

DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON PARKING STUDY

Prepared under the direction of the
Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

FINAL REPORT

June 2006

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Organization for: Town of Huntington**

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**This document was developed through the assistance of the Federal Highway
Administration, The Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and the
Massachusetts Highway Department**

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I. INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Town of Huntington, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) has conducted a parking study for the downtown area as part of our current Unified Planning Work Program. The purpose of a parking survey (or parking usage study) is to provide details on the efficiency of existing parking facilities and determine the need for revising the existing parking supply. This report presents a summary of the existing parking supply in downtown Huntington, surveys the existing demand for parking on an average weekday, and recommends improvements to alleviate parking problems.

Study Area

The study area for the Downtown Huntington Parking Study as shown in Figure 1 includes the public and private parking facilities in the Central Business District (CBD). The major streets in the study area include the Main Street/Federal Street loop, Route 20, Prospect Street (Municipal Lot), and a small portion of Blandford Hill Road. Main Street contains 9 active businesses and two vacant storefronts. Currently one of the storefronts located in the Diamant building is currently in the process of being renovated to house a restaurant. The majority of the buildings on Main Street are mixed-use multiple story buildings containing both business and residential space. Federal Street parking is predominantly used by town employees and Huntington residents with town business; however this parking area is also used for functions at Stanton Hall and the Chapel, associated with the Huntington Evangelical church. Route 20 has wide shoulders through out the downtown which encourages on street parking, and because this section is not signed as no parking consumers mainly use the shoulders for quick stops at either the package store or the pizza shop. This section of Route 20 does see some overflow parking on nights when there are town meetings or other large events in the Downtown.

II. METHODOLOGY

Parking inventories are intended to gather information on existing parking supply and its use. Parking inventories include observations of the number of parking spaces and their location, time restrictions, and the type of parking facility. In order to facilitate the recording of parking areas, the study area is divided into several blocks. Inventory data is then displayed in tables as part of the actual parking study. This allows for a comprehensive method of evaluating the data.

Accumulation (or occupancy) checks and license plate checks are the two types of usage studies used in this study. Parking accumulation is the total number of vehicles parked at any given time. The purpose of accumulation checks is to establish hourly variations and peak parking demand. These occupancy studies can be performed by using maps with field sheet tables to record the total number of parked cars in each block and the number of legal spaces in each block.

License plate checks are the technique used to observe the turnover for parking usage studies. Turnover is defined as the average number of cars parked per day during the study period in each space of a given block. These license plate checks are most often performed by an individual at 30 minute intervals walking a particular route and recording the license plate numbers of vehicles occupying each parking space. The last three digits of the license plate number of each parked vehicle are entered in the field sheet for each defined parking space.

FIGURE 1
Downtown Huntington Parking Study Area



III. DOWNTOWN HUNTINGTON PARKING INVENTORY

As the initial component of the parking survey, an inventory of the number of both on-street and off-street parking systems in the study area was conducted. This information is shown in Figure 2. Since some curb spaces were not marked, it was assumed that each space would occupy 18 feet of curb within the study area. A total of 124 parking spaces were identified in the downtown area. Public parking in the Downtown consists of Main Street with 20 parking spaces, Federal Street with 33 spaces one of which is handicap, Route 20 has the potential to have 22 spaces and the Municipal lot was estimated to have 25 parking spaces for a total of 100 public parking spaces. Private lots consist of the bank which was estimated to have 9 unmarked spaces available for its customers; the Post Office has 7 marked spaces one of which is for handicapped parking and 2 unmarked spaces on the bank side of the building used by Post Office employees. Lot 3 off of Main Street was estimated to have 6 unmarked parking spaces totaling 24 private spaces including 1 handicapped space.

The location of all parking spaces can be identified by matching the corresponding block name to the information on Table 1-Downtown Huntington Parking Survey Results. Table 1 also identifies the maximum amount of parking spaces per block, how many cars were parked in the block per observation period, the average amount of vehicles that

were parked during the study period, the average utilization for the study period, and illegally parked automobiles.

FIGURE 2
Huntington Parking Inventory



IV. PARKING USAGE STUDIES

The parking survey was performed for one day on Wednesday, October 25, 2005. The study started at 7AM and was performed every half hour until 8PM. The number of occupied parking spaces was recorded at the beginning of each interval. In addition, parking turnover information was collected by recording the last three license plate characters at the following locations through out the study.

- The North and south sides of Route 20 between Federal Street and the Post Office including the section of Blandford Hill Road included in the study (Route 20 Block).
- The east and west sides of Main Street from Route 20 northbound to Federal Street (Main Street Block)
- The North and south sides of Federal Street between Main Street and Route 20 (Federal Street Block) and,
- The Post Office Parking Lot, including two unmarked spaces on the west side of the building (Post Office Block).

