A Survey Of Modern Car Parking Habits

## Overview

Over the last two generations modern cities have undergone a rapid change from bustling busy centres of commerce to over-congested, polluted blocks of concrete car parks. Indeed, our research indicates that many corporations are moving their head offices out of these cities into industrial parks and estates on the city fringe to escape the unhealthy smog in favour of green lawns and plentiful trees.

The purpose of this study is to review the impact in recent times of the motor vehicle and to assess whether commuter habits need to change. We don’t plan to highlight or make any monumental changes through the publication of this report – however, we do wish to highlight the situation and create an open and vigorous discussion of the issues at hand.

## Recent Trends

A survey of car parking trends indicates alarming increases over a period of twenty years in most of the major international cities of the world. Information provided by the *International Automobile Car Park Attendants Association* (IACPAA) shows a steady increase in the number of parking spaces required in six major cities over the period from 1985 through to 2000. Future projections for most of these cities show a continued rise in the number of car parking spaces required.

One reason for the increase in car parking requirements in European cities may be attributable to the corresponding increase in smaller, more commuter-friendly vehicles such as the *Smart*. This vehicle can be parked at all angles, and can sometimes be physically picked up and placed in another location by two burly people.



Nevertheless, the progressive increase in inner-city vehicle parking has led to congested thoroughfares and roadways. In Berlin, which has seen a period of rapid regrowth, it is often difficult to find a free car parking space, with every conceivable spare centimetre of space utilised for car parking.



The average time taken to locate a street-based car park has increased from 5.7 minutes in 1985, to over 14.6 minutes in 2000. This of course compounds inner-city pollution problems and results in excessive fuel consumption as vehicles are constantly driven around narrow and congested streets.

Anecdotal evidence exists to indicate that the car parking problem is also significantly impacting upon commerce and daily business activities, and is even endangering the lives of pedestrians. A common practice for many delivery drivers frustrated by the inability to secure easy access to buildings is to park upon pedestrian walkways. This is dangerous in that the vans are usually driven onto busy pedestrian walkways often narrowly missing pedestrians, and also forces pedestrians to detour around parked vans. Many pedestrians actually detour onto the road way itself thus creating a rather weird paradox where vehicles are on pedestrian walkways, while pedestrians are one vehicular carriageway.



Most city councils penalise the drivers of these vans without fully understanding the cause of the problem.

## Car Parking Spaces

## The Future

However, the survey indicates that all is not gloom and doom.

In some countries, suburban private and public areas close to transport centres are being opened up for parking enabling commuters to park and then catch high-speed, low-cost public transport directly to city centres. In the United Kingdom these facilities are often referred to as park-and-drive stations.

In Dublin, for example, golf course car parks, which are traditionally quite and under-utilised during weekdays, have been opened up for public and commuter parking. This has proven to be a great boon to both the public transport system and also the gold club members who have reaped the benefits of an additional source of income. Secondary evidence also suggests that the rate of vandalism has decreased at these clubs as a consequence of the increased number of people such as commuters in the car park.



The rest of this survey is devoted to reviewing some of the more interesting innovations with car parking currently in use.