No Vacancy: Examining the Parking issues for Commuters on Campus



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ABSTRACT

This proposal tackles the growing parking problems at Texas Tech University, focusing on the challenges faced by commuter students. As enrollment has increased, so have issues with parking. There aren’t enough spaces, leading to long waits and frustration. This impacts students' ability to get to classes and activities on time.

The main problems include a severe shortage of parking spots compared to the number of students, the use of parking areas for events which displaces student parking, and unclear and often unfair parking rules. Our approach involves several steps: first, gathering detailed feedback from students through surveys and interviews to understand their specific concerns and suggestions. Based on this feedback, we will implement short-term fixes like opening temporary parking spaces and adjusting enforcement policies. The long-term strategy includes developing a comprehensive parking management plan. This will involve constructing new parking facilities and implementing smart technology to help students find available spots efficiently.

Our goal is to significantly improve parking access and management, ensuring that the campus is more welcoming and that students can focus on their academic and extracurricular activities without parking issues.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem/Opportunity

Parking on the Texas Tech University campus has become a significant challenge for students, particularly for those who commute to campus and rely on the commuter west lot. With the university's growing student population and limited parking facilities, students face overcrowded lots, long search times for available spots, and a mounting sense of frustration. These conditions negatively impact students' ability to attend classes on time, participate in extracurricular activities, and enjoy a positive campus experience. Addressing these challenges presents an opportunity to improve the campus experience by alleviating parking congestion and enhancing convenience and accessibility for commuter students.

Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to analyze the existing parking challenges faced by Texas Tech commuter students and present feasible, practical solutions that will increase parking accessibility, reduce congestion, and improve the daily experience of campus commuters.

Scope

This proposal will focus on key issues including overcrowding in designated commuter lots, inefficiencies in the current permit system, and perceived inconvenience in parking enforcement policies. By addressing these aspects, we aim to recommend strategic improvements to the university’s parking infrastructure and policies that will benefit the entire student body and ensure a smoother, more accessible parking experience.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Upon exiting the first year of university, and for some first-year students that were not applicable to living on campus, it becomes necessary for students to find modes of transportation to get onto Texas Tech campus for attending classes. In this situation, there are various ways to get onto the campus, including walking, bus route, or alternative mode of transportation such as rentable LIME scooters.

However, the most common form of transportation for students is utilizing their own vehicles and parking at specific "Commuter" lots throughout the campus (See examples in Figures 1 and 2). This means that students must register their vehicles, choose designated lots to park in, and pay for the ability to park in said designated lot.





Figure 1 (Left): Commuter West & Figure 2 (Right): Commuter North, TTU Transportation and Parking

Yet, this design system is not perfect, and several key issues have come to light in recent times due to several underlying factors:

Excess Student Quantity

In recent years, Texas Tech has continued to have a high over-acceptance rate, with this year in particular having over 41,000 students in excess (Ramsey, 2024). This has put a strain on the limited number of parking spaces available to students.

Abusive Lot Services

Due to the many events that are held on campus throughout the academic year, many lots that are utilized by students are also used for performance preparation. Some of the more recent examples of this phenomenon can be seen in the Lainey Wilson Concert, which was held on

October 10th, and cut off substantial amounts of the Commuter West and Recreation Center parking lots; currently, Texas Tech Preview, which shows off the campus to prospective incoming students, has shut down an entire section of Commuter West, C11. Parking in Commuter West during these times, like gameday parking in these same lots (Peyton, 2024), would see students being towed and fined at their own expense (despite parking being a separate fee apart from tuition). This shows that the lots that are available to students are abused and prioritized for other events rather than the students they are meant to accommodate (Campbell, 2024).

Low Parking Availability

Many of the issues that plague the current parking system are effects of the very few spaces that are available for students and faculty. Over a decade ago, there were 17,826 spaces available, with a goal of around 19,000 spaces as of 2020 (Hoover, 2011). However, these few spaces pale in comparison to the student population which is approximately double the size of the number of available spots. This shows that the quantity of spots does not support the current, or incoming, population of Tech students.

These problems have the ability to critically affect how students can attend class and pursue the education for which they have already paid for. Representing an underlying issue that could potentially undermine the very principle that both Texas Tech and students stand for: educational prowess.

RESEARCH METHODS

To get the most accurate information possible, we will be conducting a digital survey in tandem with interpersonal questions in the form of an in-person interview. An online Google Form will be created, which will be extended to participants when applicable. Then, questions will be walked through and asked by the interviewer during the extent of the interview itself.

Participants will consist of 5-6 individuals of either of the two key components:

Classmates

Fellow classmates are an extremely convenient source of information as they are readily available in the class itself and have a strong understanding of many of the key issues we will be tackling in a professional manner.

