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PRINCIPLES

OF ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND PUTTING THEM TO USE

WHEN THE TERM "ACCESS MANAGEMENT" WAS COINED more than 25 years ago to describe an approach to designing mobility functions, organizations were not thinking about relationships between parking, transportation, pedestrian movement, bicycling, sign and graphic guidance systems, and all the other elements that comprise an access management system. Instead, parking was managed by one group and bus systems were typically managed by another, guidance or wayfinding was almost nonexistent, and transportation demand management (TDM) was not even in the lexicon.

Now, there is more interest than ever in coordinating all the elements that affect an individual's journey to and from a destination, as well as general mobility. There are several reasons for the new impetus: coordinating activities is more cost effective, organizing functions can be better for the environment in multiple ways, and individuals want improved access with wiser use of consumable resources.

The principles of access management work equally well with employees, patients, students, and visitors of all types. This article outlines 10 important principles and provides examples of different environments in which many of them have been put to use successfully.

1. Successful Access Is a System.

Too often, access is understood simply as one person's trip from one location to another. But access management requires thining of the all the ways people get to and travel within a destination, whether it's a single building, an office complex, or a large university campus. Parking, transportation, signs, public information, and the other elements affecting mobility are a system, and access management planning works to ensure the system works efficiently and effectively. The elements of access management all affect each other, and in general, one should not be changed without considering the effects on all the rest.

For example, a university campus cannot simply add a new transit route without assessing how that route will interact with existing transit routes, parking facilities, traffic, pedestrian patterns, information and sign systems, and many other considerations. Similarly, adding a large new building to a downtown will affect commuter patterns, traffic, loading/unloading, and some transit connections. If access issues are not taken into consideration in the planning of new activities or construction, they often require expensive operations later to compensate for poor design.

2. It All Starts with Policies.

Developing an access management plan or starting to address some of its principles begins with the identification and approval of policies. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines policy as "a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions." Thus, policies may define which activities should be undertaken, which may no longer take place, and the priorities of an organization with regard to access management. Policies may come from the top down or include an interactive process, but the result is the same.

Effective access management policies are tangible expressions of an organization's commitment to the good stewardship of natural resources. The close coordination of access activities provides a good example of how complex activities can be organized to achieve the multiple goals of efficient and effective movement of people, and the economical use of financial and environmental resources.

A hospital or medical center might organize its policies to emphasize the priority of activities to benefit patients, such as convenient parking, shuttles between buildings, valet assistance, or convenient drop-off areas. An equal priority may be service for physicians or nurses who are critical for patient care.

An institution may need to state what is obvious as a basic policy: parking is a scarce resource and not everyone will get a convenient parking space. For most institutions, land for buildings is more important than land for parking. Thus, peripheral parking is a necessity. Policies that portray a realistic situation and the reasons for it can

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reduce bad impressions, prevent unrealistic expectations, and foster greater understanding throughout the institution.

3. Convenience is a Scarce Resource.

Everyone wants the most convenient parking space, right outside the destination (or the shortest delivery route, or a direct, non-stop transit ride). This cannot be achieved for all travelers to the same destination. Unless the combination of money and space is no object, compromises and priorities will continue to be facts of life.

In an access management scenario, convenience must be treated as the scarce resource it is, and it will not be equally distributed. Also, convenience typically comes with a higher cost.

Most large universities allocate their limited parking spaces by some form of hierarchy, whether they provide proximate parking based on an individual's position within the university, by price, or a combination of the two.

At hospitals, proximate access to emergency parking for visitors is generally a given. After that, patients and doctors typically get the best spaces. More hospitals are opting to provide valet services to promote patient and visitor convenience, after which staff may be accommodated through shuttles to on-site or even peripheral parking areas. Convenience and proximity to the work site is a significant issue for employee satisfaction, safety, and land use.

Cities may have the finest line to walk between convenience and affordability of parking, especially given that one of the primary goals for on-street parking programs is offering parking that is both things. But limited curb space must serve many masters: buses, rush-hour traffic, delivery vehicles, and short-term parking customers. As a result, the parking regulations are many and varied on the typical downtown block. The closer to desirable destinations, the greater the demand and the higher the price, regardless of time of day. Regulation and pricing work together to help manage and allocate convenience in the on-street world.