TABLE 1
Huntington Parking Results

Lot Name	Lot 1	Lot 2	Lot 3	Route 20	Post Office	Main St.	Federal St.	Totals
# of Spaces	25	9	6	22	9	20	33	124
7:00 AM	6	0	5	0	1	9	4	25
7:30 AM	5	1	5	1	2	10	4	28
8:00 AM	6	0	5	0	2	5	4	22
8:30 AM	8	0	5	1	3	7	4	28
9:00 AM	7	0	5	0	4	9	21	46
9:30 AM	7	1	4	0	3	10	20	45
10:00 AM	8	0	4	1	3	11	20	47
10:30 AM	8	3	4	2	2	12	24	55
11:00 AM	8	3	4	3	2	11	18	49
11:30 AM	8	3	4	3	3	12	19	52
12:00 PM	7	3	4	1	5	10	18	48
12:30 PM	7	0	4	2	2	15	14	44
1:00 PM	7	0	4	3	2	13	10	39
1:30 PM	6	0	4	0	2	16	9	37
2:00 PM	8	2	4	0	2	17	7	40
2:30 PM	8	1	4	0	2	18	8	41
3:00 PM	7	3	4	1	3	16	6	40
3:30 PM	8	5	4	0	2	17	4	40
4:00 PM	8	3	4	2	3	18	7	45
4:30 PM	6	1	4	1	3	15	9	39
5:00 PM	6	1	4	1	2	16	8	38
5:30 PM	7	3	5	2	2	15	6	40
6:00 PM	5	0	3	1	1	15	8	33
6:30 PM	3	0	2	0	2	14	12	33
7:00 PM	8	0	2	0	0	13	14	37
7:30 PM	8	0	2	2	0	13	22	47
8:00 PM	10	0	3	2	0	10	19	44
Average # of Cars per Block	7	1	4	1	2	13	12	40
Average Utilization Per Block	28%	14%	65%	5%	24%	64%	35%	32%
Total # of Illegally Parked Cars	0	0	0	2	0	4	1	7

V. PARKING SURVEY RESULTS

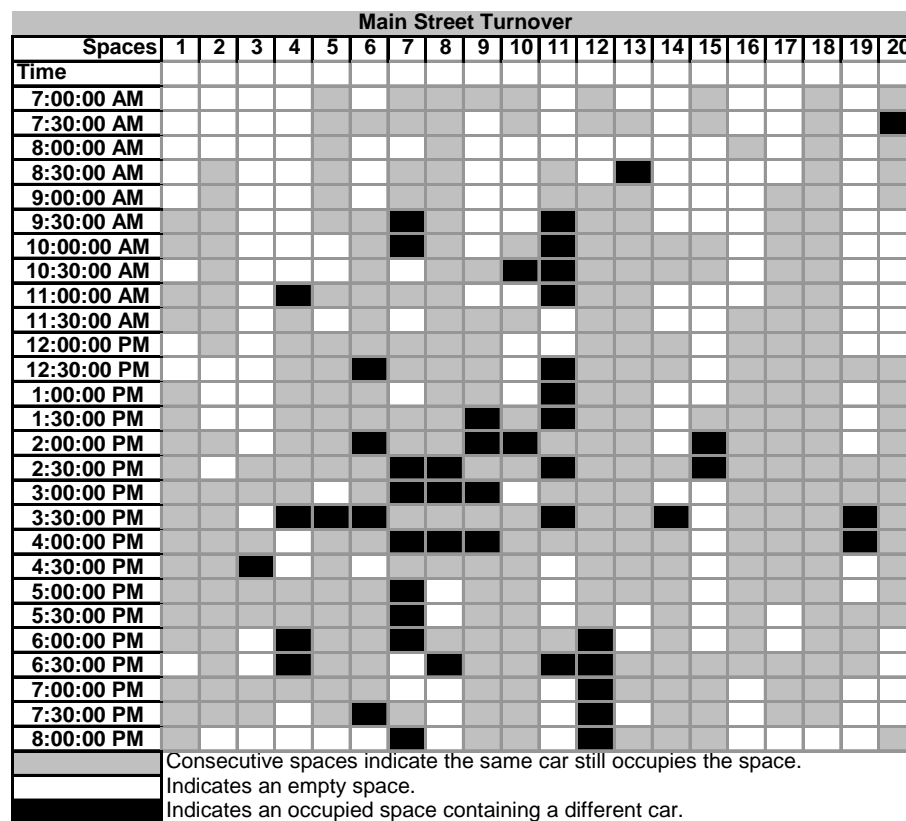
A Parking Occupancy Survey shows the number of vehicles parked in pre-defined areas over a set time-period. The distinction between a Parking Occupancy Survey and a Parking Turnover Survey is that in a Turnover Survey the license plate numbers of the vehicles are taken down during the observed time periods. This allows for the determination of the length of time a particular vehicle is parked in a particular parking space.