Outside Students

The student body of Texas Tech is a massive population consisting of individuals who come from all walks of life. For this reason, said student body would also have varying opinions over the issues being addressed in this report. Reaching out to these students would serve crucial in getting an overall, unbiased understanding of how parking issues are seen on Tech campus.

The questions that will be asked of the students will consist of basic demographic information, problem identification, and potential opinioned-based solutions. These kinds of questions will give the best representation of Tech students, as well as how most of the student body would see said problems in question being solved.

After this proposal has been concluded, performing research utilizing the prior survey and interviews will take approximately **two weeks** to complete. Upon the completion of this process, the collected data will be cultivated and organized in a way that identifies the best usage of campus resources in tackling potential problems and solutions.

PROJECT PLAN

- 1) Identify Problems ~ 1 Month
    - 41,000 Students, limited parking availability
    - Lots are not always open for parking
    - Low parking spot availability

- 2) Short Term Actions ~ 6 Months
    - Student Surveys
    - Open Temporary Lots
    - Create a plan and communicate it to students
    - Launch alternative programs to incentivize less individuals driving
    - Evaluate and Adjust parking policies as needed for efficiency

- 3) Long Term Actions ~ 24 Months
    - Create a comprehensive parking plan
    - Research alternative transportation options
    - Implement Smart Parking
    - Plan/create new parking facilities
    - Create a regular review process to prevent issue relapses

TIMELINE AND RESOURCES

Timeline:

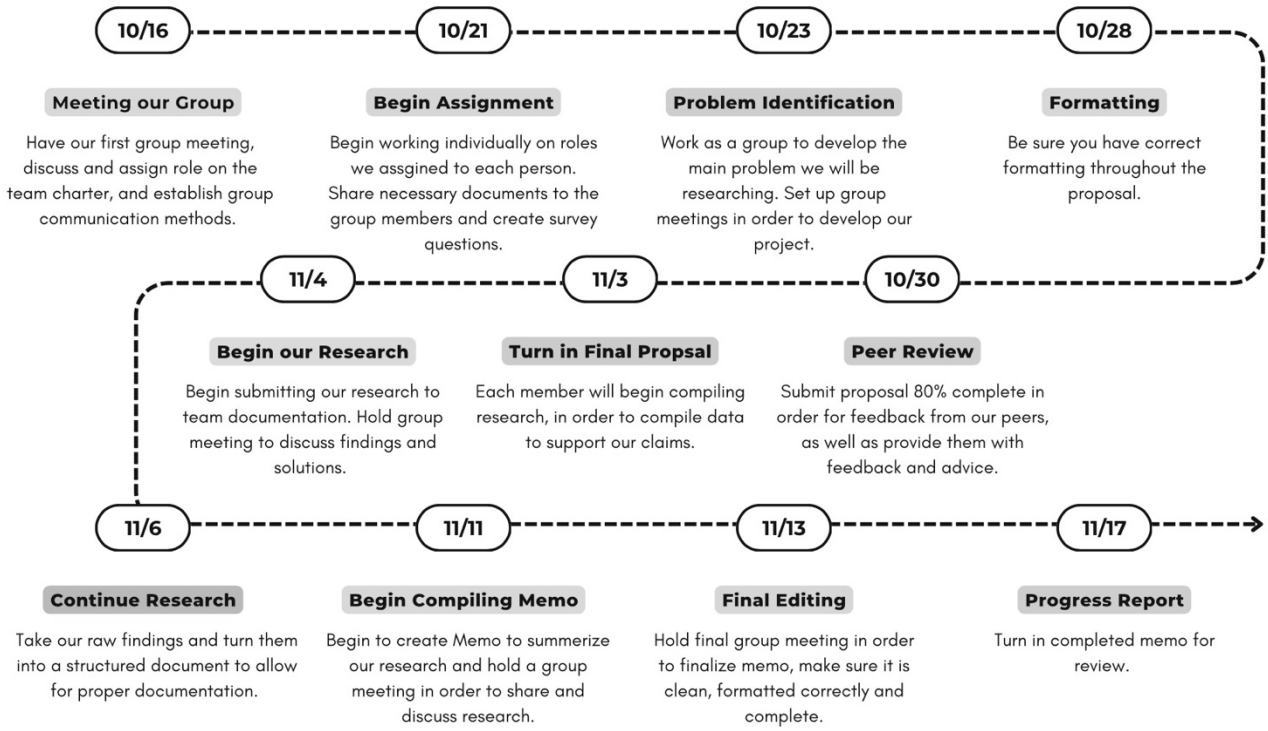


Figure 3: Timeline Diagram with Main Components

- Long Term Actions
  - Comprehensive Parking Plan Month 1 - 6
  - Research Alternative Transportation Month 1 - 12
  - Implement Smart Parking 3 - 18
  - Start Construction on New Structures Month 20
  - Create Regular Review Process Month 22 – 24

Resources Required:

