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Swiss Overview

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**COST 342: Parking Policy Measures and their
Effects on Mobility and the Economy**

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Table of contents

1	National Institutional Context.....	2
1.1	Introduction	2
1.2	Interrelations between different levels of government.....	2
1.2.1	Land use and town planning.....	2
1.2.2	Urban transport.....	3
2	National and Regional Policies Framework	5
2.1	Swiss Transport policy	5
2.2	Fiscal Policy	6
2.3	Policies on Environmental Protection.....	7
2.4	Policies on Energy.....	8
3	National Parking Context	10
3.1	Introduction	10
3.2	Characterising Figures for Switzerland.....	11
3.3	Decision-makers in the field of planning and implementing.....	12
3.3.1	Private parking places	12
3.3.1.1	Provision of new private parking space.....	13
3.3.1.2	Parking policy measures on private parking places.....	16
3.3.2	Public parking places	20
3.3.2.1	Provision of public parking places	20
3.3.2.2	Reduction and limitation of the number of public parking places	21
3.3.2.3	Measures on public parking places	22
3.3.2.4	Further measures on parking policy	25
3.3.2.5	Control and enforcement of regulations.....	26
4	General feelings on parking matters	28
5	References.....	30

1 National Institutional Context

1.1 Introduction

In accordance with the federal system of Switzerland, political competencies are shared between the three different state levels: the Swiss Confederation, its 26 cantons as well as a total of 2899 municipalities. Institutions are built on the subsidiarity principle, which means that the most decentralised level has to be granted decisional competence as far as this is suitable. Even in areas where the Confederation has been given formal competencies, the executive form of federalism will be likely to leave a great margin of liberty for implementation to the 26 cantons and their local authorities.

Another important characteristic feature of Switzerland is the application of direct democracy on all of the three institutional levels. The possibilities of recourse and participation by private organisations and interest groups must be taken into account when analysing policy making in Switzerland. Every constitutional amendment for example requires approval of the Swiss voters by referendum.

1.2 Interrelations between different levels of government

Interrelations between different levels of government have to be considered in all of the policy making activities in parking-related fields such as land use, town planning and urban transport.

1.2.1 Land use and town planning

The Confederation, the cantons and the municipalities are together responsible for co-ordinated, economical land-use policies:⁽¹⁾

The federal level has to

- plan and authorise various land use activities of the state,
- approve cantonal guidelines for planning,
- provide general support of land use planning by research, public information, counselling and financial support.

The cantons set the general guidelines, they are responsible for

- legislation of building and planning
- guidelines, setting objectives for land use development, establishing plans for various uses such as residential zones, transport or agriculture.

1 DETEC (1998), Transportation – yesterday, today, tomorrow

Detailed land use planning is up to the municipalities: they work out binding regulations for the use and access of ground and for separating building from non-building zones.

Particularly, the canton of Bern has developed the strategy of "priority development places" (Entwicklungsschwerpunkte). These places are situated near the stations of public transport in the whole agglomeration of Bern. Additional working and living places should be concentrated on such locations.

1.2.2 Urban transport

Transport policy in Swiss urban regions is a mix of federal, cantonal and municipal involvement. Main responsibilities are assigned to the federal and cantonal level. Municipalities act according to the room to move which the cantons leave them.

Public transport system

The Swiss public transport system can be differentiated in

- Intercity traffic (e.g. Geneva - Bern - Zurich)
- Local traffic of a region or agglomeration (bus or railway)
- Public transport system of a city

The local traffic is "ordered" by the cantons and they pay for the deficits (together with the federal government). On the other hand, the public transport system of a city gets only subsidies from the canton and the city (but none from the federal level). However, this solution is strongly disputed. In parliamentary questions in recent years there have been more and more demands that urban transport should also be supported by the Confederation.

Road network

The Federal Constitution assigns some general competencies to the federal level, while the cantons have the sovereignty for the construction and maintenance of roads within the framework of federal law:⁽²⁾

The Confederation sets the general rules on road traffic. It has the overall control on roads of national importance; it may decide which through roads have to be open to traffic. The use of public roads is generally free of charge; exceptions are to be approved by the Federal Assembly. The federal level further deals with emission standards for road traffic, the price of petrol, the heavy vehicle fee, the planning of the highway network, speed reductions on highways (recently also the cantons are allowed to do so, under federal control) and combined goods transport - just to name activities which are most relevant for regional traffic in urban areas.

² See Art. 82 of the Federal Constitution and Art. 3 of the (Federal) Law on Road Traffic (Strassenverkehrsgesetz).

The cantonal level is responsible for the construction and maintenance of national highways and cantonal through-ways, for taxing motor vehicles, for the promotion of low-emission vehicles, trolley buses and regional public transport, for rules on parking charges and traffic calming (30 km/h in urban districts).

It is up to cantonal laws to regulate the domains and shares of responsibilities between the cantonal and the municipal level. The municipalities are normally responsible for construction and maintenance of municipality roads.

2 National and Regional Policies Framework

National policies which influence (urban) transport and land use and therefore parking policy have to be seen as a whole, since the limits of growth of transportation are becoming more and more obvious, in the effect upon the environment, the financial demands or the use of non-renewable resources.⁽³⁾ In this chapter we will present an overview of the relevant national policies, such as general transport policy on the federal level, fiscal policy, environmental protection policy (i.e. policy on air quality), energy and land use policies.

2.1 Swiss Transport policy

Overall Transport Concept (Gesamtverkehrskonzeption, GVK) of 1978.

Due to the growth of (motorised) transport, the Federal Council recognised the necessity of establishing an Overall Transport Concept (Gesamtverkehrskonzeption, GVK) for Switzerland in the 1970s. In the 1988 referendum on the "Principles of a co-ordinated transport policy", however, the Swiss people refused a new formulation of the section on transport in the Federal Constitution.

In spite of this, the transport policy discussion of the 1980s and 90s was largely influenced by the proposals of the GVK. They included above all a better co-ordination of transport, greater emphasis upon environmental problems, support for public transport, a more logical division of competencies between the Confederation and the Cantons, and a more equitable financing of transport by those responsible for its costs. In recent years it has furthermore been increasingly important to achieve an international consensus in transport policy.⁽⁴⁾

The actual co-ordinated Swiss transport policy is explicitly based on the concept of sustainable development: its aim is to provide a modern infrastructure to the people and the economy in an efficient way and to protect the natural basis of living. Transport services shall be accessible to all segments of the population and each region on comparable terms. Health risks and dangers are to be minimised. Furthermore, transport policy shall be co-ordinated on a sustainable basis with the EU.