Table 1 summarizes the information for the Parking Occupancy Survey. The importance of this information is the recognition of highly utilized areas. The most highly utilized areas in Downtown Huntington were the Main Street block and Lot 3. These two locations had utilization percentages of 64% and 65% respectively. Please note that the size of Lot 3 behind the Heath/Diamant buildings was estimated to be 6 parking spaces. Lot 3 was observed as having 2 abandoned vehicles and Lot 1 was observed having 4 abandoned vehicles parked within study area at the time the survey was performed. The peak parking period occurred between 10:30AM and 11:00AM. A total of 55 vehicles or forty four percent of the total parking supply were observed during the peak interval.

The following is a description of parking turnover observations and results from data collected during the survey. In order to show areas with the least amount of turnover, graphs were created to show space occupancy by vehicle per half hour. Figure 3 shows the number of times a space was occupied during the survey in the Main Street Block. The Main Street block was chosen because it had the poorest turnover rates of the entire study area. The 20 parking spaces in the Main Street block are undesignated spaces, meaning any car can park in a space for any amount of time. Figure 3 shows clearly that several cars are spending extended periods of time in these on-street parking spaces.

- Morning Peak hour occurred from 10:30AM to 11:00AM
- Evening Peak hour occurred from 7:30PM to 8:00PM

FIGURE 3
Parking Turnover: Main Street



The following were also noted:

- 15/20 spaces were occupied for 6 or more consecutive intervals
- 9/20 spaces were occupied for 10 or more consecutive intervals
- On the day of the survey, there was a yoga class in Stanton hall from 9-10:30, which increased the number of cars in the Federal Street Block
- Business owners reported cars illegally parking in the Alley leading from the Main Street Block to Lot 3. Cars were observed to pull into the alleyway in the evening while waiting to pick up their children at the dance studio.

- Currently the Post Office lot is used primarily by Post Office patrons, however the Post Master expressed concerns about future overflow into their parking lot with the addition of new businesses.
- Parking on Route 20 doesn't appear to be an issue at this time. MassHighway has jurisdiction over Route 20. There are no regulations in place permitting parking Route 20.
- The Municipal Lot (Lot 1) is currently under used. Lot 1 had an average occupancy of 28% during the survey. It appears that the only utilization of this lot was by residents of Prospect Street and employees of the bank located on Route 20 west of the Post Office. This lot was observed to have four abandoned automobiles in it during the survey.
- The Municipal lot was observed to have poor signage and poor pavement markings. There are currently no pedestrian accommodations in the vicinity of the Municipal lot.

FIGURE 4

Abandoned Vehicles (Municipal Lot)



Municipal Lot Parking Sign



As shown in Figure 5, Main Street is the most highly used area for parking within the study area excluding Lot 3. This block averaged 15 occupied spaces out of 20 per observation period, with an average utilization of 64%.

FIGURE 5
Utilization per Block

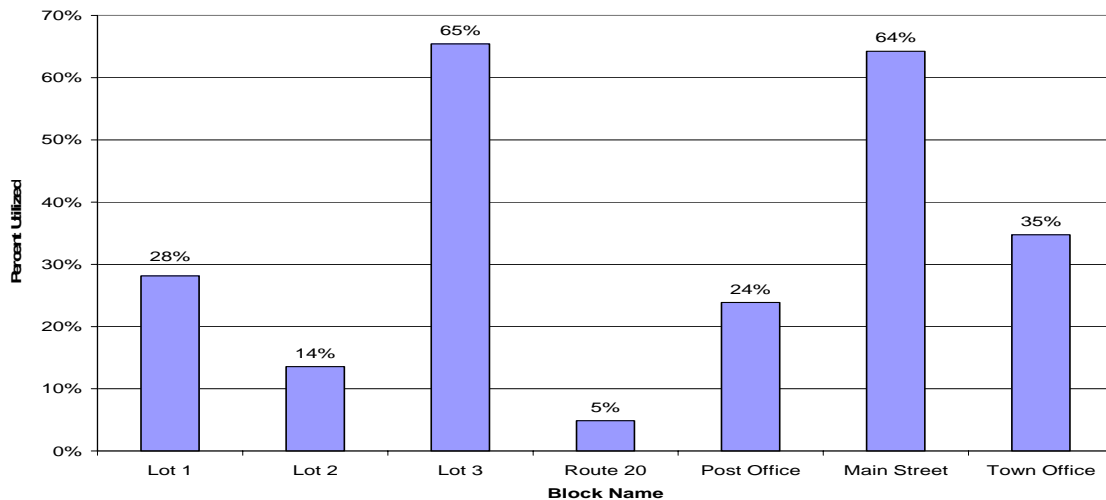


Figure 6 shows the utilization of Main Street. Main Street has an average utilization of 64% or 13 cars. There are 20 parking spaces available to 11 potential businesses on Main Street; this means there is 1.8 spaces available for each business.

