

Central City Parking

September 2014

Key Findings

Central city shoppers or visitors

When asked what had the most influence on their decision to visit the city centre:

- 40% said it was for reasons other than parking
- 36% said it was the free parking
- 14% said it was the availability of parking in locations that are convenient.

Most people (86%) found it easy or very easy to find a car park.

Compared with last year, 26% said it was harder to find a park, 50% said it was about the same and 19% said it was easier.

Most people visited the city for about an hour.

Free parking meant almost half the people stayed in town for longer they previously would have. Most of the comments were about feeling less rushed, having time to browse or take a coffee break, and not worrying about getting a ticket.

Central city workers

Most workers (79%) usually park in free all-day parking on the city fringe or in private car parks but 13% usually park in short-term public parking.

Almost a quarter of workers said they had changed where they park during the free parking period in July and August, to park closer to work.

About half of the workers surveyed use their car for work to come and go throughout the day.

Grace period

Most respondents (70% of workers and shoppers) thought 10 or 15 minutes was a reasonable grace period before a car is issued with a ticket.

Methodology

The survey was open for a week between 11 and 4 September 2014. It was sent to 1230 people who had registered for Nelson City Council's People Panel. Most of the people on the panel have been randomly selected but about 30 percent are from a database of residents who previously indicated they would like to give feedback on Council policies and decisions.

There were 520 responses to the emailed survey. The response rate of 42 percent is very good compared to similar surveys.

The survey had two general questions about the availability and management of parking enforcement as well as specific questions targeted at two particular groups of people:

- central city workers who drive to work
- central city shoppers and visitors who'd visited the city centre in the previous two months but don't work there.

There were 70 responses from central city workers who usually drive a car to work. This is a small sample off the approximately 7000 people who work in the inner city and the results should be treated with caution. The results are indicative rather than representative.

The demographics of the survey respondents differ from the wider Nelson population and under-represent people aged under 40 and Stoke residents. The demographics of survey respondents are compared with Nelson demographics at the end of this report.

As not all the respondents were randomly selected it is not possible to calculate a margin of error or confidence level for the results. However the results still provide useful feedback from a significant number of residents.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the questionnaire.

Next steps

The results of the survey were used to evaluate a free parking trial, which ran in the central city over winter, and to inform a [report](#) to a Council meeting on 9 October with recommendations for the next steps for central city parking. At the October meeting, Council [decided](#) to trial offering the first hour free for six months to March 2015, with an increase in the hourly park charge from \$1 to \$1.50.

Detailed Results

Central City shoppers and visitors

There were 400 respondents who had visited Nelson city during July or August and 340 travelled by car. Of those 340 that travelled by car:

When asked what had the most influence on their decision to visit the city centre:

- 40% said it was for reasons other than parking
- 36% said it was the free parking
- 14% said it was the availability of parking in locations that are convenient
- 5% said it was because there was less chance of getting a parking fine
- 5% said it was the availability of parking with time limits that are convenient

Most people found it easy (64%) or very easy (22%) to find a car park. 12% found it hard and 3% found it very hard.

Compared with last year, 26% said it was harder to find a park, 50% said it was about the same and 19% said it was easier. The remaining 6% didn't know or couldn't remember.

Most people visited the city for an hour or so:

- 9% visited for less than 30 minutes
- 35% visited for 30mins to an hour
- 39% visited for an hour or two
- 16% visited for longer than two hours, including 2% who visited for longer than 3 hours

Free parking meant 46% of people stayed in town for longer they previously would have. Most of the comments were about feeling less rushed, having time to browse or take a coffee break, and not worrying about getting a ticket.

Central City workers

There were 70 responses from central city workers who usually drive a car to work. This is a small sample off the approximately 7000 people who work in the inner city and the results should be treated with caution. The results are indicative rather than representative.

Where do they usually park?

- 45% usually park in free all-day parking on the city fringe
- 34% usually park in private car parks
- 13% usually park in short-term public parking
- 7% usually park somewhere else, e.g. 3% park in car pool parks
- No one selected Wakatu Square

22% had changed where they park during the free parking period in July and August, to park closer to work.

53% use their car for work to come and go throughout the day.

Two-thirds of the respondents work full-time and third work less than 30 hours a week.

Grace period

All respondents (workers and shoppers) were asked what they thought is a reasonable grace period before a car is issued with a ticket. Most people thought 10 or 15 minutes was a reasonable amount of time:

- No grace period 2%
- 5 minutes 8%
- 10 minutes 37%
- 15 minutes 33%
- 20 minutes 17%
- 30 minutes or more 3%
- Other 1% (such as proportion of the time limit)

Comments

275 people made further comments about parking in Nelson city centre.

The most common issue (40 comments) was the perception that the **enforcement** is 'over-zealous', don't allow enough of a grace period or give tickets when rule breached only slightly e.g. "double parked for 30 seconds" or "parking slightly on white line" or "only 1 minute over time". There were comments that the anxiety over getting a ticket deters people from visiting or shortens their visits.

However there were also 10 comments supporting enforcement and that it was necessary to ensure workers don't utilise the car parks.

In terms of **supply**, there were about a dozen comments saying there aren't enough car parks or suggesting a parking building is needed and a similar number saying there is enough or too many. However there were another 19 comments saying there is a need for **all day parking for workers**. Several people commented that long stay parking is impacting on residential areas on the city fringe. About a dozen people commented that workers were using the short-term parking during the free parking promotion.

About 30 people supported the free parking initiative and/or wanted it to continue, although it's not clear if they meant just in winter or all year round. Half a dozen people commented it needed to be **free** to compete with Richmond. There were about 10 comments saying the **charges** for parking are okay or cheap. Five people suggested the first hour could be free, two people said the first two hours, and one said the first 30 minutes. Several people said the first

10 or 15 minutes should be free to enable quick visits without the hassle of finding coins and going to a meter.

There were 7 people who wanted longer **time limits** and another 8 people who want a system where you can **pay as you leave**. There were about 12 comments saying it was inconvenient finding change or having to estimate the length of their visit. Several people suggested electronic payment methods.

There were 15 comments asking for **other forms of transport** to be encouraged, including the recognition that parking management has an influence on transport choice. Other suggestions included covered bike racks, free buses and park and ride options. There were 7 comments about making parts of **Trafalgar Street** pedestrian only.

There were 10 comments about it being confusing that **Wakatu Square** wasn't free.

There were 7 comments about parking being harder to find on Saturdays and suggesting the **Saturday Market** is located somewhere else.

There were also 9 comments about the **senior parking permit**, which currently allows people over 65 to park for one hour for free. There were some suggested changes about when and where they could be used as well as few complaints that they have been devalued by the free parking initiative.

Demographic Analysis

The survey ended with optional demographic questions.

	Percentage of Parking Survey Respondents	Percentage of population aged 15 and over (Census 2013)
	%	%
Gender		
Male	42	47
Female	58	53
Age		
15-39	11	34
40-64	58	45
65+	31	21
Suburb		
Stoke	26	37
Tahunanui	8	11.5
Nelson Central	52	40
Atawhai and Nelson North	14	11.5