To correspond with this concept, the Federal Council has set several targets. The ones relating to parking policy are:⁽⁵⁾

- Environmentally sound and safe traffic means are to be promoted, i.e. public transport as well as "slow traffic" (on foot and by bicycle), especially in urban agglomerations.

3 DETEC (1998), Transportation – yesterday, today, tomorrow.

4 For an overview, see: DETEC (1998), Transportation – yesterday, today, tomorrow.

5 GVF/UVEK (2000), Infoblatt GVF: Koordinierte Verkehrspolitik.

- In the long run, all of the transport means are to cover the costs they are causing, whereas public utilities are to be compensated in the interest of a country-wide basic supply.

2.2 Fiscal Policy

The revenue for construction and maintenance of the Swiss road network is principally generated from contributions made by road users, i.e. by means of the motor fuel taxes, motorway user badges, the levy on heavy goods vehicles (today a flat rate; on 01/01/2001 the variable heavy goods vehicle fee comes into effect) and the cantonal vehicle license charges.

Around 30% of the revenue of the motor fuel taxes represent general income of the Confederation; the other 70% are reserved for road use, especially for construction and maintenance of the motorway network and certain main roads by the Confederation and the cantons, but also to finance projects that are less directly connected with road construction (measures for environmental and countryside protection, contributions to combined transport). In contrast to this, the municipalities have to finance their roads mostly from their own general resources, i.e. the local tax revenues.⁽⁶⁾

On the federal level, there are ongoing discussions regarding energy taxes and an ecological tax reform for Switzerland. In September 2000, an initiative to introduce an energy tax on non-renewable energy resources with earmarking of the revenue for the promotion of renewable solar energy resources was put to the vote. At the same time the Swiss voters had to decide on an alternative proposal of the National Council (with a lower rate, limited in time and earmarked for the promotion of all renewable resources), and on a constitutional amendment that would lay the foundation for an ecological tax reform (ÖSR) with a higher energy tax. The ÖSR would lead to a higher charging of the use of non-renewable resources and in exchange to that, non-wage labour costs (such as social security contributions) would be lowered. Furthermore existing taxes and subventions would have to be checked on wrong ecological incentives.

For motorised transport, the passing of the initiative or one of the proposals would lead to higher fuel prizes in a smaller or greater extent⁽⁷⁾ and - in dependence of the approved version of an energy tax – would generate more means to promote measures such as Car-pooling, Car-sharing, ECO-drive and "slow traffic" in combination with public transport.

The initiative as well as the proposals were rejected by those entitled to vote on September 24th 2000.

6 DETEC (1998), Transportation – yesterday, today, tomorrow.

7 For scenarios of the ecological and economical consequences of either version, see for example ECOPLAN (1999a), Ökologische und wirtschaftliche Auswirkungen der neuen Finanzordnung mit ökologischen Anreizen.

2.3 Policies on Environmental Protection

The revised constitution of Switzerland has come into force on January 1st, 2000. It states in particular the following ecological principles which (will) guide all of the national policies, not only policies on environmental protection:

sustainability (Art. 73)

precaution- and polluter-pays-principle (Art. 74)

economical land use (Art. 75)

By explicitly introducing the notions of sustainability and of the polluter-pays-principle, environmental policy has significantly changed in the past few years: the former policy mainly used directives, prohibitions and subsidies as instruments, whereas the new approach is rather based on economic instruments, individual responsibility and co-operation.

The **Environmental Protection Act** (Umweltschutzgesetz, USG) of 1983 provides for measures protecting human beings, animals and plants, as well as their living spheres from damaging impacts such as air pollution and noise.

It contains some important measures regarding the process of parking policy making:

- For large buildings and infrastructure projects the USG asks for an **Environmental Impact Analysis** (Umweltverträglichkeitsprüfung, UVP) to examine if a certain project meets the requirements of environmental protection. Car parks for more than 300 cars are subject to a UVP. In general, the UVP-procedures are subject to Cantonal law.
- The USG grants the right to appeal in the planning stage of construction projects to some by the federal council determined environmental organisations (Verbandsbeschwerderecht, Art. 55 USG)
- Among other measures, the last revision of the USG of 1997 obliges the public authorities to co-operate with trade and business organisations in order to encourage (self-) initiatives of decision-makers of the economy to implement the Environmental Protection Act.

Policies on Air Quality

In accordance with the Environmental Protection Act (USG), the Federal Council enacted the **Federal Clean Air Ordinance** (Luftreinhalteverordnung, LRV) of 1985, last revised in 1998.

The LRV sets threshold values to limit the noxious emissions (NO_x, CO, O₃, SO₂, PM10) and obliges the cantons to work out rehabilitation measures for areas with high pollution levels. The canton of Bern for instance has elaborated its first "action plan against air

pollution for the agglomeration of Bern" in 1990.⁸ This plan shows ways how to reach the air quality standards which have been set by the Ordinance. The measures proposed were developed and have to be implemented in a close co-operation between the canton of Bern and the municipalities.

As the emissions of motorised transport are a major source of air pollution and the number of available parking places has been recognised as one of the decisive features for determining the amount of car traffic, **parking management** is a main instrument of the cantonal and municipal action plans against air pollution.⁽⁹⁾ "Parking management" means structural and operative measures for guidance or restriction of stationary traffic. Dependent on the availability and quality of the public transport system in a certain area, the amount of (new) parking places can be more or less restricted or taxed.

The **Federal Law on the Reduction of CO₂** of 1999 provides for a number of measures in the field of energy consumption. The aim is to reduce Swiss emissions of CO₂ to 90 percent and fuels to 92 percent of the 1990-value by the year 2010. In order to reach this goal, the law provides for a CO₂-tax, but only in case it should be foreseen that the economy will not achieve the reduction aimed at. Such a tax would not be introduced before the year 2004 in any case.⁽¹⁰⁾

2.4 Policies on Energy

In 1991, the Federal Council authorised the Action Programme "Energy 2000". Together with the adoption of an energy article in the Constitution and the referendum on a moratorium to build nuclear power plants in 1990, as well as the Federal Council's declarations at the international Climate Conference in Geneva (1990) and at the Environment Summit Conference in Rio (1992), the route was set for a new Swiss energy policy.

Apart from providing financial and economical incentives by introducing an energy tax and an Ecological Tax Reform (as discussed in chapter 2.2) to meet the aim of a sustainable development, the Federal Council wants to promote *voluntary measures for rational and renewable use of energy* by the Action Programme Energy 2000 and its successor Energy 2000+. The program is led by the Minister for Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC) and composed of representatives of all the three state levels and exponents of business, science and interest groups. Implemented measures that are

⁸ KIGA - Kantonales Amt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit (1991), Massnahmenplan zur Luftreinhaltung in der Region Bern, Teilmassnahmenplan Verkehr.

