

COMMON GROUND

By Helen Sullivan, APR, Fellow PRSA

Results of the first-ever Global Parking Survey underscore the value of collaboration.

Parking professionals in the United States are keenly aware of the challenges and opportunities facing the industry in their own country, but what about their counterparts around the world? Do professionals in other countries have similar priorities, successes, and frustrations? Do they prioritize sustainability and agree that the public's perceptions of parking are steadily improving?

What Trends are Having the Most Impact on Parking?



As IPI Executive Director Shawn Conrad, CAE, discovered on his travels to parking conferences around the world, the leaders of parking associations have much to gain when there is time for dialogue and discussion.

"The sweeping changes in the industry are affecting everyone, yet we have long been relatively insulated from one another," he says. "During the past few years, we felt the time was ripe to more effectively tap the expertise and experiences of our counterpart parking association leaders by forming a forum to address our common goals."

That forum is the Global Parking Association Leaderships (GPALs) Summit. Established by IPI, the organization met first at the 2012 IPI Conference & Expo in Phoenix, and again last month at the European Parking (EPA) Congress, hosted by the Irish Parking Association in Dublin.

GPALs' first collaborative project: to take the pulse of the global parking industry through a survey based on an adaptation of IPI's annual *Emerging Trends in Parking* survey. A subcommittee, including Keith Gavin, (Ireland), Patrick Troy, (UK), Carole Whitehorne (Canada), Larry Schneider (Australia), Andre Piccoli (Brazil), Nick Lester (EPA), and Conrad (U.S.), worked closely to prepare a survey for distribution to participating countries.

"We were impressed by the universal willingness to participate in the survey and the excitement it generated, especially in countries such as Japan with whom we previously had little contact," says Conrad. "Not surprisingly, we share many of the same issues, but the survey revealed some clear differences in countries' priorities and circumstances."

Each country received a report of its own constituents' responses, and all the surveys were analyzed by the Washington, D.C.-based Market Research Bureau, with assistance from Giuliano Mingardo, senior researcher in the Department of Regional, Port

and Transport Economics at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Results were first shared at last month's GPALs gathering and then at the EPA Congress by past IPI Chairs Cindy Campbell and Casey Jones, CAPP.

"The GPALs Global Parking Survey is a valuable snapshot and the beginning of knowledge building and collaborative projects among parking associations around the world," says Jones.

Technology Rules the Parking Industry

The U.S. certainly is not alone in feeling the reverberating effects of technology in the parking industry. Throughout the world, technologies such as GPS and mobile phones, electronic payment, and sensor space monitoring systems are making it easier for parking professionals to meet the demands of drivers. Among 21 countries polled, the majority listed the move toward innovative technology as the leading industry trend.

Sustainability is a Focus

Sustainability is a broadly-shared global concern, with most respondents saying the greatest environment benefit for parking comes from on- and off-street guidance systems that enable drivers to find spaces faster, reducing carbon emissions. Coming in a close second is energy-efficient lighting, which is seen as one of the top three priorities for a majority of countries, particularly Germany (85 percent) and Brazil (72 percent). The third leading trend—encouraging alternative travel through bike storage, car and bike share, and access to mass transit—is clearly seen as a priority in Norway (70 percent), followed by Britain, Australia, Ireland, Brazil, and the U.S.

Another subject raised by both the survey and the EPA Congress was the parking industry's role in accommodating electric vehicles (EVs). IPI is working with the U.S. Department of En-



Parking association leaders from around the world gather for GPALS meeting held in conjunction with European Parking Association (EPA) Congress.

ergy to develop standardized guidelines to be released later this year, and it appears that other countries are assuming an equally proactive role. Antoni Roig, GPALs' representative from the Parking Association of Spain (ASESGA), noted that his country will soon be required to allocate as much as 20 percent of its parking spaces to EVs.

Others at the meeting, including Nick Lester of the EPA, pointed out the need for better communication with the automobile industry to ensure that the industry's capabilities are keeping pace with their developing technologies. Perhaps one of the meeting's most intriguing questions was raised by Tamas Szirmay of the Hungarian Parking Association: How do we deal with the legal and liability issues that will arise as new automated driving/parking technology becomes more mainstream?

Which Cities Are More Progressive?

When it comes to parking innovations, are any cities seen as leading the pack? Asked to name up to three cities within or outside of their own countries they would consider trendsetting or progressive, respondents most often cited London (named by nine countries), San Francisco (seven countries), Amsterdam and Paris (five countries each), and Barcelona, Seattle, and Tokyo (four countries). In the U.S., respondents also identified New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. While no city is free from parking and transportation issues, the responses suggest that professionals around the world can learn much each other.

Public Perception

Through its *Parking Matters*® program and other education and awareness efforts, IPI has worked hard to improve public perceptions, and annual polls of its members confirm that the association is making headway. GPALs survey results suggest that may not be the case everywhere. In Spain, for example, two-thirds of

respondents felt attitudes about parking remain negative and unchanged, as do half of those surveyed in Britain and Australia, and 40 percent of those in Norway. Germany's respondents are split between feeling attitudes are improving (36 percent) and actually becoming more negative (40 percent).

As Conrad pointed out at the EPA Congress in Dublin, improving public perceptions "is not a sprint, but a marathon," and the continuous challenge is to keep messages on target and seize educational opportunities.

Most respondents agree that more collaboration is needed, particularly between parking professionals, urban planners, and local government officials. This was most strongly voiced by representatives of the Scandinavian countries, but at least half of those polled in Australia, Britain, and Canada concurred. In the U.S., urban planners, architects, and local government officials emerged as the three groups most in need of parking education.

These results echoed what IPI has long advocated: the need to tap parking expertise earlier in the urban planning process to avoid later issues with economic development, transportation flow, congestion, and design.

Societal Factors

A majority—11 of 13 countries surveyed—listed traffic congestion as one of the most significant societal influences on parking. (Australia, Canada, and the U.S. viewed traffic congestion as the leading influence, followed by Brazil, Britain, and Germany). One-third of respondents believe that parking's greatest future challenge will be dealing with a scarcity of space and resources and rising mobility costs in urban areas.

Interestingly, other societal influences on parking varied by region. They included economic pressures on retailers (listed first by Brazil, Britain, Ireland, and Spain), increased fuel prices (listed first by Spain and second or third by six other countries), a focus on environment and sustainability, and desires for more



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(From left to right) Tamas Szirmai of the Hungarian Parking Association; Andre Piccoli of Brazilian Parking Association (Abrapark); IPI Board member and Past Chair Cindy Campbell; and IPI Executive Director Shawn Conrad, CAE.

liveable, walkable communities (both of which were rated most highly by all three Scandinavian countries, followed by Canada, Germany, and the U.S.). Security was a top issue in Germany.

Although only Brazil noted that parking issues stem from a shortage of qualified employees, several countries agreed on the need for industry education and professional development.

Scheduled to convene again at the 2014 IPI Confer-

ence & Expo in Dallas in June, GPALs has appointed an advisory council that will decide on future projects, including a directory of participating parking associations.

As Conrad says, "The important thing is that we are finally bringing our industry together to collaboratively address issues and seize the future's limitless opportunities."

For more information and downloadable survey charts, visit parking.org/gpals.



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