



## CURB USER ENGAGEMENT GUIDANCE

### PLAYBOOK

#### LEARN ABOUT:

Improving curb management in a city involves a variety of partners due to the complex nature of urban infrastructure, transportation, and today's on-demand delivery culture. Engaging these partners is crucial for effective planning, implementation, and long-term success.

This document provides guidance around who to engage, the type of engagement, and how to communicate the curb management vision in your city.

THE **SMART CURB**  
COLLABORATIVE

# THE SMART CURB COLLABORATIVE

The SMART Grant Collaborative is an initiative of the Open Mobility Foundation (OMF). Membership in the collaborative is a key aspect of the USDOT SMART Grants awarded to each of the member cities of the collaborative. While each city's project is unique, all projects share a similar problem and technological approach, specifically to digitally gather and analyze curb information to reduce congestion, enhance livability, provide the tools to address equity, and improve safety on city streets. The shared, open-source Curb Data Specification (CDS) stewarded by the non-profit OMF lies at the heart of this collaboration, and will enable data to be gathered and analyzed such that cities can more optimally use their curbs and dynamically respond to emerging policy needs through experimentation, piloting and prototyping various approaches.

## MEMBERS



# INTRODUCTION

Improving curb management in a city involves a variety of partners due to the complex nature of urban infrastructure, transportation, and today's on-demand delivery culture. Engaging these partners is crucial for effective planning, implementation, and long-term success.

This document provides guidance around who to engage, the type of engagement, and how to communicate the curb management vision in your city.



**NOTE:** This guidance primarily focuses on motor vehicle deliveries, as well as general purpose parking. It's important to note that most cities aim to encourage the use of smaller vehicles and devices, which are often more efficient and don't face the same curb access challenges that larger delivery and personal vehicles face.

# CURB PARTNERS

## WHO

All residents, workers, and visitors of a city interact with the curb in some way, whether you're driving, biking, walking, taking transit, or making or receiving deliveries. These curb users can be broken into four primary groups:

1. General Public: Residents, workers, and visitors that drive, bike, walk, and take transit (e.g., ALL travelers)
2. Curb Policy Partners: Mayor's Office, City Council, Safety and Environmental Advocacy Groups, Public Safety Departments
3. Special Interest Groups: Small Business Owners, Adjacent Property Owners
4. Curb Users: Companies and their drivers, as well as the public, who regularly make deliveries and/or move passengers, including parcel companies, TNCs (Uber/Lyft), taxis, navigation technology companies, food distributors, meal deliveries, restaurant services, etc.

How we talk about curb access and curb management with each of these groups will vary, due to their varying interests and the language they use.

# WHAT IS CURB MANAGEMENT?

While folks working in curb policy might feel like the term “curb management” is intuitive, many people won’t know what the term means. Consider starting conversations with a simple definition to ensure everyone understands and is using the term in the same way.

“Curb management” is all about how we use and share the space next to the curb on the street. It’s not just for parking cars anymore. With changes in technology, the economy, and our communities, different groups want to use this space for things like loading and unloading goods, dropping off and picking up passengers, creating bike lanes, and setting up outdoor dining areas and little parks.

