

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: August 6, 2025

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Tim Ricard, Economic Development Manager
Subject: Downtown Parking

Recommendation to Council:

Provide feedback to staff regarding downtown parking, including potential adjustments to the Emily Rose Circle parking lot.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Fiscal Health. Goal Statement: Ensure the economic health and long-term financial viability of the Town.

Background:

The launch of SMART passenger train service in June 2025 has altered downtown parking dynamics. While the addition of a regional rail connection presents opportunities for economic growth and mobility, it has also created hardships for downtown businesses, as Windsor transitions to hosting a major transportation hub in the heart of its town center. This report provides background on the ownership and management of downtown parking assets and outlines potential policy changes for Council consideration.

The Emily Rose Circle parking lot—also known as the Windsor Intermodal Transit Facility—was completed and opened in 2006 as part of a broader strategy to support multimodal transportation in Windsor. The facility was developed in partnership with Sonoma County Transit and with the assistance of federal transportation grants, which dedicated the site to support transit ridership. It was envisioned as a park-and-ride and transit hub to serve Sonoma County Transit, future Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) operations, and general public access to Downtown Windsor. The lot includes 97 public parking spaces.

The facility is governed by an Intermodal Cooperative Agreement between the Town of Windsor and Sonoma County Transit, and is jointly owned by the two agencies. Under the terms of the agreement (Attachment #1), the Town of Windsor is responsible for parking enforcement and day-to-day management.

The lot is currently using a joint Town of Windsor and Sonoma County Transit sign (Attachment #2) which attempts to reserve the spaces for commuters. However, without the addition of enforcement provisions from the Town of Windsor Municipal Code or the California Vehicle Code, enforcement is not possible.

Parking Spaces Reserved for Park and Rider Commuters
Monday thru Friday
6:00 AM to 8:30 AM

Adjacent to the Intermodal facility are an additional 64 private parking spaces—20 residential and 44 commercial—owned and operated by the Town Green Village Association (TGVA) for exclusive use by nearby residential and commercial units. These private spaces are not subject to Town management or public parking policies. Attachment #3 shows the location of these public and private parking areas.

In June 2025, SMART completed and opened a new 125-space surface parking lot located just south of the Windsor River Road and Windsor Road roundabout. The lot is owned and operated by SMART and intended to provide all-day parking for rail commuters and Downtown visitors. While the new lot was designed to alleviate pressure on nearby on-street and shared-use parking, many SMART riders continue to use the Emily Rose Circle lot, as it is significantly closer, further straining parking availability in the downtown core.

Timed Parking

In 2008, the Town Council adopted Ordinance No. 2008-239, which amended the Municipal Code to authorize the creation of time-limited parking zones by Council resolution. This ordinance continues to guide the Town's parking policy and enforcement framework.

Guided by the Downtown Parking Management Study (Attachment #4) and informed by extensive community feedback, the Town Council adopted a resolution in 2023 using the authority granted by Ordinance No. 2008-239 to implement time-limited parking throughout Downtown Windsor. This included the designation of free three-hour parking zones and 15-minute parking zones in high-demand areas to improve turnover and better support local businesses.

Key elements of the parking management program include:

- Free three-hour time-limited parking and 15-minute time-limited parking in designated areas to encourage turnover and availability for customers;
- Free all-day parking in peripheral lots, including the SMART lot, to accommodate Downtown employees, SMART riders, and visitors with longer stays.

To improve public awareness and wayfinding, staff developed a Downtown Parking Guide (Attachment #5), which was updated in May 2025 to reflect the addition of the SMART lot. The guide was shared widely through an outreach campaign targeting residents, businesses, and visitors, helping to educate the public on parking options available throughout Downtown Windsor.

Discussion:

Staff have heard the concerns expressed by Downtown business owners regarding increased parking congestion and reduced availability since the launch of SMART service. Many businesses have shared that these changes are impacting customer access and overall Downtown vitality. In response, the Town is taking proactive steps to evaluate parking management strategies and identify practical solutions that balance the needs of transit riders, visitors, and the business community.

Staff have been in coordination with Sonoma County Transit, SMART, and the Windsor Police Department to evaluate the establishment of time restrictions for the 97 public parking spaces at the Emily Rose Circle parking lot—also known as the Windsor Intermodal Transit Facility. One approach would be to designate:

- **93 spaces as 24-hour parking**, to support transit riders and long-term Downtown visitors; and
- **4 spaces**, adjacent to the Windsor Visitor Center, as **three-hour parking**, with signage indicating

they are for exclusive use by Visitor Center patrons.

This proposal is consistent with the Town’s broader downtown parking strategy and is intended to achieve multiple goals:

- **Support SMART and Sonoma County Transit ridership** by preserving 24-hour access to the majority of the lot;
- **Promote turnover in high-value short-term spaces** near the Visitor Center to better serve tourists and day visitors;
- **Improve access for Downtown businesses and employees**, particularly during peak periods;
- **Free up spaces currently occupied by long-term parkers**, increasing availability for customers and transit users; and
- **Enhance Downtown economic vitality** by ensuring a mix of parking options that accommodate both short and long visits.

Enforcement of timed restrictions has historically been inconsistent due to staffing limitations at the Windsor Police Department. However, recent staff reorganization has increased the Town’s capacity to support parking enforcement throughout Downtown. This added capacity will help ensure that parking rules are followed and that time-limited spaces remain available for their intended uses.

New signage and pavement markings would be installed within the Emily Rose lot to clearly communicate the new time restrictions. These designations would allow the Windsor Police Department to enforce the restrictions through citation and towing as authorized by the Municipal Code. Effective enforcement is essential to maintaining compliance and delivering the intended benefits of the parking management program.

If Council is supportive of pursuing these or alternative time restrictions at the Emily Rose lot, staff would return with a formal resolution to establish the restrictions, along with a fee schedule to set the associated parking fines.

Fiscal Impact:

The fiscal impact associated with the proposed time restrictions in the Emily Rose Circle parking lot is minimal and can be absorbed within the existing FY 2025–27 operating budget. Costs include the fabrication and installation of new signage and pavement markings to designate the 24-hour and three-hour parking spaces. These costs are estimated at less than \$2,500.

No additional staffing is required for enforcement. The Windsor Police Department’s Community Services Officer will incorporate enforcement of the new regulations into existing patrols. Parking violations will be processed through the Town’s existing agreement with the Phoenix Group for citation management and collection.

Environmental Review:

This action does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378 and required no environmental review.

Attachment(s):

1. [Windsor Intermodal Transp Facility Sonoma Co. SMART](#)
2. [Sign Picture](#)
3. [Parking Ownership Map Downtown Windsor](#)
4. [Downtown Windsor Parking Study](#)

5. Windsor Parking Guide
13.6 Downtown Parking PowerPoint (Distributed 2025-08-06)
13.6 Correspondence (Distributed 2025-08-06)

Prepared by:

Tim Ricard
Economic Development Manager

Reviewed by:

Nick Walker
Administrative Services Director

Approved by:

Jon Davis
Town Manager