FIGURE 6
Utilization of Main Street

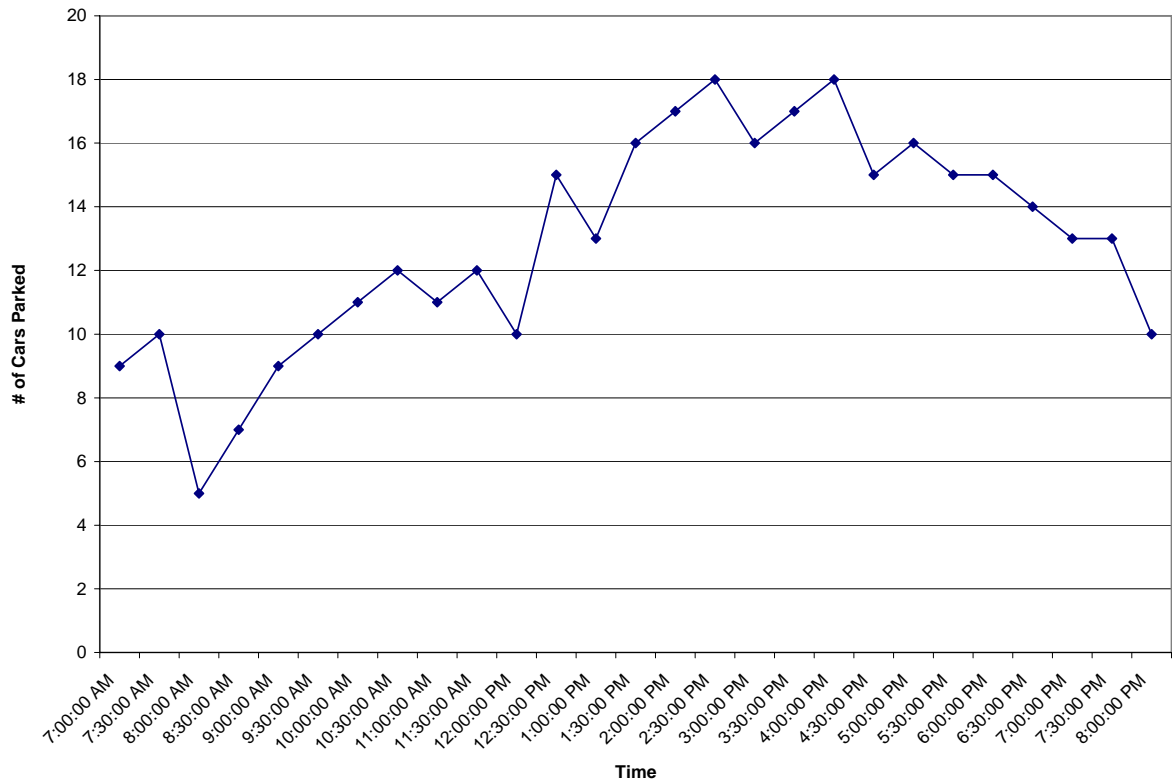
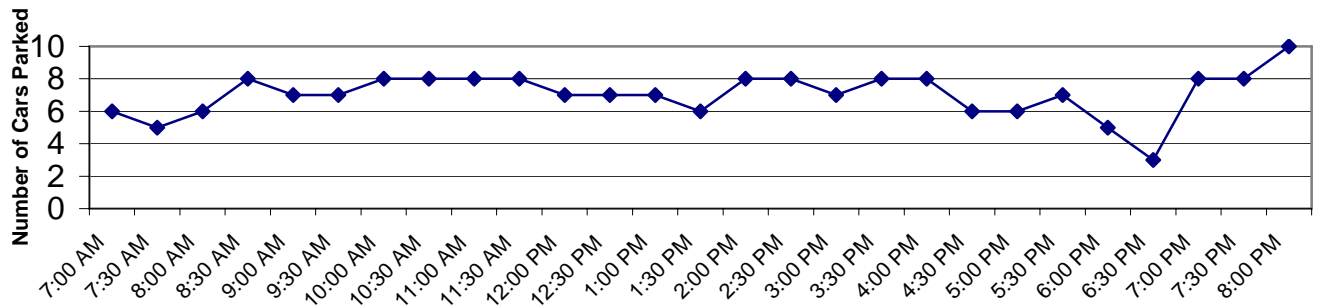


Figure 7 shows the utilization of the Municipal Lot (Lot 1). As illustrated in the graph, Lot 1 has a very low utilization rate, averaging 28% or 7 cars. Of which 4 were assumed abandoned. The most likely reason for the low utilization is the lack of knowledge and accessibility of the lot. At peak hours this lot remains largely under-utilized.