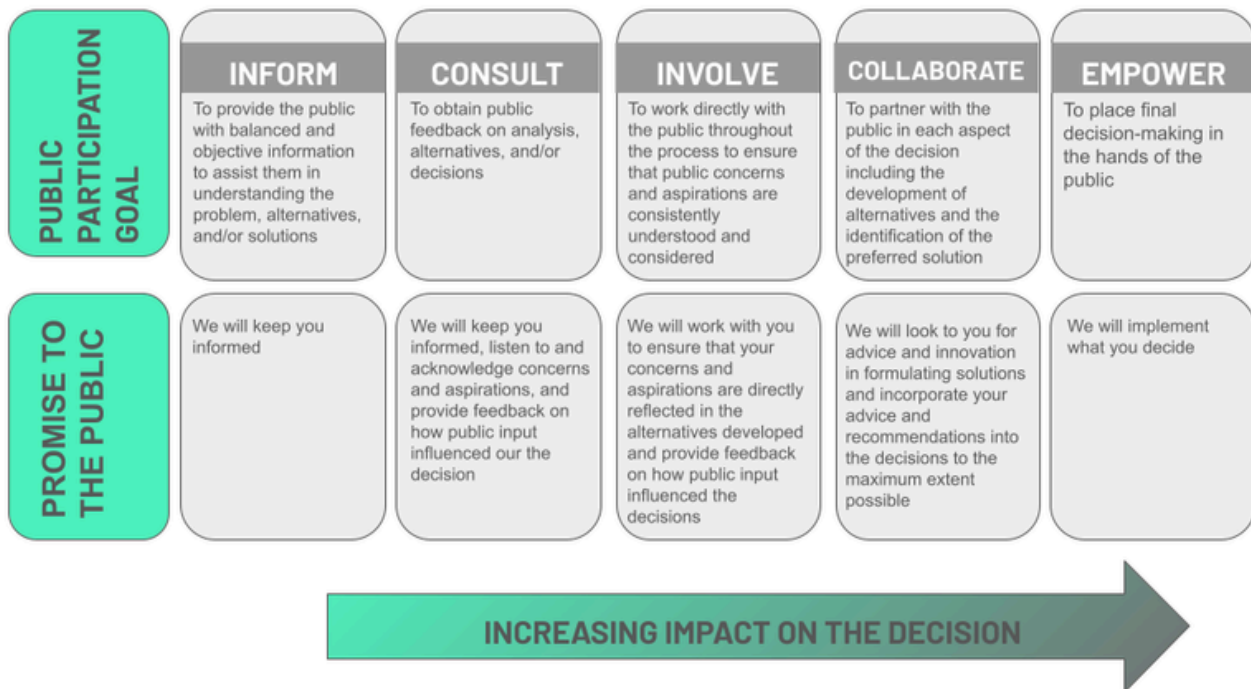
The practice of curb management is about figuring out the best way to leverage this space to meet community needs and shared goals – for example, improving safety and reducing harmful emissions. It’s also about ensuring there is space for those who need it most, such as people with disabilities, cyclists, and small businesses.

## WHY?

When approaching engagement, it’s important to understand why you’re engaging a given group. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) identifies five primary goals of engagement: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower.

In general, cities will seek the following goals when engaging with the public:

- General Public: to inform and consult
- Curb Policymakers: to inform, consult, and involve
- Special Interest Groups: to inform, consult, and collaborate
- Curb Users: to inform, consult, and collaborate



# The Benefits of Curb Management

## Reduced Traffic Congestion

Curb management can play a significant role in reducing traffic congestion by optimizing the allocation of curb space for various uses such as parking, loading zones, and passenger drop-offs. By reducing double parking and improving traffic flow, cities can enhance mobility and reduce travel times.



The **general public** cares about getting to where they want to go smoothly and quickly.

**Curb policymakers** care about efficient movement of traffic and reliable access to the curb for city services and emergency response.

**Special interest groups** care about getting their deliveries on time, affordable goods, and customers arriving to their business with ease.

**Curb users** care about efficiently completing their target number of deliveries or drop offs within their work shift.

# The Benefits of Curb Management

## Enhanced Safety



Curb management can improve overall street safety by reducing conflicts between different modes of transportation and providing clear, designated spaces for loading, parking, and pick-up/drop-off activities - keeping crosswalks, bicycle lanes and transit lanes clear of obstructions and reducing traffic weaving and blocked lines of sight. This can help reduce crashes and injuries, making the city safer and more welcoming for all road users.

The **general public** cares about feeling safe when walking, biking, driving, and dining outdoors.

**Curb policymakers** care about eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

**Special interest groups** care about their customers comfortably arriving at their business.

**Curb users** care about having space buffered from moving traffic to make deliveries, and reliable crosswalks and sidewalks to deliver goods to or drop off customers.



# The Benefits of Curb Management

## Thriving Local Businesses



Curb management can support local businesses by ensuring convenient access for customers, delivery vehicles, and service providers. Years of data has shown that more walkable, bikeable business districts generally increase revenue for business.

Sufficient loading space, bike lanes, and outdoor dining are all examples of curb uses that have positive impacts on local business. Additionally, delivery operators traditionally pass the costs of parking fees or tickets to the business, who may or may not be able to pass those costs to customers while remaining competitive. Smart curb management can reduce the cost of goods and services and increase margins.

The **general public** cares about easy access to their favorite local shops and affordable goods and services.

