Transportation and Parking Committee
Minutes
April 21, 2006

Present: Mark Armstrong, Patrick Donohoe, Rick Johnson (Guest), Doug Jones (Guest), Edward Lener, Richard McCoy, Amanda Mitchell, Steve Mouras, John Pollard (Guest), Pat Rodgers (Guest), Josh Sarfity, James Tyger, Wyatt Sasser

Patrick Donohoe called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

The March 17, 2006 minutes were approved. Several guests were in attendance so everyone went around the table and introduced themselves.

Old Business:

• Steve Mouras briefly reviewed some of the problems caused by current practices regarding state vehicle parking practices. He indicated that this was the second meeting to gather data and input from those around campus who oversee large vehicle fleets. The guests were then asked to each share their thoughts and concerns.

• John Pollard, the Director of Engineering Operations for Communications Network Services, reported that his field service activities fall into two main categories. For outside work, such as adding cable underground or in steam tunnels, a service vehicle is usually needed to provide power and ventilation during the installation process. For inside work he argued it is also important for vehicles to have close proximity to work areas so as to have access to tools, ladders, cable reels, etc. Since they operate on a cost-recovery basis more time spent going between the vehicle and job site could translate to higher fees.

• CNS vehicles all return to their designated area overnight. John indicated that they may need to look at a vehicle by vehicle basis as to which ones need turf permits. When asked about identifying numbers for CNS vehicles John indicated that this is not currently done but that he was willing to consider adding numbers to the bumpers.

• Doug Jones, Field Engineering Manager from CNS, added that members of his staff do troubleshooting and repair of telephone and network services in different buildings on campus. Added restrictions on parking may make it harder to keep scheduled appointments if it means additional travel time. He indicated that his unit has weekly staff meetings and that these meetings often include reminders about vehicle-related issues such as potential damage to tree roots caused by parking under trees.

• Doug also inquired about service vehicle parking in plaza areas such as at War Memorial Gym, near McBryde, and between the University Bookstore and Newman Library. Both Doug and John indicated that adding service vehicle spaces in certain places on campus would aid in reducing the problem of parking on sidewalks.
Steve Mouras asked everyone for their thoughts on the best way to ensure accountability if new rules are put into place. One option is to ticket individual vehicle operators. The other is to treat it strictly as a personnel matter for disciplinary action. Either would require that the vehicle operator who committed the violation be identified and to do this cooperation from the various units would be essential. Those present seemed to favor the ticketing approach as it provided an immediate incentive for drivers to comply yet would not have any of the long-term impacts that might be associated with personnel action. If ticketed, vehicle operators would have an opportunity to appeal through the usual channels.

Rick Johnson, Director of Housing and Dining Services, said he was unclear about what the exact rules are at the present time and stressed that any new policy be clear and well-communicated. For the dining facilities vehicle access is generally good. However on the housing side of operations there are many areas of campus that do not have access roads. His crews need to be able to get close to buildings to maintain the residence halls. They are exploring the use of more off-road vehicles that have less impact on the turf but these have limitations and can’t be used for larger tasks such as transporting mattresses.

Rick also spoke about employee morale in relation to any changes that are made with regard to state vehicles on campus. In particular he noted similar concerns relating to commercial delivery vehicles such as those from Coca-Cola, UPS, Federal Express, etc. and emphasized that these also need to be addressed by any new policy. Richard McCoy responded that commercial vehicles on campus are now subject to a Vendor Business Contractor (VBC) policy and that things have improved in recent years as a result. One problem when violations are reported is that the delivery vehicles are only in one spot for a very short time so it can be hard to ticket them.

Pat Rodgers, Director of Business Technologies, oversees mail service on campus. She emphasized the importance of being able to get close to the buildings when transporting large quantities of mail each day to departments and to students. Frequency of such deliveries may have to be reduced if new restrictions are imposed that significantly increase delivery and pickup time. Richard McCoy responded that certain buildings may need to be looked at on a case by case basis and cited Litton Reaves as an example. At present the mail truck does not use the loading dock there but parks on the sidewalk directly in front of the building.

Steve Mouras thanked the above guests for their input. He and Patrick Donohoe then led a brief discussion of how the committee wanted to proceed. Richard McCoy suggested inviting guests from certain departments on campus that have large numbers of state vehicles that are parked in spaces long-term to get input on that aspect of the issue. The committee agreed that this would be a good idea and that the final meeting of the academic year would be used to complete the information gathering process. Steve indicated that his office would prepare some draft proposals for the committee to review when it resumes in the fall.
• The committee briefly discussed the issue of the intersection of Spring Road and Washington Street. Steve Mouras indicated this is now on the list of campus projects but did not have an estimated completion date at this time.

New Business:
• Patrick Donohoe sought volunteers for a new co-chair of the committee and for a new recorder. Wyatt Sasser offered to serve as co-chair provided his appointment to the committee is renewed. No one present volunteered for the recorder position so this will be on the agenda again for the May meeting.

• Josh Sarfity passed along a suggestion for the timing of Blacksburg Transit schedules. During the evening hours buses run less frequently and the current BT schedule does not correspond to the class schedule. Bringing the two into closer alignment would help reduce wait times and might boost ridership.

• Josh Sarfity also expressed concern from students over changes in the Perry Street lots associated with the new sewer line being run through Derring Lot and into the commuter lot areas. The first question was whether adequate notice had been given when some spaces were designated for faculty/staff use. Richard McCoy reported that bright yellow signs went up a week in advance of the change and that for two weeks afterward his staff only issued warning tickets rather than real ones. Everyone agreed that this was sufficient for people to become aware of the change. Josh also asked about Perry Street Lot 2 which has many faculty/staff spaces sitting empty. Steve Mouras indicated that this was a temporary problem. One entrance to the lot has been blocked as a result of construction so that lot has had limited access. This entrance should be reopening within a few days. Steve Mouras also emphasized that route of the new sewer line was largely determined by the topography of the area and must follow the lowest route. Since the project is estimated to require 8 months time to complete there was no way to avoid an impact during the school year.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 A.M.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 3 at 10:00 A.M. in the Sterrett Center, Room 90R.

Respectfully submitted,
Edward Lener, Recorder