FIGURE 7
Utilization of the Municipal Lot (Lot 1)



VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the parking in downtown Huntington does not seem overly problematic. Most streets and lots do not reach their full capacity at any time during the day. In addition, many of these areas could withstand a much higher volume of automobiles. Taking into account the minimal amount of spaces available in the direct vicinity of the downtown businesses, and the possible future downtown growth, the following recommendations should be considered.

- The Town of Huntington should consider improving the Municipal lot (Lot 1) on Prospect Street. These improvements should include new markings, signing, paving and lighting.
- Pedestrian upgrades should be made to provide easy access to and from the Municipal lot. These improvements should include but not limited to: new crosswalks (a crosswalk should be added at the east end of the town common to allow town employees and residents to cross Route 20 and have direct access to the town offices), signage, sidewalk upgrades, and the addition of curb extensions on Route 20 where crosswalks are located. Curb extensions at the crosswalks would help calm traffic through the Downtown.. Huntington will have to consult with Masshighway District 1, who has jurisdiction over Route 20, prior to the implementation of any changes.
- Signs should be placed in appropriate locations directing patrons to the municipal lot
- The Town of Huntington should consider opportunities as they become available to expand the existing parking supply. This could include the acquisition of private land for use as parking areas.
- Designate locations for parking of downtown employees to increase on-street parking availability for patrons. Make sure employers are aware that their employees should not be using on-street parking spaces.
- The Town of Huntington is encouraged to approach the apartment owners on Main Street in order to develop a parking agreement for tenant parking. The agreement should allow residents to use the certain parking spaces on Main Street and Federal Street during non-business hours.
- Huntington should have the abandoned vehicles located on publicly owned land removed.
- The Town of Huntington should re-evaluate the existing parking supply in the downtown to ensure that parking spaces are laid out in the most efficient way.

The Town of Huntington needs to decide whether or not parking on Route 20 in the Downtown is needed. Currently Masshighway District One does not have a formal parking policy in place that allows automobiles permission to park on Route 20 through the downtown. This regulation isn't currently enforced allowing cars to park at random through the downtown. By designating short term parking areas, parking can be better controlled allowing automobiles to park only where it has been determined safe to do so.

Designating parking on Route 20 will have both advantages and disadvantages for the Downtown. A disadvantage would be winter maintenance which would be more difficult, parking bans would need to be issued and enforced to allow plows room to navigate Route 20 during snow storms. Advantages include the ability to regulate parking so cars would only be allowed to park in designated areas for designated times. Also cars parked on Route 20 would potentially act as a traffic calming device to reduce the speed of vehicles traveling through the Downtown. Designating on street parking would also assist local businesses on Route 20 as well as act as overflow parking for

town meetings and other events in the Downtown. MassHighway District One has jurisdiction over Route 20, the Town of Huntington should consider petitioning the District to designate short term parking along Route 20 through the downtown.