**Curb policymakers** care about economic development (encouraging businesses to locate in their city) and retaining and supporting the businesses currently operating.

**Special interest groups** care about increasing profits and keeping access to their business and provide competitive pricing for customers.

**Curb users** care about efficiently serving their customers and maximizing daily deliveries, pick ups, and drop offs.

# The Benefits of Curb Management

## Improved Livability

Curb management decisions can improve the livability and character of neighborhoods. By engaging with residents, local businesses, and community groups, cities can ensure that curb management initiatives reflect local needs and priorities, fostering a sense of community ownership and pride in the urban environment.



The **general public** cares about public space in their community (including the curb) being used in ways that reflect their local needs, preferences, and community identity and connect them to their neighbors.

**Curb policymakers** care about maintaining desirability and affordability of neighborhoods to increase or maintain the city's population.

**Special interest groups** care about making the block and neighborhood in which their business is located desirable for customers to visit.

**Curb users** care about thriving, desirable business districts that increase demand for deliveries.

# The Benefits of Curb Management

## Improved Accessibility and Equity

Curb management initiatives can improve accessibility for all residents, including those with disabilities and limited mobility. By designating accessible parking spaces, providing clear signage, and prioritizing pedestrian-friendly infrastructure at the curb, cities can promote equity and ensure that everyone has equal access to essential services and amenities.



The **general public** cares about unobstructed, predictable access to the curb space they need and a logical, intuitive system for understanding how the curb is regulated.

**Curb policymakers** care that accessibility requirements are met ensuring that vulnerable groups can easily and safely access the curb.

**Special interest groups** care about curb uses that make their business operations more efficient, resulting in increased revenue, as well as safe, reliable access to their business for customers.

**Curb users** care about delivery drivers' ability to safely and efficiently make deliveries with well-maintained curb and pedestrian infrastructure.

# The Benefits of Curb Management

## More Balanced Allocation of Street Space

Curb management plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable mobility modes such as walking, micromobility, public transit, and electric vehicles. By reallocating curb space to support pedestrian infrastructure, bike lanes, transit stops, and zero-emission zones, cities can encourage the use of clean mobility options, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and combat climate change.



The **general public** cares about a logical and intuitive curb that meets the public's highest and best needs, effectively accommodating as many uses as reasonable.

**Curb policymakers** care about serving constituents and using curb management to promote core goals including safety, sustainability, equity, and economic growth.

**Special interest groups** care about curb use that supports their business operations and customers and makes their business district desirable.

**Curb users** care about consistent and reliable access to the curb to make deliveries, pick ups, and drop offs.

# The Benefits of Curb Management

## Good Governance

Effective curb management covers the cost of maintenance and administration of the curb through fees, permits, and fines. By implementing smart parking technologies and demand-based pricing strategies, cities can ensure efficient use of curb space and minimize congestion, while also reducing administrative costs.

The **general public** cares about their tax dollars being used responsibly and the city accommodating the best and highest use of the curb.

**Curb policymakers** care about being good stewards of public dollars and utilizing technology that will improve efficiency and cover administrative and maintenance costs for curb management.

**Special interest groups** care about their tax dollars being used responsibly and the city accommodating the loading and access needs of their business in ways that do not create unreasonable costs that are passed to customers.

**Curb users** care about predictable and fair pricing of the curb in ways that do not impact their bottom line and are not passed to their customers.

# Framing the Conversations

## General Public

- **Informing** - When seeking to inform the public about curb management, ensure you frame the conversation around how effective curb management benefits the person or group with whom you're speaking.
- **Consulting** - When seeking feedback from the public on curb management, consider the following questions:
  - How do you primarily use the curb space? (e.g., pick up/drop offs, parking, riding bikes/scooters, outdoor dining)
  - What curb uses would you like to see more of in your neighborhood or areas you frequently visit?
  - Are there any frustrations you experience with the curb space?

