



By Siobhan Johnson

As many of us have been made aware, the UNC Transportation and Parking Advisory Committee, TPAC, decided to eliminate future on-campus parking for students during its Oct. 24 meeting. The decision came after Provost Robert Shelton and Vice Chancellor of Finance Nancy Sutfenfield said that UNC's parking problems will become worse as the University embarks in the development plan detailing campus growth for the next 8 to 10 years.

The committee has not yet decided whether parking will be gradually phased out or if parking spaces will be removed immediately. If the phase-out option were adopted, the plan would come into effect during the 2003-04 school year. During its first year, the plan will take away on-campus parking from sophomores and then juniors the following year. The plan will continue until parking is completely eliminated by 2006-2007. Under this plan, next year's freshmen will never have residential parking on campus.

But if the committee decides to remove spaces immediately, on-campus students could be permit-less as early as next semester. However, Shelton said the plan likely would not affect anyone until at least the 2002-03 school year. While he did not say if residential parking would be reinstated after the Development Plan is complete, Shelton did say that the parking crunch would "recover" with the new parking decks being added as part of the plan.

Officials said the new fare-free busing system should get students around more easily as well as the transportation of students to off-campus lots once it is implemented in January. Shelton said TPAC members are now discussing whether buses will be running later in the evenings to meet student needs and that the decision will be announced at a later time.

But he said the elimination plan will not affect hardship parking, student commuter parking or married student housing parking. The committee is also considering new permit prices for faculty and student parking and is discussing how to provide night parking as the University moves forward with the development plan.

Shelton said continued campus growth has forced administration to reconsider their priorities in regards to parking issues. The majority of the spaces that will be taken from residents will be given to faculty.

Sue Estroff, the Faculty Council Chairwoman, said faculty and staff do not have access to reliable public transportation, making their commutes to and from work a frequent frustration.

"I think faculty would be happy not to drive to work if there were reliable public transportation, but there isn't," Estroff said. "I've also gotten emails from professors in the evening college who can't find spots at night because of student parking."

Estroff said some faculty members have waited as long as 15 years to receive parking permits. Of the 14,558 parking spaces currently on campus, 3,553 are held by students, with 480 of those reserved for on-campus residents. The remaining 10,598 spots are designated for faculty and staff.

Student leaders said they are surprised and disappointed the student body was not included in discussions on the future of on-campus parking. Sophomore Dorothy Ariail, one of three student members of the TPAC, said the decision to remove the student spaces had already been made by Shelton and Sutfenfield before the idea was presented to the committee.

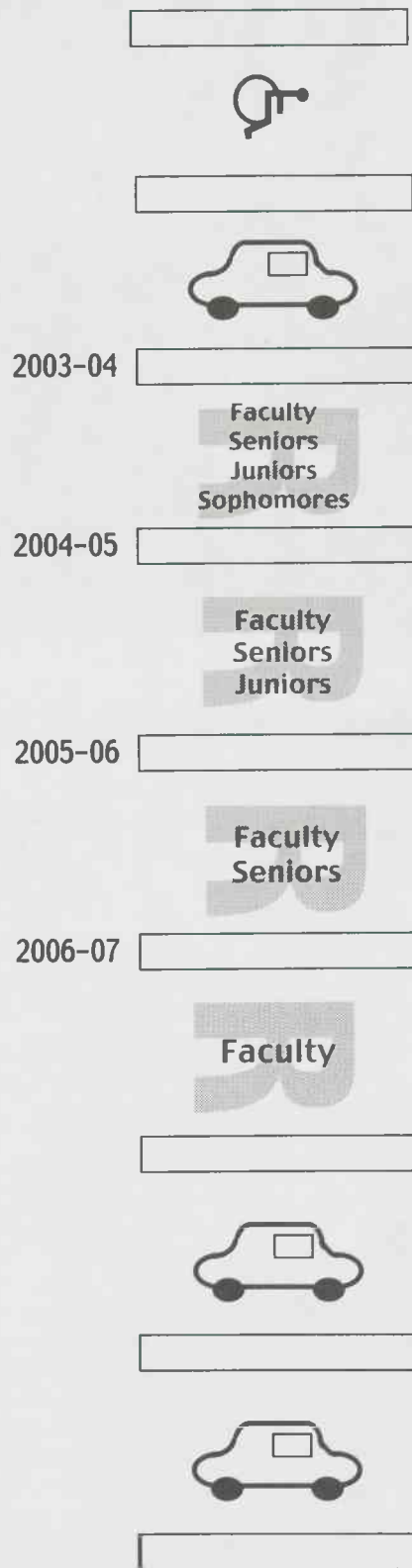
Student Body President Justin Young also said issues are typically discussed with a committee before the decision is made, and said he was disheartened by the lack of prior consultation. "This sets a horrible precedent for major decisions on campus," Young said.

UNC officials said they are not aware of any student contributions prior to the decision to eliminate parking.

Students have had mixed reactions about the future removal of their on-campus parking. "The construction does cause inconveniences, but I'm willing to make the sacrifice," Stacia Gaskin, a junior from New York, said. "I'm glad the class of 2015 will have a more aesthetically pleasing and technologically advanced university. It will make my degree look better. But then again, I don't have a car here."

Sophomore Chris Dula also said that although he believes giving more parking spaces to faculty is a good idea, the plan leaves many unanswered questions for students.

"I understand the need for faculty to have more space, but they have more options than we do when it comes to having transportation," Dula said. "They can come to work on the bus, but how am I supposed to get home without myself or anyone I know having a car?"



Top: The parking lot shows how students will gradually lose their parking permits. By the 2006-2007 academic year, no students will be allowed to park on campus.