Strategy 4: Improve Access to Downtown

4.1: Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from Downtown to reduce future parking demand.

Improving access to Downtown by walking and biking will minimize future parking demand in the Downtown. The City should prioritize capital projects that improve access to Downtown for pedestrians and bicyclists through the City's transportation and capital plans.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: Capital costs will be developed as part of the transportation and capital planning process. Design and planning costs will not substantially increase if considered as part of the regular updates to the transportation plan and annual update to the City's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

4.2: Expand secure bike parking Downtown using a systematic, data-driven approach. Evaluate the need for more secure parking and potential bike parking locations where there is high demand.

Bicycle parking is important to support transit access and commuting. The City should develop a bicycle parking plan that identifies areas of high demand such as at the transit center and near major employers, best practices for bicycle parking technology, and partnerships with community organizations and major employers to increase bicycle commuting to and from Downtown.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: A bicycle parking plan could likely be developed in-house by existing City staff with limited consultant assistance. There may be an opportunity to leverage other City planning projects such as the Downtown wayfinding plan to also address bicycle parking. Capital costs would be developed as part of the bicycle parking planning effort.

4.2: Encourage carsharing in public and private parking facilities.

Carsharing services such as ZipCar, Car to Go, and ReachNow provide access to vehicles as an alternative to vehicle ownership. Carsharing vehicles are more efficient than individual ownership because they are shared amongst many users since most vehicles spend most of the time parked. Carsharing vehicles increase mobility options while decreasing the demand for parking. Carsharing vehicles can be provided in private residential or non-residential parking lots, in public off-street lots, or in on-street parking stalls. Carsharing vehicles may require round trip use or one-way trips typically using on-street parking stalls. An on-street carsharing program requires a City ordinance establishing a permit program for carsharing vehicles and associated permit fees.

Currently, the nearest carsharing services are provided by ZipCar at the Evergreen State College. No carsharing services are currently operating in the City of Olympia. The City should discuss opportunities

to provide service Downtown with carsharing companies and pursue partnerships with major employers such as the State of Washington. Other incentives may include a reduction in the on-site parking requirement or other incentives for providing carsharing vehicles in new developments.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: Staff time to update the Municipal Code to establish an on-street carsharing permit program and associated fees and other carsharing incentives.

4.4: Collaborate with local and regional transit agencies to improve service to and from Downtown.

The City should pursue transit access improvements to Downtown in partnership with local transit agencies. While transit agencies have the primary responsibility for transit planning the City owns the streets and public right-of-way that buses travel along, and therefore have a role in improving transit efficiency and access. Transit improvements may include updating routes based on new development and changing demand, improving signal timing for transit priority, expanding and improving bicycle parking, allocating the public right of way for transit improvements such as bus bulbs and improved shelters, parking for transit access, and commute trip reduction programs to increase incentives for transit use.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: Staff time and capital costs associated with coordinating with local and regional transit agencies and planning future improvement projects within the right-of-way.

4.5: Implement the street and public space improvements from the 2016 Downtown Strategy to improve pedestrian comfort, mobility, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), focusing on the Downtown Core.

The Downtown Strategy includes several major street improvement projects that may impact the amount, location, and configuration of on-street parking. Improved streetscapes that support greater levels of pedestrian comfort and mobility as well as better ADA access will improve the experience with the parking system. Some reduction of parking to support these mobility goals may be a better use of the public right-of-way than maintaining every on-street parking stall. In addition, the shared parking program is an opportunity to increase parking access using parking that is already constructed and not currently being used.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: Staff time and capital costs associated with planning future improvement projects.

4.6: Explore alternatives that provide angled parking for Downtown street projects.

Angled parking has the potential to significantly increase the amount of on-street parking. Converting parallel parking to angled parking typically requires the reduction in the width of travel lanes or the elimination of one or more lanes of travel. Some downtown streets have a center turn lane that may not be warranted and may support the conversion of parallel parking to angled parking. Sidewalk widths in

relation to supporting ground floor land uses should also be considered as wider sidewalks are generally favored along active first floor uses such as retail stores and restaurants that may desire outdoor seating. Back in angled parking could also be considered.

Timeline: Short to mid-term

Estimated Costs: No significant costs as angled parking would be considered as part of the design and engineering that is already required for the street projects.

4.7: Implement a program that will give free bus passes to low to moderate income Downtown employees through a commute trip reduction (CTR) task force with members from the City, major employers, transit agencies, community organizations, and other interested stakeholders.

To incentivize Downtown commuters to take the bus, the City could reinstate the free bus passes that were a part of the Downtown Commuter Program (in place from 2008 to 2010). Among other tools, the Downtown Commuter Program provided free monthly bus passes on a first-come first-served basis. Funding during the program came from Washington State Department of Transportation grants. During the public engagement process of the Downtown Parking Strategy, free bus passes were identified as a desired amenity. The City could re-implement the program using funding from the Parking Fund. The City and Olympia Downtown Association could work together to determine employee eligibility and administration of the program.

Timeline: Short-term

Estimated Costs: There would be costs associated with purchasing or subsidizing the bus passes. Currently, local monthly passes are $30 and it would cost $3,000 per month to purchase 100 passes for distribution. This would cost a total of $18,000 for a 6-month pilot program. There would be staff time associated with administering the free pass program as well legal review by the City attorney to ensure that there would be no legal issues with the program structure related to the gift of public funds.