## Tips for Communication

- Avoid slang and jargon. Write and speak in plain English. It's okay to use acronyms, but not without spelling them out at least once first.
- Write and speak positively. Use positive language rather than negative language.
- Keep the audience at the center. Tell stories where they are the hero, not you.
- Be relevant. Focus on the stories only you can tell.
- Adapt appropriately. How you talk can (and should) change depending on the forum and audience

# Framing the Conversations

## Curb Policymakers

- **Informing** - When seeking to inform curb policymakers about curb management, ensure you frame the conversation around why the policy-maker(s) should care about this work/your project/curb management. Consider how the work helps policymakers to accomplish related or tangential goals? (e.g., downtown revitalization, closing funding gaps, supporting local businesses)
- **Consulting** - To gain support from policy makers, it's often helpful to provide them with some ownership over ideas or projects. Invite them to bring ideas to the table and own the narrative to communicate back to their constituents.

## Special Interest Groups

- **Informing** - Keep businesses and adjacent property owners in the loop with open lines of communication and consistent updates.
- **Consulting** - When seeking feedback from special interest groups on curb management, consider the following questions:
  - How often are you receiving deliveries for your business?
  - How do your employees get to work?
  - As a nearby property owner, for what uses do you rely on the curb?
  - What is working and where?
  - What isn't working and where?
- **Collaborating** - How can the city better designate or manage the curb near your business/residence in order to best serve you, your customers, and your neighbors?

# Framing the Conversations

## Curb Users

- **Informing** - Keep curb users in the loop with open lines of communication and consistent updates. Ensure city staff are framing policy, pilots, and projects around benefits (or positive tradeoffs) for loading, pick ups, and drop offs.
- **Consulting** - When seeking feedback from curb users on curb management, consider the following questions:
  - Aside from curb use, what other transportation factors affect your business? (e.g., congestion, safety, cost, etc.)
  - Describe your (or your drivers') average experience on a given day.
  - What is working and where?
  - What isn't working and where?
- **Collaborating** - How can the city better designate loading, pick up, and drop off space to ensure you can safely and efficiently make goods deliveries, or passenger and food pick up and drop offs?



# Communicating the Process

When engaging partners around curb projects and general curb management, it's important to focus on the outcomes listed above.

While those working in right-of-way policy might not want to hear it, most people don't care about curb regulation digitization or the Curb Data Specification. What people do care about are safer streets, cleaner air, vibrant neighborhoods, and economic prosperity. The good news is that quality curb management can provide direct positive impacts to all of these things.

**NOTE:** Most of the partners *only care about* the benefits and outcomes. The process likely only needs to be communicated to policymakers.

So, how might you communicate that to interested parties without putting them to sleep? The process and benefits of curb management can be explained in 5 simple steps:

1. **Measure** - You can't manage what you haven't measured. The goal of measuring (or inventorying) curb activity is to get the whole picture of what's going on - understanding curb regulations (how the curb is currently allocated and programmed), who is accessing or trying to access the curb, how long vehicles are parking or stopping, traffic patterns, and even an inventory of objects at the curb (trees, street furniture, mailboxes, etc.).

# Communicating the Process

2. **Analyze** - After you have the data, the goal is to analyze it to identify the conflicts or gaps and identify improvement areas and decision-making frameworks. Curb data can be used for things like developing a curb allocation hierarchy that uses data to determine the highest and best use of the curb in a given district or block.

3. **Design** - After identifying areas for improvement and decision-making frameworks, city staff can develop design options for improving curb management at various scales (city-wide, district-wide, or by block). This could look like a menu of potential design options that are shared with partners before determining what solutions are best suited to improve curb operations. The design phase might even include piloting certain solutions before moving to more formal, long-term implementation.

4. **Execute** - The execute phase is where cities see solutions implemented. Using the curb data and analysis, cities can reallocate curb space for more beneficial uses, update pricing for parking or loading, or expand enforcement capacity to improve efficiency and safety. Data and analysis can also help cities manage dynamic curb zones, where the authorized use and price of the curb may vary during the day based on supply and demand data.

5. **Measure, Refine, Improve** - The work of curb management in a city is never truly complete. Cities will continue to measure and analyze curb data regularly to understand changing demands, uses, and needs of the curb. Curb management is a continuous process of refining and improving, so cities can expect to consistently restart the curb management process

# Thank You

A special thanks to the members of the Open Mobility Foundation's SMART Curb Collaborative for contributing their time, experience, and dedication to this effort. This project seeks to share learnings and resources for any city or agency to adopt.

This paper was authored by CityFi in collaboration with the Open Mobility Foundation and the University of Washington's Urban Freight Lab.

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