4. Not All Mobility Activities are Equal.

Access management requires evaluating all the ways that individuals get to their destinations and determining which modes of travel should take precedence. In some locations, pedestrian movement takes priority over all other modes. In others, bus movement has the higher priority. And in still others, the use of personal vehicles ranks first because other modes are not available. The placing of priorities should not be confused with the ranking of people, or groups of people. It is strictly based upon the most desired ways of travel depending on location, needs, and values.

Many college and university campuses emphasize pedestrian movement through their master plans, road closures, and efforts to enhance sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian safety. In many cases, personal and service vehicles are banned from the core of campus, with only fire and safety vehicles allowed to travel where pedestrians predominate. Of course, this takes a great deal of planning in order to ensure that day-to-day logistics (deliveries, service, catering) still take place in reasonable and efficient ways.

Priority may be given in some locations to carpools over single-occupant vehicles. Even if similar fees are charged, a better parking location may be enough to encourage some individuals to carpool rather than drive alone.

5. There's No Such Thing as a Free Ride.

The cost of good access management needs to be evaluated in light of the costs associated with either doing nothing and keeping an undesirable status quo, or building more parking. While everything has a price, the real issue becomes, "What is achieved as a result of the expenditure?" for policies, wayfinding systems, a TDM program and participation incentives, and the other concepts discussed here. Where is the value in dollars saved when compared with negative perceptions, customer inconvenience, and wasted fuel, when insufficient resources cannot support an effective access management system?

Relatively few cities have invested in good wayfinding programs to assist drivers. The costs associated with congestion, emissions, fuel, wasted time, and frustration—not to mention those who simply abandon their trips—are surely higher over time that the cost of good wayfinding.

Similarly, a college or university must invest in developing TDM programs. Successful programs must create solutions (public transit passes, owner shuttle systems, rideshare, etc.), advertise, perhaps provide incentives, continually support public information campaigns, and offer real-time information about program components. The cost of developing and managing a TDM program offsets the cost of parking spaces that would need to be constructed to accommodate similar populations.

A TDM program is also a long-term investment, as changing behavior takes time.

6. Logistics: Basic Functions Always Need to Be Considered.

Master planning and urban planning often fail to consider the imperatives of daily functions that must occur. All destinations have their own needs, whether those needs are deliveries, service of equipment, maintenance and upkeep, drop-off of individuals, bus stops, or parking for loading/unloading.

Closing roads to create a more pedestrian campus does not work if the reasonable routing of circulator buses is hampered and service vehicles cannot reach buildings. Similarly, designing a new classroom building without a loading dock or service area will only force these daily services to use the front door or other public spaces not designed to accommodate them. Insufficient parking for daily transactions will lead to undesirable parking behavior by those who have logistics responsibilities. Keeping the logistics needs in mind when planning buildings, roadways, and circulation is a must in access management.

7. Effective Wayfinding and Timely Information Go Hand-in-Hand.

A major tenet of access management is to provide the correct information where and when it is needed, and to assume that wayfinding guidance is best applied in multiple forms and is reinforced (repeated) at key points to serve as confirmation to the motorist or pedestrian.

It does no good to tell someone a parking lot is full after he enters the lot or when he's already turned into the one-way street leading to that full lot. Similarly, there is no benefit to telling someone the bus is detoured after boarding it. Individuals should be given as much information as possible about getting to and from destinations, in multiple forms at the right time and place, at key decision points leading up to their destinations.

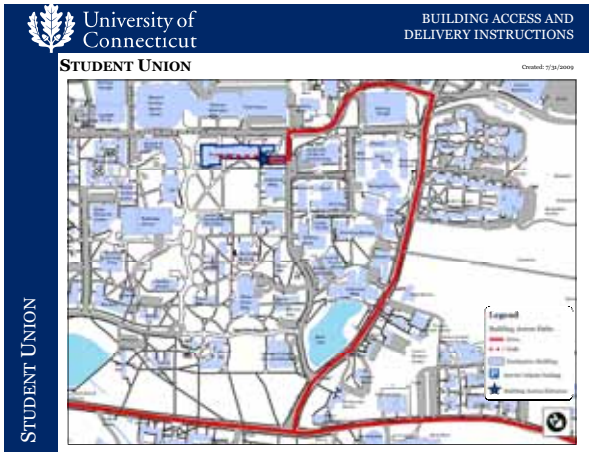
Airports represent classic examples where improper and insufficient placement of wayfinding information signs can lead to parking customer angst and frustration or worse. The authors have missed flights due to a lack of signs at key decision points; imagine turning into a garage access lane in the middle of the airport only to be greeted by a parking representative saying "parking is full," requiring doubling-back and a subsequent 20-minute walk.