VII. APPENDIX
Parking Turnover Graphs
Lot Utilization Graphs
Survey Form

Turnover

Federal Street

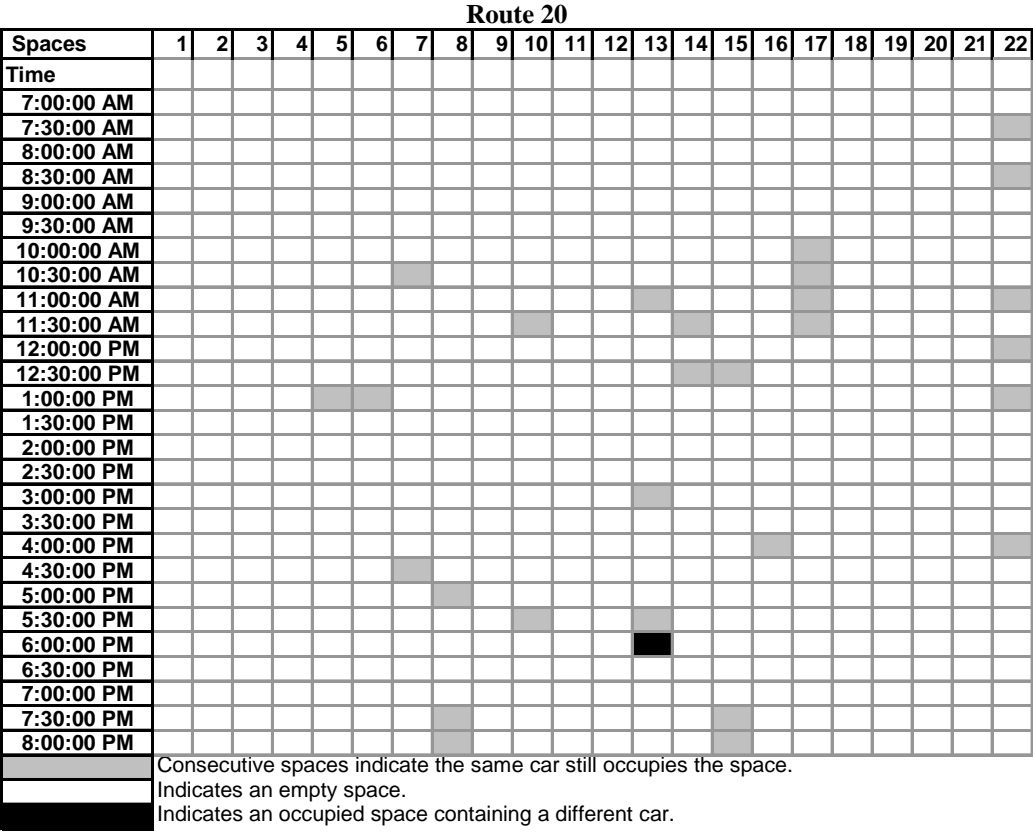
Space	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
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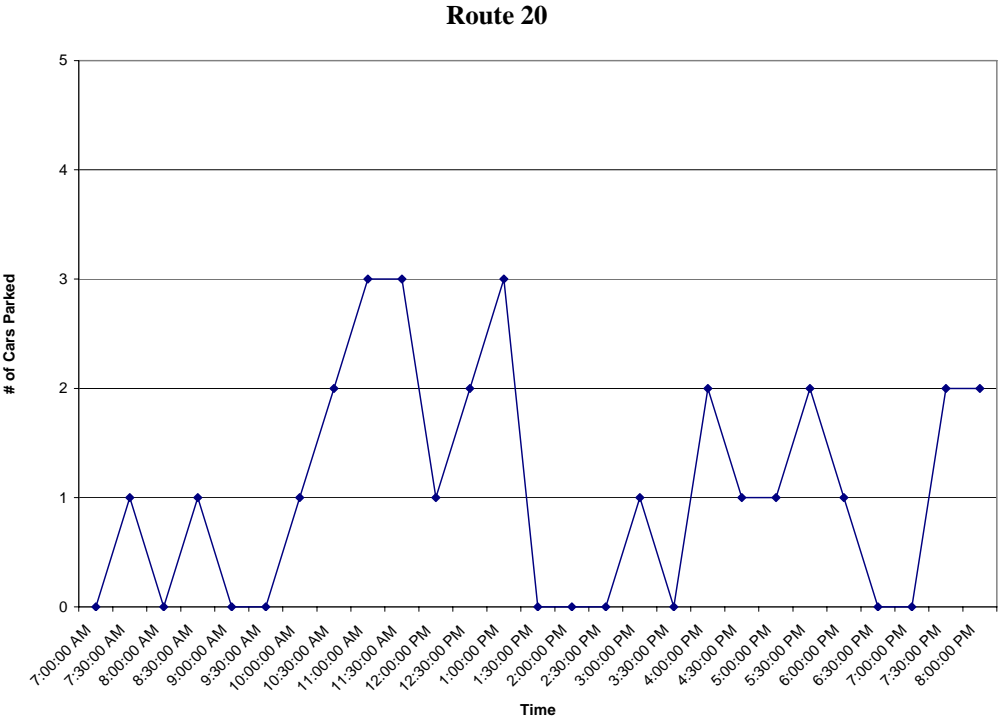
Post Office Lot