⁹ BUWAL – Bundesamt für Umwelt, Wald und Landschaft (1997), Parkplatz-Massnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen.

¹⁰ The approval of the energy tax and the promoting measures as described in chapter 2.2 would make the CO₂-tax redundant.

relevant for transport policy are for example ECO-drive courses, promotion of Car-sharing and combined traffic in municipalities.⁽¹¹⁾

The new Energy Law, enacted in 1999, forms the legal basis of the Energy 2000+ Action Programme and the continuation of a progressive and sustainable Swiss energy policy. The most important changes are the possibility to contract out certain tasks to private organisations on the one hand and to grant overall amounts to the cantons for the development of programs to meet the aims of the policy (instead of promoting only single projects) on the other hand.

11 DETEC (1999), Aktionsprogramm Energie 2000, 9. Jahresbericht.

3 National Parking Context

3.1 Introduction

Parking policy in Switzerland is subject to change:⁽¹²⁾ In the 1960s and 70s the main goal of parking policy was to provide a sufficient amount of parking space to meet the rising demand. Environmental damages, congestion and the growing scarcity of open space have led to a rethink. Starting from the latest findings that the amount of free parking places is a main determinant for road traffic⁽¹³⁾, experts now propose reductions of available parking places and improved parking management as appropriate measures in order to slow down traffic growth.

In Switzerland, parking policies therefore consist of a **mix of price, quantity, time and user oriented policy measures** (see table 1):⁽¹⁴⁾

Table 1: Types of parking policy measures in urban areas

Price oriented policy measures	Quantity oriented policy measures	Time oriented policy measures	User oriented policy measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – parking fees – subsidies for the provision of new parking infrastructure (e.g. Park+Ride facilities) – charges for park cards (e.g. for residents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – legal regulations concerning the provision of new parking space – removing existing parking spaces – planning and building of public parking infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – parking period limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – privileges for certain user groups (residents, clients, deliverers, handicapped etc.) or car types – access restrictions for certain user groups or car types

However, not all of these measures have been realised to a great extent. Especially the implementation of measures for *reduction and regulation* of parking space is not an easy task: due to the (still) high significance of 'the car' (as status symbol, symbol of liberty) to a big part of the population, **acceptance** of such measures is usually rather low.⁽¹⁵⁾

12 See BUWAL (1997), Parkplatzmassnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen.

13 See for example GVF (1996), Wege der Schweizer.

14 Source: ECOPLAN (1994), Parking Policy.

15 As was shown for example in the studies of the PRIMA-project (ECOPLAN (1999b)). A reliable indicator for the importance of cars to the population and therefore the acceptance of measures to regulate or reduce car traffic in Switzerland has proven to be the *extent of motorization*: municipalities with a high degree of motorization have the least restrictive parking regulations (BUWAL (1997), p. 24).

3.2 Characterising Figures for Switzerland

Switzerland has 7 million inhabitants and more than 3 million licensed cars. Three quarters of the Swiss households own a car, of which 25 percent have more than one car.

The 1994 study of everyday mobility shows that per day 88% of the population (older than 6 years) in Switzerland are traffic participants. On average each person makes 33.2 kilometres a day and travels 1 hour and 23 minutes.

Private road transport dominates amongst the transport modes: The most important means of transportation in Switzerland are private cars. 68 of 100 kilometres are made by car. Private cars are generally poorly occupied. Although most of them are rated for 5 people, the average occupation per kilometre travelled amounts to only 1.6 people.

The average annual distance travelled by car was 13'000 km in 1994. This number has declined in recent years, as the number of households with 2 or 3 vehicles has increased. Overall, however, road traffic has continued to grow.

Table 2 presents an overview of the most important figures related to car use in Switzerland:

Table 2: Characterising Figures of car use in Switzerland

Inhabitants (in thousands), 1998 ^a			7'124	
Number of licensed cars (in thousands), 1998 ^a			3'383	
Car-ownership ^d			474 cars per 1000 inhabitants, 75% of the households own a car	
Average occupancy of private cars , 1994 ^c			1.6 persons per car	
Modal split				
Share of means of transport, 1994, all day, persons over 6 years			Annual kilometres per person over 6 years, 1994 ^b	Average traffic performance per vehicle, 1993 ^b
	by distance (in %) ^a	by journeys (in %) ^c		
private car	68.0	35	8'431	12'956
rail	13.6	3		
bus/tram/post bus	4.5	9		
motor cycle	1.8	2		
bicycle	2.7	7		
on foot	4.5	43		
other	4.8	1		

Sources: ^a BFS (1999a), Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz 2000

^b GVF/BFS (1996), Wege der Schweizer

^c DETEC (1998), Transportation – yesterday, today, tomorrow

^d BFS (1998), Schweizerische Verkehrsstatistik 1995

Automobiles need space: for the more than 3 million cars in Switzerland the space required is estimated to be about 8000 hectares, or twice the surface of the canton Basel-Stadt. Swiss households have more cars than parking spaces available. One in three households has no parking place, but only one in four has no car.⁽¹⁶⁾

Half the people employed have a reserved parking place at work. Most of them can use it for free, only some 5% have to pay a rent. The availability of parking space at work has a major influence on the choice of means of transport. Over 80 percent of the employees who have a parking place provided at work, use their car to go to work. Of those employees who don't have access to parking space at work, only every third uses a private car regularly.

3.3 Decision-makers in the field of planning and implementing

In Switzerland, on- and off-street parking are not the two major categories of parking types, but rather **private and public parking places**. Parking concepts and strategies do often not cover the private sector though it is well known that a large part of car trips - especially commuter and shopping traffic - ends on private car parks.⁽¹⁷⁾ Parking policies in Switzerland contain instruments for private parking spaces as well as for public ones.

Additionally, we have to differentiate between **existing and new parking facilities** in order to examine the spheres of regulation concerning parking matters:⁽¹⁸⁾

3.3.1 Private parking places

What we call "private parking places" in this paper are parking places *owned* by private people or companies. Private parking places thus may be open to the public (e.g. privately run car parks, car parks of shopping- or leisure centres) or they may be accessible only to a certain circle (e.g. owners of apartments, employees of a company).

Parking areas of the public administration are treated in this section as well (although they are owned by the public sector), because they are mainly used by (public) employees and therefore they require similar measures as private parking spaces for employees.

16 See for example DETEC (1998), Transport – yesterday, today, tomorrow.

17 Privately owned parking places ("private parking places") make up around 60 to 85% of the available parking space in swiss cities (BUWAL (1997), Parkplatzmassnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen, p. 72f.).

