

## Stacked Decks

Written by Larry Gautier, Special to the BT  
August 2018

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### Transit solutions must include parking proposals



I am a big fan and advocate for better transportation solutions. Especially since I've been sitting in traffic, like the rest of you, for many years. I think it's a goal that we should continue to strive for. Being a native Miamian and a 30-year commercial real estate professional, I too have seen area traffic get worse and worse over the years.

There is another area of efficiency that is rarely talked about, but which I think has to be part of the overall transportation solution -- and that is parking. There are creative parking systems that now exist and that should be reviewed, explored, and considered.

We always talk about the drive time that it takes to get from one point to another. But we never talk about the time and frustration we go through when we get to our destination and then can't find a parking space. Now, granted, this can be more of an area- and site-specific issue, but nonetheless, the lack of parking can be a major inconvenience and problem.

For example, have you ever struggled to find a parking space in Miami Beach or Brickell? How many times did you drive around the block hoping to find a spot? How much time did it take until you did? And then, when you found a parking space, how much did you have to pay?

Let's take it one step further. Have you ever been to a shopping center, office building, or apartment building and couldn't find a parking space? Yep, we have all been there.

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It seems that the only solutions I hear about are building more large high-rise concrete parking garages that can take years to plan, get approved, and build -- and which, by the way, are very expensive.

On the other side of the equation are local residents who don't want these structures in their backyards because -- you guessed it -- they cause even more traffic congestion. On top of that, the proposals for better transit, new local zoning codes, and more ride-sharing models are all designed to *reduce* the number of cars that are on the road.

It seems to me that we need some new thinking around parking solutions that can be implemented immediately and complement the efforts of the transportation-efficiency conversation.

As a bonus, what if that parking solution had the flexibility to be modified and even downsized as needed in the future?

I've been looking for several years for a specialized parking system, and I think I have finally found it.

Mechanical parking hasn't yet taken off as a viable concept in South Florida. That is very strange, since this type of parking is standard operating procedure in cities and countries elsewhere around the world.

Miami-Dade County, especially, has one of this nation's most diverse international populations, so you'd think that implementation of this parking solution would be a no-brainer, especially since the end user or customer is likely already acquainted with the system. In addition, mechanical parking is widely used in cities like New York and Chicago, and has been for many years, very successfully.

As most of you probably are, I was very skeptical of anything new in the parking area. However,

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during my research, I have found this type of parking technology to be very efficient, safe, and secure. There are several companies that are working on implementing the first system in Miami-Dade County. Of those, the international companies seem to have really developed a top-notch mechanical parking product. These systems can be customized to fit a specific site.

Technology can be incorporated to reduce the wait time to less than if you parked in a garage; plus they generally cost one-third of the cost of a typical concrete garage and can also be up and running in one-third of the time, as well. The parking structure can be designed to blend into the environment with creative exterior decorations.

These are just a few of the immediate benefits. Safe, secure, reliable, and sustainable -- check those boxes, too.

Education and communication at this point are key to implementing mechanical parking solutions. Numerous presentations to end users in both the public and private sectors have been made, and the first projects are ready to get built.

Each is a customized parking solution. Some are for individual owners, some turn parking lots into greenspace and solutions that support area development. Each request is unique in its own way. That is the beauty of the system -- its flexibility and its ability to meet the needs of *all* stakeholders.

Our car may get us there, but “parking drives everything!”

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