Spaces	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Time									
7:00:00 AM									
7:30:00 AM									
8:00:00 AM									
8:30:00 AM									
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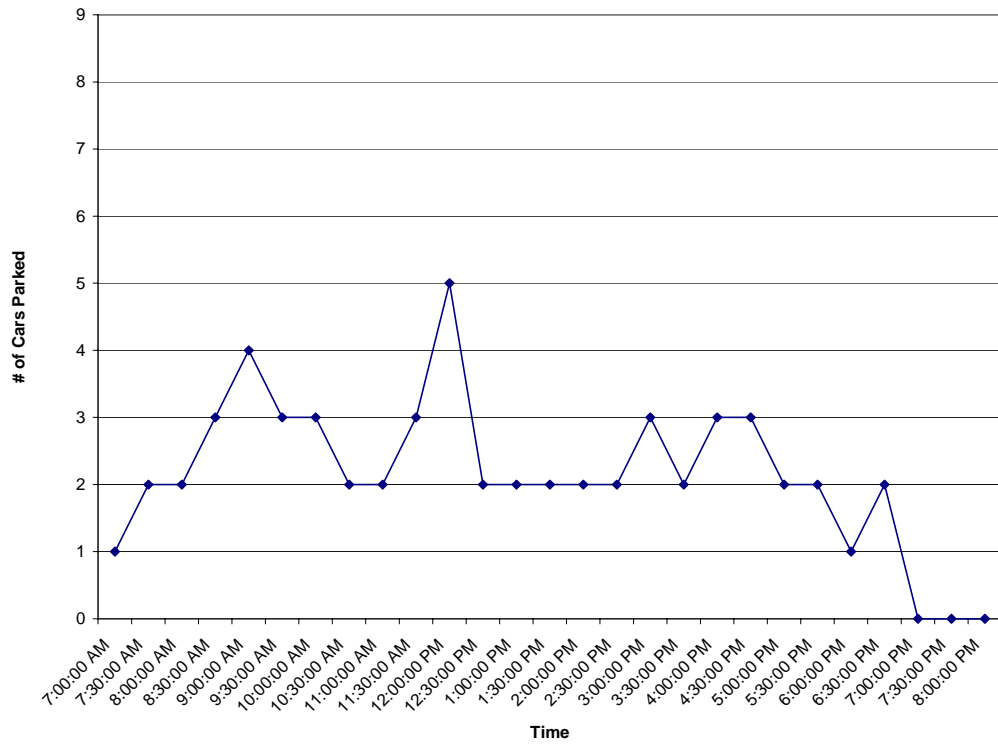
Consecutive spaces indicate the same car still occupies the space.
 Indicates an empty space.
 Indicates an occupied space containing a different car.