18 The following exposition is based on BUWAL (1997), Parkplatzmassnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen, p. 18f.

3.3.1.1 Provision of new private parking space

The cantonal construction acts formulate principles on the construction of parking places. Generally it is up to the municipalities to put these principles in concrete terms by municipal decrees. Exceptions are urban cantons like Basel-Stadt and Geneva, which have detailed parking policy decrees that are binding upon their municipalities, or the canton of Bern whose parking policy decree sets minimum-standards for certain areas which suffer from bad air quality (Massnahmenplangebiete).

Since the 1960s most cantons oblige the developers of new buildings to provide a sufficient amount of parking spaces. Those developers who are not able or willing to provide any parking space have to pay replacement taxes (Ersatzabgaben) instead, which enable the municipality to build public parking areas. The implementation of the principle of replacement taxes is mostly up to the municipalities: In some cases, the canton restricts the use of the replacement tax-revenues to the construction of public parking space only, in others the local authorities can decide on the expenditure.⁽¹⁹⁾

On the other hand, due to the enormous growth of car traffic in the past decades and in order to prevent further uncontrolled growth, many urban municipalities are limiting the number of parking places allowed to build: when constructing a new (or rebuilding an existing) building, the required planning and building permission is only given if the number of new parking spaces does not exceed a certain number determined by the parking policy decree. The permissible number of parking places depends on the features of the building on the one hand and the accessibility of the area by public transport on the other hand (see figure 1).

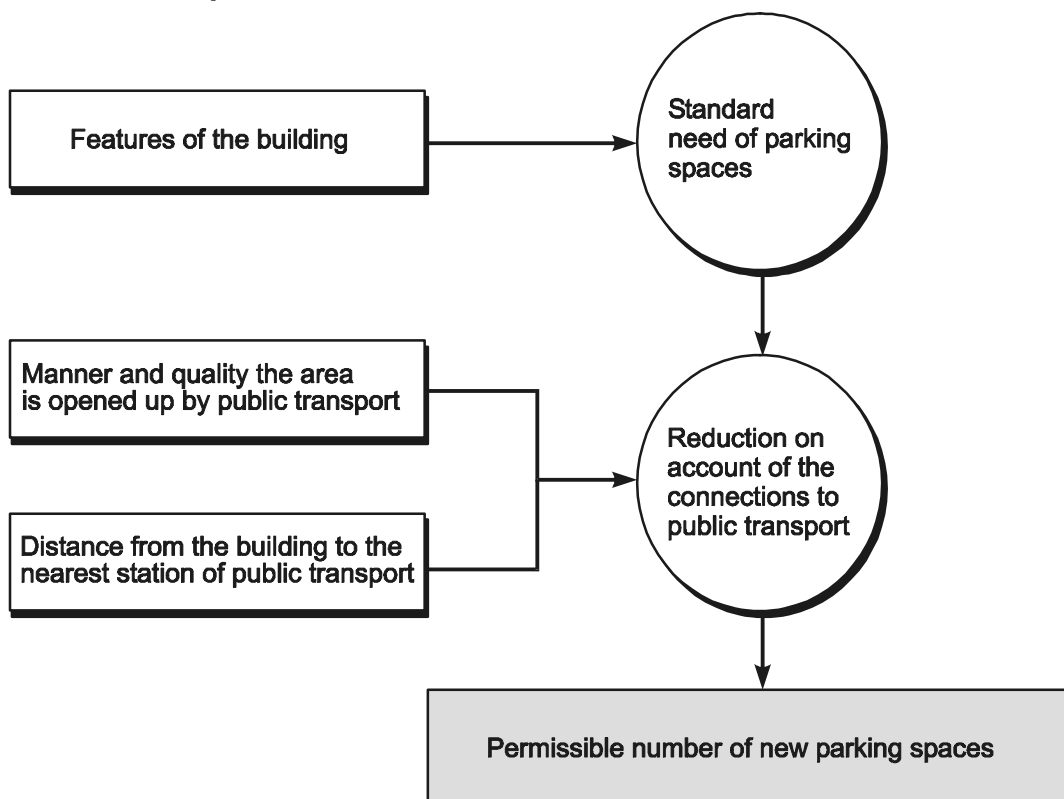
Features of the building are for example gross floor space, the number of rooms or the way the building is used. The manner and quality the area is opened up by public transport depends on whether the nearest station of public transport belongs to a local, regional or supra regional network. Another important factor is the frequency of the connections.

Some municipalities reduce the permissible number of parking places even further, dependent on factors such as technical practicability (e.g. in medieval city centres), limited capacity of the existing road network or environmental aspects.

This change of parking policy away from demand-oriented towards a supply-oriented policy has occurred in the 1980s and 90s in most Swiss towns. A few of towns still haven't come to an agreement on limiting the construction of parking space yet.

19 More and more towns abandon the charge of replacement taxes, because the use of the revenues often causes a political dilemma: some groups refuse to use the tax yield for the improvement of public transport or cycle ways, whereas the construction of additional public parking areas is no longer desirable for environmental reasons.

Figure 1: Procedure to determine the permissible number of new parking spaces⁽²⁰⁾



What concerns the provision of new private parking places the following aspects are of special interest:

- In the past ten years the **influence of interest groups** on parking policy has been growing. Especially some environmental organisations (for example the VCS)⁽²¹⁾ have successfully demanded to reduce the number of allowed parking places in several cases within the procedure of granting construction permissions. On the other hand, pressure groups of trade and industry were supporting measures in order to ease the conditions to provide for new private parking places.
- **New developments (Example of Bern):** Experiences from the execution of measures implemented by the previous Action Plans on clean air in Bern have shown that while technical measures in heating, industry and automobile technology had been successful to help reduce air pollution and energy consumption, these improvements had been lowered by the ongoing growth of traffic volume and energy consumption.

²⁰ Parking standards are formulated by the Association of Swiss Road and Traffic Engineers (Vereinigung Schweizerischer Strassenfachleute, VSS). The VSS is an association with members of private firms, public administration and colleges in the fields of civil engineering.

Although this problem had been known before, the necessary steps to implement the corresponding measures accordingly hadn't been taken in a sufficient way so far. The new Action Plan on clean air of May 2000 wants to implement an **overall approach** by not only concentrating on those areas which suffer from bad air quality (Massnahmenplangebiete) as described in chapter 3.3.1.1, but by extending the measures on the whole Canton of Bern.⁽²²⁾ Furthermore the new Action Plan provides for an improved co-ordination of clean air policy with land use planning by adjusting the planning horizon to 15 years.

