

NATIONAL GUIDELINES: A GREEN IDEA

By Paul Wessel

I was struck when reading “In Sickness and In Health,” Christina Onesirosan Martinez’s April *Parking Matters*® Blog (blog.parking.org) post, that Britain’s Department of Health had issued comprehensive parking guidelines.

It’s hard to imagine the U.S. National Institutes of Health or Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services doing such a thing, but the premier British health agency issued a 60-page document—the ruggedly titled

“Health Technical Memorandum 07-03—NHS (National Health Service) car-parking management: environment and sustainability.”

It turns out to be an extraordinary publication addressing how much parking matters to successfully delivering health care services, while pointing to the importance of “sustainable transport.” Finding that 90 percent of its visitors

had trouble either finding a space or finding their way around a health care facility garage, the Department of Health recognized:

- Worry, concern, and unnecessary stress should be removed wherever possible. Measures to assist with this include:
 - Maintaining safety throughout the NHS site.
 - Avoiding any confusing messages and signage.
 - Giving detailed information relating to parking, including where to park and how much it will cost to park.
 - Listening to feedback.
 - Implementing measures in NHS car parks that can remove worry, concern, and stress for patients and visitors.
- Sustainable transport measures are also discussed in detail to highlight the methods that NHS organizations can implement to reduce dependency on single-occupancy cars and car-park demand, which is often at, or over, maximum capacity.

As most of us know, Britain has a national health care system born out of the devastation of World War II. The U.K.’s Department of Health has jurisdiction over the NHS. Maybe given that for almost 70 years it’s been running a vertically integrated health system for

64 million citizens, it makes sense that the department would have both the desire and ability to focus on the relationship of parking to health care.

What it produced is a guidance tool that identifies “best practice in car-park management and sustainable transport in order to improve the patient and visitor experience and support staff on their journeys to and from work.” The report depicts “a number of measures that have been used by NHS organizations to reduce the demand on parking and promote better use of car-parks on NHS sites,” breaking them down into three categories: sustainable transport; car park management; and car park equipment.

Among the recommendations:

- Management matters: “Car-park management plays a crucial part in the successful running of an NHS organisation. Without the appropriate car-park management, the patient and visitor experience will be poor.”
- Planning matters: “Sites are encouraged to produce travel plans outlining measures to reduce reliance on the car as a means of getting to work and instead promotes healthier and more environmentally-friendly methods such as cycling or walking.”
- Partnerships matter: “Generally speaking, car-parks that demonstrate best practice, whether in the NHS or in other organisations, are those where the lead organisation managing the car-park has formed partnerships with other companies that work in the parking industry, such as trade bodies and operators.”
- Pricing to market matters: “Only 30 percent of NHS organisations have carried out a revenue impact assessment on parking charges following on from surveys carried out.”
- Integration with transit matters: “Liaison between NHS organizations and public transport providers is recommended to ensure that appropriate services are provided.”

One of the primary tenets of sustainability is the recognition that we are all connected, that our actions have ripple effects far beyond us. This awareness, demonstrated clearly by NHS, will be good for people and the planet. **P**



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