



Modeling Technocracy: Garages Seen As ‘Urban Mobility Hubs’

The 1934 Technocracy Study Course (p. 244) proposed a “network of garages at convenient places all over the country from which automobiles could be had at any hour of the night or day. No automobiles would be privately owned. When one wished to use an automobile he would merely call at the garage.” □ TN Editor

With cities looking at new ways to use garages and alleviate congestion, parking management company FlashParking says it has a different solution: convert garages into “urban mobility hubs” that serve multiple purposes.

Instead of using garages for just parking cars, the company suggests repurposing them and adding areas to charge electric vehicles (EVs); park and charge dockless bikes and scooters; stage ride-hailing vehicles when they do not have a fare; clean and service cars; and act as a holding area for autonomous vehicles (AVs).

“Parking garages aren’t the first thing that come to mind when you think of urban mobility or smart city initiatives, but some of the more innovative asset owners and parking operators are seeing that there is

an opportunity to be part of the solution rather than continue to be part of the problem,” Jordan Weiss, vice president of marketing at FlashParking, told Smart Cities Dive.

As cities discourage personal vehicle usage, there are theories about the future of parking garages. Some cities have experimented with ideas to repurpose them or remove them to free up the space for other ventures.

It is in a similar vein to Los Angeles-based architecture firm Woods Bagot’s [MORE LA initiative](#), which explores how surface lots can help ease issues like the housing affordability crisis and to make it easier to use AVs. In an interview with Smart Cities Dive, architect James Sanders, who consults for Woods Bagot as the global chair of its design council, said it represents a major opportunity to “begin to recoup some of this vast inventory that has been given over to the storage of unused cars.”

Ride-hailing has been blamed in-part for increasing urban congestion, as drivers often spend time trawling the streets looking for their next fare, known as “dead-heading.” Weiss said if parking garages can be revamped into staging areas, it can get them on and off the streets as needed. He said the plan is to “repurpose or extend some real estate within those urban garages and allow them to park their cars, save fuel, get off the streets, ease congestion and basically stage there until their next fare.”

And with dockless bikes and scooters coming under repeated scrutiny for [cluttering](#) the public right-of-way, Weiss said providing parking and charging for them in a garage could be a way to solve that problem. Companies like [Charge](#) have looked at offering parking for dockless vehicles, and Weiss said there are plenty of opportunities for dockless providers to partner.

“These micromobility companies, they spend a significant amount of money paying people to pick up these assets, drive them to a charging area, charge them and then drop them off back in the city center the next day for use,” Weiss said. “They would be able to save a lot of money by creating partnerships with these parking assets and have them staged

and charged right there in the central business district rather than spending money to have them sent off and recharged.”

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