To implement the new overall approach and the improved co-ordination with land use planning, the new Action Plan provides for **"road performance models"**, as they have already been applied for the region of Bern and the region of Thun: According to the cantonal "balance of emissions" of 1995, road performance of motorised passenger traffic (measured as daily vehicle kilometres) may not rise by more than 8% on average from 2000 to 2015 to meet the aims the policies on clean air and climate protection.⁽²³⁾ The biggest share of this growth potential is to be used by the cities and agglomerations (max. 11% compared to 8% on average growth). In the region of Thun for example, five municipalities have developed such a regional road performance model: 40% of the additional road performance are allocated to the actual locations with big traffic volumes, the rest should apply to the whole region. The planning authorities welcome the new gained flexibility - but no one knows *how to control* "road performance"! Actually, this new concept thus means a loosening of the previous policy.

Furthermore, since the limitation of the maximum number of parking places allowed (that was decreed in 1991 by the Canton according to the Action Plan of 1990) was heavily opposed by pressure groups of trade and industry, this regulation has been replaced in the new cantonal Construction Decree (enacted in March 2000) by a *range* of the number of allowed parking places. This maximal allowed number is therefore no longer determined by the accessibility of the location by public transport means (as provided for in the VSS-norm mentioned above), but by the will of the investors.⁽²⁴⁾

In addition, municipalities will no longer be allowed to decree divergent regulations anymore according to the new Decree. For the city of Bern, this means that the existing parking regulations which are stricter than in all of the other areas of the Canton of Bern, will have to be loosened within the next years.

21 Verkehrsclub der Schweiz.

22 Volkswirtschaftsdirektion des Kantons Bern (2000), Lufthygienischer Massnahmenplan für den Kanton Bern (Vernehmlassungsentwurf).

23 This number takes into account the rehabilitation requirements on the different pollutive substances on the one hand, as well as the most recent forecasts on improvements in engine technologies on the other hand.

24 Amt für Gemeinden und Raumordnung (2000), Abstellplätze für Fahrzeuge.

- **Reduction of already existing private parking places:** Another important feature regarding existing private parking places is the protection of acquired possessions, as a principle mentioned in the federal constitution and embodied in the cantonal construction acts. This makes it hardly impossible to remove already existing parking places later on – as long as they have been constructed in conformity with the law. *Indirect measures* that can lead to a (relative) reduction of the number of private parking places will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.3.1.2 Parking policy measures on private parking places

a) Taxes on private parking space and compulsory charging of fees

Some of the Cantonal action plans on clean air provide for measures to impose taxes on private parking space or to order the charging of fees on private parking places. From a legal point of view, this is possible for cantons or municipalities, but requires in any case a formal legal basis, which defines the circle of taxable persons, the objects of taxation, a tax-limit, the use of the revenues, as well as controls and possible sanctions.

After a long period of legal disputes in the 1990ies, the federal court finally decided in 1999 that the cantons and the municipalities are allowed to enact such laws on the basis of environmental law, i.e. that the freedom of ownership may be restricted in order to reach the goals of the Federal Clean Air Ordinance (see the example of the case of Belp on the next page).

Until now, such ordered charges on private parking places have been realised in the following cases:

- Parking places of the **public administration** that are not open to the general public, such as parking places for administrative staff, teachers and other employees of the public sector. Many Swiss Cantons and local authorities are planning to introduce such fees. Most of them meet with internal opposition, particularly in the case of taxing parking places of school grounds. Even so there are quite a few Cantons and municipalities that have already successfully realised fees on parking places of the employees in the public sector⁽²⁵⁾. Most of them exclude handicapped people and shift workers from being taxed and some establish further criteria to assign the available parking space.
- Parking places of **shopping centres:** In the 1990ies, two distinct types of taxes on private parking places had been discussed and provided for in some of the Cantonal Action Plans on clean air:

25 E.g. the urban Canton of Basel, the Cantons Fribourg, Thurgau and Zug or the Canton and city of Bern.

1. Tax on the *number* of private parking places with the aim to reduce this number, e.g. in the Canton of Zurich:⁽²⁶⁾

This would have been a yearly or a single tax paid by the owner of the parking places to the municipality, regarding all of the available parking places or only the number that exceeds the minimum number of parking places required. Such a tax could have been passed on to the users of the parking places (employees, customers). The revenues of this tax would have been used to improve access by public transport means.

So far, this kind of environmental tax never came into effect for political reasons. Meanwhile, the Canton of Zurich has cut this measure out of its Action Plan on clean air.

However, there might be a chance that a tax on private parking places will be implemented within the framework of an **Ecological Tax Reform** that is being discussed in the Canton of Zurich. It would be an environmental tax levied on the number of parking places of big facilities that cause a lot of traffic (shopping centres, leisure and sports-facilities, car parks) to be paid to the Canton.⁽²⁷⁾ The net-revenue would not be earmarked, but returned to the households and companies.

2. *Compulsory charges* on the *use* of parking places with the aim to encourage drivers to use public transport means instead of cars.⁽²⁸⁾

Example: The Case of Belp⁽²⁹⁾

In March 1999 the Federal Court decided that the Canton of Bern may *oblige* a shopping centre to charge parking fees on its customer parking places. It further stated that in the long run such fees must not be restricted to *new* shopping centres, but that *existing* shopping centres will also have to be obliged to levying fees in the near future. However, the cantonal authorities were not really pleased by this decision: in October 1999 the administrative tribunal had to urge the Canton to finally set the fee accepted by the federal court. Yet this order hasn't been put into action and in the end, the canton of Bern *dropped the obligation* to charging parking fees by shopping centres in the new Action Plan on clean air of May 2000⁽³⁰⁾ because the relevant authorities say it is disputed if parking fees have a positive or a negative influence on the environment.

26 Air Programme 1996, Measure PV7b.

27 The tax would be levied on the number of parking places that exceed a predetermined limit. See INFRAS/ECOPLAN (1999), *Ökologische Finanzreform im Kanton Zürich*, and Regierungsrat des Kantons Zürich (2000), *Vernehmlassung zum Bericht zur Ökologischen Steuerreform*.

28 e.g. Action Plan on clean air of the Canton of Bern (1992), Measure p1.2; Action Plan of the Canton of Luzerne (1993), Measure U2e; Action Plan of the Canton St. Gallen, Measures V2.2 and V2.3.

29 Lauber F. (2000), *Bern holt Atem für die Luftthygiene – Der Fall Belp bleibt auf Eis*.

30 Volkswirtschaftsdirektion des Kantons Bern (2000), *Lufthygienischer Massnahmenplan für den Kanton Bern (Vernehmlassungsentwurf)*.