As the saying goes, "familiarity breeds contempt," and poor wayfinding message placements, too! A planner's familiarity with a site can lead to assumptions in the placement (or non-placement) of signs and with the nature of the message. Conversely, unfamiliarity with the parking environment and destination choices can actually be an advantage when it comes to locating wayfinding messages. Seeing a place for the first time and trying to find one's way to a location is the real test of whether wayfinding and information is adequate and helpful.

8. Change Takes Time and Communication.

Implementing a change to a holistic access management-based approach can initially be upsetting for system users. The level of discontent seems to increase exponentially with the amount of time an individual has been in an organization or at a location. A very important part of comprehensive access management is to have constant and consistent communication with user groups, and to solicit their feedback and involvement as functions are altered. Old habits die hard, even if they no longer serve the environment in which they exist. However, those old habits exist for what seem to be good reasons to those who have them, so changes need to take into account why individuals are doing what they are doing, and how this will change with a new system.

A recent example involved trying to find out why mail was being delivered through the front door of an older building, instead of being delivered through the loading dock. Discussions with mail personnel revealed that the only elevator to the second floor mail room was just inside the front door, at the opposite end from the loading dock. Thus two alternatives were available: change the method of moving



ACCESS MANAGEMENT considers the planning, use and integration of traffic and circulation, public transit, alternative transportation modes (ridesharing, bicycles), parking, pedestrian movement, sign and graphic guidance systems, logistics (deliveries, service vehicle use, fire and safety), and public information.

These elements are all part of a continuum of activity that either helps or hinders the ability to find a desired destination.

The goal of access management is to enable individuals to arrive at their destinations as easily and safely as possible, while keeping the process as economical as possible for the destination's owner.

mail from hand carrying to using a rolling hand truck so that the loading dock could be used, or continue using the front door even though it interfered with pedestrian access. The institution had to decide the lesser of the evils. But a good lesson for future building design was also revealed.

On a broader level, communicating the goals and objectives of an access management plan through the use of PowerPoint or a similar program can be very helpful in illustrating why changes are needed and what the organization wants to accomplish. Photos of vehicles on sidewalks, trucks delivering goods through front doors, ruts and ruined landscaping along sidewalks, and delivery vehicles in accessible parking spaces can express much about why behavior and activity need to change.

Following up with affected user groups can be very valuable. After new policies and procedures are established, there will be a need to fine tune them. Asking individuals to evaluate the pros and cons of some changes will provide worthwhile insight on how the new procedures are really working.

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9. Enforcement: The Tie that Binds "Access" and "Management".

Too often, enforcement is overlooked or is considered an undesirable part of city, campus, medical center, or special event venues. But the truth is that all the planning in the world is useless without solid and consistent enforcement of access management regulations.

Vendors will continue to drive on the sidewalks to get close to buildings unless they will suffer some consequences for continuing that behavior.

Students will continue to ride bicycles in pedestrian areas if no enforcement prevents them from it.

Organizations will continue to put up their own signs wherever they want unless there are guidelines and enforcement to prevent it.

10. Performance Monitoring.

As with any functioning system or process containing a variety of specialized parts functioning as a whole (similar to a vehicle), the access management system's gauges and meters need to be consistently monitored. The program manager should develop characteristics or performance indicators that will exhibit success or less-than-desired performance. Then, staff needs to pay constant attention to the system's indicators to maintain a proper balance of service as demands shift and passengers or motorists come and go.

Municipal parking managers should monitor parking supply and demand, and the performance of the parking regulations and enforcement operations, through parking activity surveys for occupancy, violation and turnover rates, violation capture rates, violation payment rates, etc. Persistent tickets for delivery vehicles parking on sidewalks, for example, is a significant indicator of insufficient curb space for managing day-to-day logistics.

Monitoring transit ridership and parking demand at a university can be accomplished through a range of methods, from manual passenger and vehicle counts, to sophisticated automated passenger counters linked to GPS-based vehicle locators, to parking access and revenue control systems that monitor garage availability rates in real time. Understanding the increase in transit ridership and its effects on parking demand can affect planning for additional parking facilities, or use of existing ones.

We believe that a holistic approach to the consideration of all elements affecting access brings greater value to planning and operations, eliminates solutions that will not be successful, and avoids design mistakes that must be compensated for with more expensive operations. In short, access management promotes the wise use of resources and responsiveness to the ways in which individuals move to their destinations. P