



3. park-and-ride lots: shared lots and pocket park

Park and ride lots are parking facilities where people can park their cars and either join a carpool or vanpool, or get on a bus or other transit service. Park and ride lots expand the reach of transit because people who are unable to walk to a bus stop, can still access transit by driving short distances, or by getting dropped off.

Traditionally, park and ride lots are located in suburban locations outside of downtowns, along train lines or express bus services. These park and ride lots tended to be larger formal facilities with lots dedicated to the park and ride function and, in most cases offer a range of passenger amenities.

In more recent years, transit agencies have developed shared park and ride lots with existing facilities that frequently have excess parking, such as shopping malls, or entities that primarily use their parking on weekends, such as faith based organizations. Shared park and ride lots are often marked with signage, but otherwise offer little in the way of passenger amenities. These types of arrangements have proven successful around the country.

In some urban areas, there are limited opportunities to develop traditional or, even shared park and ride lots. Consequently, some transit agencies have started to develop “pocket park and ride lots” as opportunities present themselves. Pocket park and ride lots are smaller lots with space for 30 or fewer vehicles, but that are strategically located along key bus routes. Pocket park and ride lots take advantage of available parking to encourage more people to ride transit. They may also be used in locations where people meet to carpool.



Application to Mid-South

The Mid-South region is developing a network of commuter services, but to date lacks much of the infrastructure necessary to help commuters find and use alternative forms of transit. Developing more park and ride lots, both for carpoolers and transit riders is an important part of the strategy. Because there are few existing park and ride lots, there are many opportunities in the region. Any new programs, however, would need extensive marketing.

The Mid-South region could develop park and ride lot facilities in a number of locations, including at the end of bus services that can be used for bus riders traveling into downtown Memphis, or as a location for people to meet and carpool to employers located at the periphery of the urbanized area. Park and ride lots located at the end of routes, such as Route 50-Poplar, Route 40-Wolfchase or Route 36-Hack’s Cross, for example, could be used for people for people traveling into town carpoolers looking to work locations in Germantown, Collierville, or Fayette and DeSoto Counties. At a future date, the park and ride lots could also be used as pick up points for employer shuttles and other “last mile” connections to bring people from the end of a transit service to an employment center.

Park and ride facilities, as discussed, can include a small or large number of spaces; ideally the lots size will reflect demand and offer potential for expansion. There are also opportunities to develop and market existing park and ride opportunities such as the parking available at the MATA terminals, including the North End Terminal, Central Station, American Way and Airways. Each of these facilities has a limited amount of parking that could be used for park and ride, including both traditional and reverse commutes.

As the Mid-South Region develops park and ride lot infrastructure, it also important to include the full suite of supporting programs and products, including employer transportation programs, ride-matching services, vanpool programs, guaranteed ride home, bike facilities (lockers and racks) and signage and marketing.

How it works

Pocket park and ride lots can be developed in a variety of ways ranging from transit agencies purchasing and developing sites; using former Department of Transportation construction staging areas near freeways; and signing contracts with shopping malls and faith-based organizations.



Parking Lot at Mississippi Blvd
Christian Church, Memphis, TN

When creating pocket park and ride lots, the idea is not to look for large parking lots but rather smaller strategically located lots that can be served from the street or are close to a major bus stop. The intent is to increase the range of transit for people who can't quite walk to a bus stop but would still benefit from using transit for part of their trip.

Locating pocket park and ride lots involves touring major bus service corridors to identify potential space. In many cases there are already informal

places where riders have found and use small pockets of parking to access the bus. Space may be partial space at an employer or retail establishment that overbuilt parking, or through a site that has changed ownership and parking no longer matches need. Once space is identified, transit staff can research ownership and discuss potential sharing agreements with the owners.

Finding and securing pocket park and ride lots is not easy, largely because opportunities are limited and building owners can be wary of sharing parking. An important strategy for transit agencies is to ensure their agreement is reasonable and enforced through clear communication. Improvements to the lot may be feasible through direct or grant funding.

Funding

Park and ride lots are typically funded by a combination of federal, state and local funding programs. Depending on the location of the park and ride lot in the Mid-South area, these funding sources may include:

- Urbanized Area Formula Funds (Section 5307) : funding for capital, operating, and planning funding assistance for public transportation in urbanized areas. Capital programs typically require a 20% match from local entities, which may include the state.
- Rural Area Formula Funds (Section 5311) : funding for capital, operating, and planning funding assistance for public transportation in non-urbanized areas. Capital programs typically require a 20% match from local entities, which may include the state.
- Bus and Bus Facilities Program (Section 5339) : this new funding program under MAP-21 provides funding for buses and bus related facilities and probably could be used for park and ride lot development.
- Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) provides funding for strategies that reduce air pollution. CMAQ funds can be used for a wide variety of transit uses, including park and ride facilities.

Best Practice

The *Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)* has an active system of over 300 park and ride lots around the state. Some lots serve rail and bus transit and others are for carpoolers only.



As part of developing the park and ride lot system, VDOT also created a well-organized and easy-to-use website that helps potential users find the nearest or most convenient park and ride lot and clearly describes any restrictions on using the lot as well as available transit and vanpool service available from the lot. VDOT also recently launched a marketing plan with strong branding and signage to promote the park and ride lot network, let people know when new lots are available, and links the park and ride lot with their 511 travel information system.

VDOT is also in the process of developing a cost savings calculator and trip planner to articulate benefits from using the park and ride lot.