Based on this decision of the Federal Court, there are discussions going on amongst the Canton of Zurich (to replace the above-mentioned measure that was cut) and several other cantons of the German-speaking part of Switzerland which examine the possibility of *introducing such compulsory fees on private parking places* of big facilities (such as shopping centres or other projects that require an environmental impact analysis) *jointly*. This would diminish the fear of shopping centres to lose their customers to competitors in other cantons and raise the political acceptance of such a measure.

There are already several cases of shopping centres that have to charge fees on their parking places due to legal decisions forced by environmental groups such as the VCS within the procedure of granting construction permissions.

To avoid legal disputes, authorities usually prefer to reach **voluntary agreements** with the private owners, which has been successful in several cases – not without tough negotiations preceding however.

Some companies have already introduced fees on their parking places on their own:

- because demand exceeded supply of available parking space, or
- for an environmental-friendly image of the company, or
- to maximise utility within the company: especially during a recession as in the 90ies, several companies have made the users bear the costs of the parking places to follow the causation principle and to raise further revenue. Some of them refund (part of) the revenue to their employees, e.g. in order to make a contribution to tickets for public transport.

In some cases companies set up additional criteria to regulate the excess demand, e.g. they may privilege company cars, handicapped employees, management staff or employees who don't have access to public transport service.

Example: Parking and mobility management of "Novartis" in Basel

The company Novartis is a major employer in the city of Basel. Heavy traffic around the 5 different company's sites in Basel caused by car commuting and travelling between sites, made the company promote the use of bicycles for business and commuter trips. The parking management concept of the company is based on three pillars:

1. Cut down the supply of parking places: the number of parking places was reduced and each division of the company was allocated a certain amount of parking places (dependent on distance to be travelled and access to public transport means).

2. Charge parking space: each division has to pay fees for the division's parking spaces to a common drivers' pool – the employees, however, don't have to pay for the use of parking places.
3. Offer alternatives: employees who give up car use for commuting and business trips voluntarily are offered a bicycle for free. At the same time the company applied several measures to promote and facilitate the use of bicycles by: creation of an internal working group; setting up a network of bike paths at each location and to connecting different company sites, integrated with the city's cycle network (in conjunction with the city administration); install special cycle gates at the main entrance of each company site and covered cycle parking; establish a cycle repair service and a pool of company cycles; promote the use of the bicycle by establishing a company-owned fitness club and run periodic marketing activities.

As a result of the integrated parking and cycling policy more than a quarter of journeys to work are made by bicycle. For its long-standing, systematic and convincing promotion of cycle use, the company was awarded the most cycle-friendly company of Switzerland in 1998.⁽³¹⁾

b) Reduction of the number of private parking places

There is no legal basis for a real reduction in existing private parking places due to the protection of acquired possession. Nevertheless there are some (indirect) possibilities within the scope of the existing legal framework that can lead to a relative reduction of private parking space:⁽³²⁾

- Within renovation or extension of a building: the recalculation of the permissible number of parking places can lead to a reduced amount of permitted parking space, in case there had been a new parking decree with *stricter regulations* put into effect since the construction of the building (e.g. a few cases in the canton of Bern).
- An indirect reduction might result when introducing a regional approach, the way the city of Fribourg did in 1993.

Example: The city of Fribourg

The city of Fribourg registered all of the existing private and public parking places and divided the city into three zones according to the accessibility by public transport. Furthermore, the city was subdivided into more than 200 sectors. This led to the *calculation of actual values and the determination of desired values of parking places* per flat, per working place or per visitor – dependent on the use of the building. For every bigger (re-)construction project (e.g. a multiplex cinema), the permissible number of parking places is determined according to those values.

31 Sources: Mr. Preiswerk/Novartis, <http://www.taxistop.be/toolbox/english/famous/fmsnova.htm> and <http://www.igvelo.ch/wettbewerb/index.html>.

32 BUWAL (1997), Parkplatz-Massnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen, p. 37.

Voluntary agreements of private companies: so far, some local authorities have tried to, but not been able to *convince* private owners of an actual reduction of already existing parking places for their employees. However, there are a few companies that have indeed reduced parking space *on their own*, as the above-mentioned example of “Novartis” has shown.

3.3.2 Public parking places

“Public parking places” are parking places that are *owned* by the public sector and open to the public at large. Most of these parking places are on public streets and squares, a few of them in car parks owned by the public sector. Some of them might be operated by private companies.

Public parking policies contain a mix of various parking policy measures such as legal regulations and taxes (for a short overview see chapter 3.1, table 1).

3.3.2.1 Provision of public parking places

In general, there is a trend to limit the amount of publicly accessible parking space in the city-centres (e.g. in Zurich, Bern). New parking places are mostly provided outside of the central areas in the form of park and ride facilities.

A recent trend in Swiss municipalities is to augment the urban quality of life by closing on-street parking places to regain living space (for pedestrians, kids, pavements, etc.), but replacing and concentrating them at the same time by building new (subterranean) car parks (e.g. in Basel, Biel; planned in Bern).

□ Park and Ride facilities:

In urban areas, Park and Ride facilities are being constructed on the outskirts of towns, near stations of public transport means (S-Bahn, local buses, trams) with the intention to ease the traffic load in the cities and to link private and public transport:

The realisation of major public transport projects (such as the S-Bahn in Zurich and Bern) or the quality improvement of public transport (by introducing separate bus lanes in Lausanne for example) in the 1990s have increased the importance of P+R facilities³³ as their main task is to promote the use of the associated public transport services instead. Another reason for the growing importance of P+R facilities is the introduction of parking policy measures in the inner part of the urban areas (especially the realisation of Blue Zones in residential areas) that raise the demand for parking space in P+R facilities.

The Canton of Bern for example wants to promote Park and Ride facilities according to the cantonal transport policy by making financial contributions to the realisation of such projects. Planning and construction of these facilities however are a matter of the

33 As well as Bike + Ride facilities to promote the use of bicycles.

planning regions, the municipalities and the transport contractors.⁽³⁴⁾ In view of this situation the state government of Bern enacted in a decree principles for P+R facilities.⁽³⁵⁾ If these principles are not fulfilled by the operators of P+R facilities (e.g. a community or a public transport operator) the state authorities do not subsidise the erecting of the P+R facility. The principles are:

- P+R facilities should minimise the driving distance of car traffic (i.e. a decentralised structure of P+R facilities is preferred⁽³⁶⁾). They should not be located close to the city of Bern but at the junctions of public transport in the surrounding countryside.
- P+R facilities should not compete with local public transport. Otherwise, former users of public transport may switch to car use to drive to the P+R facility.
- The owner must elaborate operation directions that define the management of the P+R facility (level and structure of user charges⁽³⁷⁾, access limitations, surveillance of the parking spaces).
- New P+R facilities must correspond with the goals of regional planning and transport concepts.

