Building ramp.
- Lot AA
- Lot C
- Lot B

References:

Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board: Summary of Parking Needs and Alternative Strategies for the Minnesota Capitol Area. (Legislative Briefing Paper #1.) Strgar-Roscoe-Fausch, Inc., 1987.

Parking and traffic studies for the Minnesota State Capitol Area. Wayzata, Minn.: Strgar-Roscoe-Fausch, Inc., 1987.

Appendix

Ramp Parking Summary

Numbers and calculations are based on permanent full-time staff unless otherwise noted.

Office	SOB mbr + staff	Total ees**	SOB less mbrs	Ramp Parking	Ramp-Staff	% SOB staff	% Total
	SOB total	mbrs + tot staff	SOB staff - mbrs	Curr allotment	Less members	staff in ramp	staff + mbrs ramp
House	381	413	247	278	144	58%	73%
Senate Adj *	70	297	42	47	36	86%	67%
LCC	19	23	19	6	6	32%	32%
LRL	17	19	17	9	9	53%	53%
ORS	43	52	43	22	22	51%	51%
OSS	36	105	36	23	23	64%	64%
Other	13	13	13	13	13	100%	100%
TOTAL	579	922	417	398	253	61%	69%
Senate	70	297	42	47	19	45%	67%
LCC Tot	79	94	79	37	37	47%	47%

	Ramp Parking	Ramp-Staff	Ramp Roof	Ramp Covered	Ramp Covered	% Ramp Roof	% Ramp Cvr'd
	Curr allotment	staff only	staff only	staff only	Total mbrs + staff	staff only	staff only
House	278	144	65	79	213	26%	32%
Senate Adj	47	36	14	23	33	39%	64%
LCC	6	6	5	1	1	26%	5%
LRL	9	9	8	1	1	47%	6%
ORS	22	22	18	4	4	42%	9%
OSS	23	23	20	3	3	56%	8%
Other	13	13	3	10	10	23%	77%
TOTAL	398	253	133	121	265	32%	29%
Senate	47	19	14	5	33	33%	12%
LCC Tot	37	37	31	6	6	39%	8%

LCC - Joint legislative commissions
 ORS - Office of the Revisor of Statutes

LRL - Legislative Reference Library
 OSS - Office of the Secretary of State

Other = 2 barber, 1 Plant Mgt, 1 emergency, & 9 handicapped

* Senate adj = reflects the fact that 11 members and 36 staff park in the SOB ramp

** Total ees = all office part-time + full-time permanent employees and members