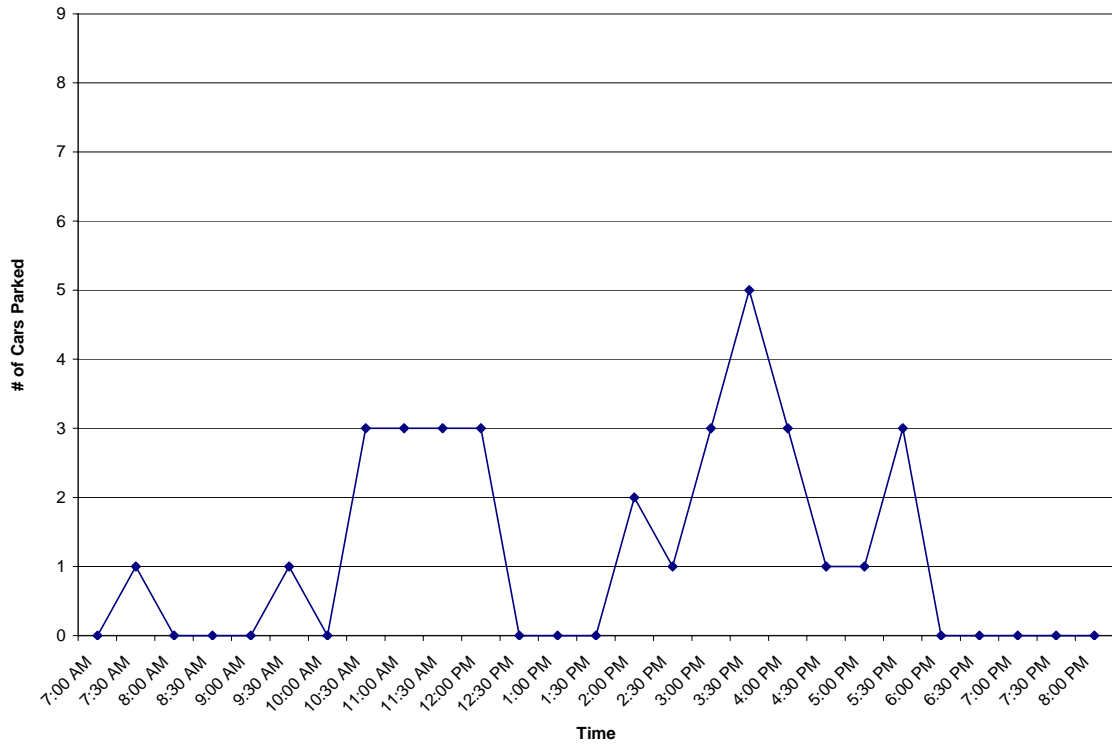
Utilization

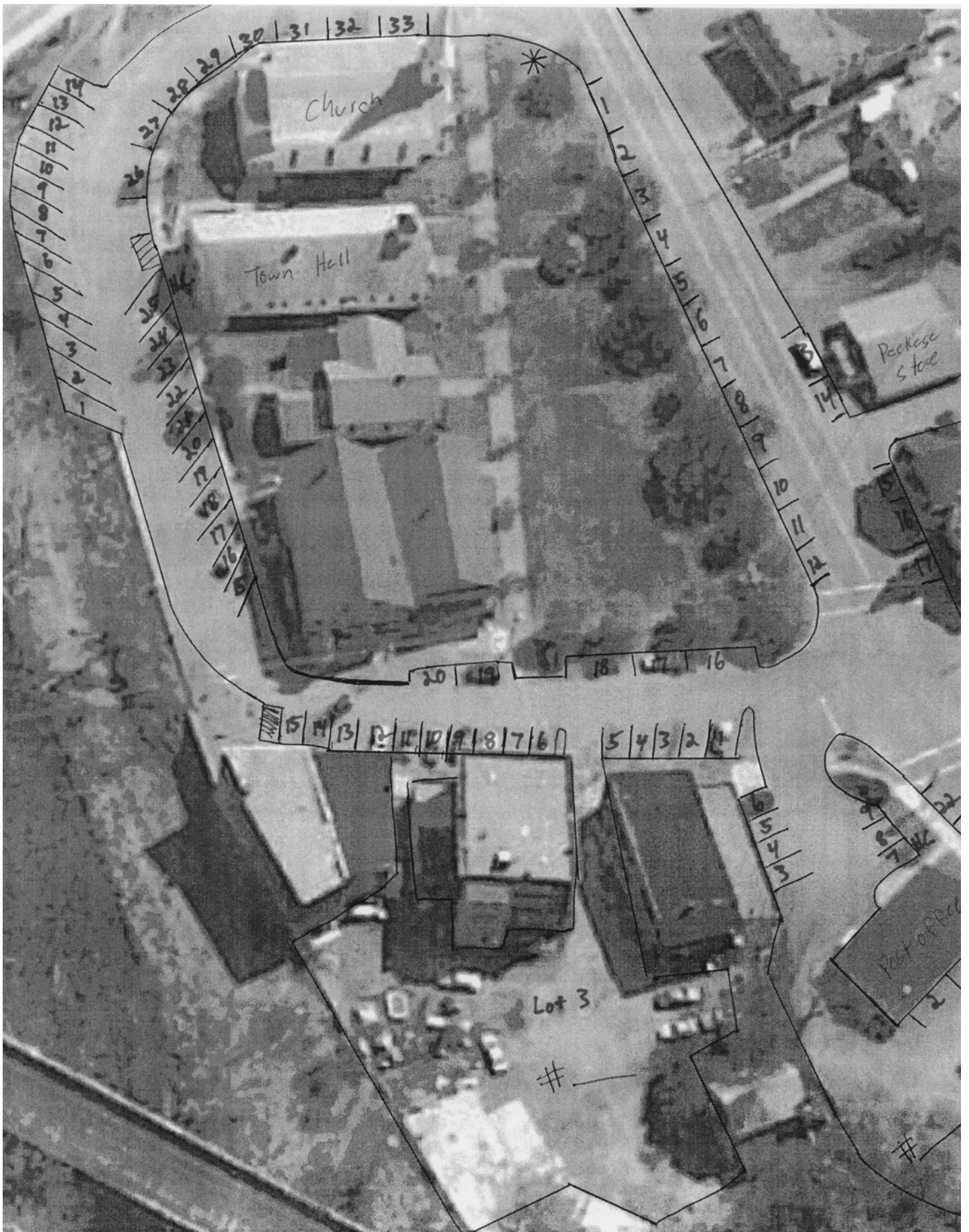


Post Office



Bank Lot (Lot 2)







Survey Performed on October 26, 2005

1. Start each round of the survey at the Asterisk, and survey in the same direction every half hour.
2. Record the last 3 digits of license plates in the appropriate parking space. Count cars only in lots specified on the survey form (Include abandoned cars each time)
3. Draw in any cars parked illegally
4. Be as accurate as possible when entering data and write neatly in order to make data processing easier.
5. Use comment section for any observations or notes dealing with the parking study.

Comments _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears slightly aged or off-white. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.