For the urban area of Bern such a regional P+R concept has been worked out by a working group including representatives of local and state administrations and of public transport operators. The P+R concept for the urban area of Bern is an integrated part of the regional traffic and urban planning.

3.3.2.2 Reduction and limitation of the number of public parking places

An actual *reduction* of the number of public parking places has not taken place in any Swiss city for political reasons. In the mid 1990s, when the most heavy debates took place, compromises between the opponents (right wing political parties and interest groups of trade and businesses versus the green – left parties and environmental groups), for example in Zurich (1996), led to a limitation (by the number of 1990), but not to a reduction of public parking space in central areas.⁽³⁸⁾

In Basel-Stadt there is a law that prohibits the construction of new car parks in the city centre. However, the state government wants to repeal this ban in order to gain more flexibility for measures in town planning and to improve the parking supply in the central area by qualitative and quantitative measures, as demanded by a multidisciplinary work group (Werkstadt Basel, see also the example in section 3.3.2.4.).⁽³⁹⁾

34 Furthermore, every P+R project that is related to a railroad station must be approved by the federal office of transport (Amt für Gemeinden und Raumordnung (1995), Arbeitshilfe Park+Ride/Bike+Ride).

35 See Baudirektion des Kantons Bern (1992), Grundsätze für P+R-Anlagen im Kanton Bern.

36 In contrast to B+R facilities which may be promoted at central locations as well.

37 The charges must be higher the nearer the P+R facility is to the city centre.

38 Tiefbauamt der Stadt Zürich (2000). Parkplätze in der Innenstadt seit 1990.

39 Regierungsrat des Kantons Basel-Stadt (2000). Parkplätze in der Innenstadt: Verbesserungen prüfen.

3.3.2.3 Measures on public parking places

a) Parking time limits on public parking places

According to the standards of the Association of the Swiss Road and Traffic Engineers (VSS), public parking places can be marked by white, blue, red or yellow lines⁽⁴⁰⁾ :

- Blue zones: Vehicles in blue zones may be parked for a maximum of 1.5 to 3 hours during the day on weekdays (i.e. Monday through Saturday, 8.00 – 18.00h). Blue zones are implemented mostly in residential urban areas. No fees are being charged for the restricted short time use, but for the privileged use by residents who can buy park cards that authorise them to unlimited parking in their residential area. In some cities, permissions for privileged use of blues zones are extended to other user categories, such as car-sharing associations (e.g. in Zurich). Park cards do not guarantee a free parking place. Usually, there are also possibilities to buy daily parking cards at the local police stations.
- Red zones: zones with a maximum free parking time up to 15 hours.
- White parking places: their use may be restricted by time limits and they can be taxed at the same time.
- Yellow parking places: these are restricted to a certain circle of users (e.g. taxi ranks).

Further details on rates, time limits and user categories are subject to municipal decrees.

The aim of this categorisation is to use the available public parking space more efficiently. Commuters, for example, are less likely to station their cars on parking places of the blue zones, since the daily park cards are rather expensive and in some places they are hard to get (e.g. only in single pieces at the local police stations). So there might be an incentive for commuters to use public transport (in combination with park and ride facilities) instead and there's more available space for residents, customers or visitors.

Therefore, due to the restrictions of the allowed parking time, certain types of users may be prevented to use the respective parking places, since the demand for parking places varies between different groups of car users: Commuters are generally looking for cheap parking spaces without a restrictive limitation of the parking time whereas for business people it is more important to find as soon as possible a free parking space because time losses are much more expensive than even high parking costs. Correspondingly, parking policy measures raising the availability of parking spaces (e.g. parking fees) are more in favour of business traffic than of commuter traffic. According to the maximally allowed parking time, parking places can be divided into the following types:

40 BUWAL, Parkplatz-Massnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen, p. 50f.

Table 3: Parking period and parking purposes

Period	Time	Purpose
PP with very short parking period	< 30 min.	Short shopping, deliveries, pick up (of persons)
Short-time-parking	30 – 90 min.	Shopping, use of services, meetings
Medium-time-parking	90 – 180 min.	Shopping, meetings, leisure activities, visits
Long-time-parking	3 to 15 hrs.	Residents, commuters, visitors; leisure and shopping activities
Unlimited parking period	> 15 hrs.	Residents, commuters, visitors

Source: BUWAL (1997), following Bays/Christe (1994)

In order to better meet the needs of customers, most city-centres provide a mix of shortest-, short- and medium-time parking places.

b) Charging of fees on public parking places

According to the federal constitution (Bundesverfassung, BV), the use of public roads is generally free of charge, exceptions have to be sanctioned by the federal assembly (Art. 82^{ter} BV). The Law on Road Traffic (Strassenverkehrsgesetz, SVG) delegates most competencies on road traffic to the cantons (Art. 3, SVG). They may regulate traffic within the framework of federal law (e.g. for reasons of safety or environmental protection of residents and others concerned) and they may delegate the competence to do so to their municipalities.

Tax sovereignty in general is up to the cantons. In what way the municipalities are allowed to charge fees or levy (environmental) taxes depends on cantonal tax law.⁽⁴¹⁾

In Switzerland, **fees** to cover the *direct costs* of the authorities have been charged in highly central areas for years: the users of parking places have to bear the costs that result to the authorities from installing, maintaining and controlling parking places and meters.

Recently however, municipalities have extended parking charges to less central (residential) areas, and rates are generally being increased: In some cases the parking fees may also cover indirect costs, such as costs of land use, as well as the costs for construction and maintenance in the case of car parks.