- Survey Tools
- Communication Platforms (E-mail)
- Budget for maintenance and incentives
- Planning resources for new structures

COSTS AND BENEFITS

Component	Estimated Cost	Time Requirements	Human Resources Needed
Survey and Data Collection	$500	2 months	Research Team (5-6 members)
Temporary Lot Maintenance	$2,000	1 month (setup)	Facilities Management staff
Carpool Program Incentives	$1,500	3 months (launch)	Student Government Association
Smart Technology Implementation	$10,000	6 months (implementation)	IT Department, external vendors
New Parking Structures	$1 million (est.)	24 months (planning & construction)	Facilities Planning and Management team
Ongoing Evaluation Process	$1,000 annually	Continuous	Parking Services, Planning Committee

Figure 4: Budget Breakdown

CONCLUSION

All in all, the growing number of students on our campus is creating significant challenges. The multitude of inefficiencies not only leads to frustration, but more importantly inhibits the overall campus experience. With the limited number of available parking spaces clearly unable to accommodate rising demand, it seems critical to us that this issue is promptly addressed in order to enhance student satisfaction and campus accessibility.

Moving forward we have found a few widely adopted solutions that could help, as well as a more innovative one using smart technology that could vastly improve the current parking issues. As we progress, we will also remain open to other potential solutions to ensure our campus remains welcoming and functional for everyone, students and faculty alike.

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APPENDIX A

The questionnaire will include several key questions, both multiple choice and by linear scale, broken up under different sections:

Demographic Information:

1. What is your age?

2. What is your sex/gender?

3. Are you currently enrolled as a student at Texas Tech?

4. What is your current classification (year)?

5. Do you currently own a parking pass for any lot on campus including Residence and Commuter permits?

6. If you answered yes to the previous question, which lots do you currently park in?

Parking Experience:

1. There is an estimated ~40,000 students currently enrolled on Texas Tech campus. Do you believe there is ample parking for all students, including on-campus and off-campus students?

2. How difficult do you find it to be when searching for convenient parking spots in your chosen lots (if applicable)?

3. How long is the average walk time from your parking lot to your designated campus location (class)?

4. Do you feel it is justified when Texas Tech elects to close off certain parking lots for campus events such as concerts, gamedays, tailgating, and incoming student activities?

5. Do you believe Texas Tech University can be aggressive at times when ticketing, booting, or towing vehicles?

6. Do you think the price of parking permits is justified when considering potential parking issues?

7. If you were to not park on campus, do you believe that Texas Tech University has provided enough accommodations for students, outside of parking, to find transportation to campus proper such as with buses and scooters?

Issue Identification:

1. Which do you think is the most prevalent issue impacting student parking?

2. Do you consider many of the issues mentioned as being improvable by Texas Tech University?

3. Do you think many of the issues mentioned could be minimized by more student engagement?

Potential Solutions:

1. What do you think is the strongest way the parking situation could be improved upon?

2. How do you think your suggested solution would impact the current parking situation?

3. Do you think your suggested solution would be able to be easily implemented by Texas Tech University?

Group members will walk through these questions with participants, asking and expanding upon notions as needed throughout the interview process.

APPENDIX B

The **consent form** will contain the following information regarding protecting user privacy, safety, and responses:

Please read this form and indicate whether you consent to testing at the bottom.

Student Parking Issues Consensus

You are invited to be in a research study in which we ask you to give your opinion on current issues and potential solutions facing parking on Texas Tech campus. You have been identified as a possible participant because you are a Texas Tech University student. This study is being conducted by Christian Jeter, Carolyn Karr, Angela Moreno, Kobie Wilhite, and Evan Rae.

Purpose & Procedures

The purpose of this study is to explore and record student opinions and solutions over parking issues on Texas Tech campus.

If you agree to be in this study, your participation will consist of a questionnaire about your demographical information, experience with parking on campus, issue identification, and a short debrief over potential problem solutions. Your participation will not exceed thirty minutes of your time.

Risks & Benefits

You will have no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study. Participation in this study may benefit you by encouraging you to think about the ways in which parking could be improved to better suit student needs and preferences. Your participation will also help students, faculty, and program administrators learn more about student parking issues.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you are not required to participate in this study. You can withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will have no effect on your relationship with the university.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that we may publish, we will include zero information that will make others able to identify participants. We will use pseudonyms or numbers in place of your real name to protect your identity. Only researchers and our course professor will have access to this data.

Contact & Questions

The researchers conducting this study are Christian Jeter, Carolyn Karr, Angela Moreno, Kobie Wilhite, and Evan Rae. You may ask any questions you have about the study now. If you have questions later, you may contact any of us through email at chjeter@ttu.edu, carokarr@ttu.edu, mor03321@ttu.edu, Kobie.Wilhite@ttu.edu, or erae@ttu.edu.