41 BUWAL, Parkplatz-Massnahmen in Schweizer Agglomerationen, p. 42.

Example: The dispute about parking fees in Zurich

In 1994, the voters of the municipality of Zurich approved a decree that provided for substantially higher parking fees for short-time and medium-time parking (longer than 30 minutes) in central areas. The city's trade and business organisations and the automobile associations did not approve with this decision and went to court. The dispute was mainly about the question, if the municipality was allowed to charge higher fees than necessary just to cover the costs for maintenance and controlling – or if doing so would violate the constitutional principle that the general use of roads has to be free of charge. The Federal Court decided in 1996 that Zurich was allowed to charge higher fees for longer parking duration in very central areas, since to station a car for more than 30 minutes would correspond to a "heavy use of common property" when considering the great demand for parking space in the city centre.⁽⁴²⁾ Thus the municipality of Zurich was allowed to charge CHF 0.50 for 30 minutes (as before), and CHF 2.— for one hour and CHF 5.—for two hours in the centre, compared to CHF 0.50 per hour in the rest of the city as before.⁽⁴³⁾

This decision formed the basis for other municipalities to increase parking fees: In the city of Bern for example, the green-left parties wanted to generally raise parking fees in 1999: in residential areas from 1.—to 2.— and in the city centre from to CHF 2.—per hour to CHF 3.—. Additionally, in the city centre the new tariff should also have to be paid *during the night*. Exponents of the local business opposed to these changes in the parliament. A compromise was being reached in 2000: fees will be raised only in the residential areas. Parking fees *in the city centre* however will have to be paid also *during the night* in future (in contrast to other cities, such as Zurich). Exceptions are made for residents and hotel guests. Furthermore, the fee for park cards in Blue zones are increased from 8.—to 15.— per day, with the new possibility to buy 4-hour-cards at a price of CHF 8.—.

From an economical point of view the rate increases of Zurich and Bern make sense: compared to off-street parking places in public car parks, on-street parking places in central districts should be more expensive, since on-street parking places are much sought-after and easier accessible. A comparison of tariffs between on- and off-street parking places in Bern after the rate increase shows that on-street parking is still too cheap (CHF 2.—per hour compared to CHF 2.80 to 3.20 per hour in five of the six public car parks in the city centre). In Zurich tariffs for the first hour of parking are the same (CHF 2.—per hour) in most of the car parks compared to on-street parking during the day. In order to reach an efficient allocation of the scarce parking supply and to minimise search traffic, rates should be (further) increased for on-street parking in Swiss cities.

Charging of **environmental taxes on parking places:**

The charging of environmental taxes on parking places would require a cantonal legal basis. In the context of parking places, an environmental tax would have the aim to

42 Hildebrand (1996), Höhere Parkgebühren sind rechtmässig.

43 1 CHF = 0.65 EURO (June 2000).

reduce the demand of parking space by increasing parking fees to an amount that is higher than necessary for just covering direct costs and indirect costs of the authorities (e.g. to charge more than CHF 3.- an hour in highly central areas). Such measures have not been realised yet:

- The former Action Plan on clean air of the Canton of Bern of 1992 provided for enacting a decree on environmental taxes on parking places. However, such a decree has never been enacted and meanwhile this measure was dropped in the new Action Plan of May 2000.
- The Canton of Zurich wants to implement parking policy measures within the framework of the planned **ecological tax reform** ⁽⁴⁴⁾:

The *polluter-pays-principle* shall be enforced by the Canton and the communities by raising *cost-covering taxes* on the use of public parking places (i.e. taxes that cover also the indirect (external) costs).

An *environmental tax* shall be levied on those projects that cause big traffic volumes (such as shopping centres, car parks, sports- and leisure-facilities) in order to reduce traffic emissions and to promote a relocation of those projects to areas with a good accessibility by public transport means in the long run (see chapter 3.3.1.2.).

3.3.2.4 Further measures on parking policy

□ Parking guidance and information systems:

In order to use the existing parking facilities (especially of car parks) in the city centres more efficiently, several cities, e.g. Bern, Geneva and Winterthur have introduced parking information systems or they are planning to do so (e.g. Zurich). By signalling the amount of free parking space in the various city car parks to the drivers when entering the central district of a city, search traffic can be reduced; less central car parks that used to be badly occupied may attract more customers and note increased occupancy rates after the introduction of parking guidance systems (e.g. in Bern).

□ Regional parking management:

While some cities (especially the smaller ones) are charging fees only in central districts, more and more cities are charging all of the available public parking places at least with "control fees" (such as in Blue zones), dependent on the centrality. This growing tendency for an *area-wide parking management* by taxing and/or imposing time limits results from the experience that users tend to switch to unmanaged parking places where possible, which lessens the efficiency of those measures.

Since in Switzerland, parking management is mostly a matter of the municipalities (and not of the cantons), measures may vary within an agglomeration that contains several

44 Regierungsrat des Kantons Zürich (2000). Vernehmlassung zum Bericht zur Ökologischen Finanzreform.

municipalities and drivers can evade them by stationing their car in the streets of a neighbouring municipality with unmanaged parking places.

Bern's new Action Plan on clean air⁽⁴⁵⁾ for example provides for implementing an area-wide parking management across political boundaries: municipalities within one regional centre or agglomeration have to work out parking master plans jointly by 2003.

□ **Integrated parking policy - a "new" approach: "Delegate for parking matters"**

As the various examples of Bern and Zurich have showed, disputes between political parties and interest groups on parking policy matters are nothing unusual in Switzerland. A new way to reach consensus and an improved coordination of parking policy issues is shown by the example of Basel:

Example: "Werkstadt Basel"⁽⁴⁶⁾

In the 1990ies the urban canton of Basel-Stadt was faced with financial problems as many other Swiss cities. Amongst other reasons, the fiscal gap resulted from the fact that more and more financially strong inhabitants moved out of the city. The authorities were therefore looking for ways to maintain quality of life in the Basel in the long run. Within the project "Werkstadt Basel" the so called "Consensus Conferences" were established: multidisciplinary groups worked out ideas and possible measures. As a result of this participatory process, the government presented an action programme for the city's development ("Aktionsprogramm Stadtentwicklung Basel-Stadt) with 195 accepted (realisable) measures in various fields. These measures are categorised as projects, concepts or goals/ideas. There are 61 projects, i.e. measures that may directly be put into action. One of these is the appointment of a **"Delegate for parking matters"** in June 2000. This person is responsible for the co-ordination and realisation of other parking related projects: the most important of them is to set up an **area-wide parking management according to economic principles**. One measure will be to enable drivers *to use parking tickets as tickets for public transport means* as well. Other measures are the replacement of parking places above ground in residential areas by subterranean car parks or the establishment of a parking guidance system as described before.

3.3.2.5 Control and enforcement of regulations

Usually it is the local police that is responsible for managing public parking space, i.e. for signalling parking places and the maximally allowed parking time, for levying taxes, as well as for control and punishment in case of violation of those measures (by fines or the impoundment of vehicles).

In the end of the 1990s, parking fines have been raised dramatically in several Swiss cities (e.g. in Bern, Lausanne, Zurich) in order to get a better grip on the often rather

45 Volkswirtschaftsdirektion des Kantons Bern (2000), Lufthygienischer Massnahmenplan für den Kanton Bern (Vernehmlassungsentwurf), Massnahme P3.

46 According to Mr. Wiener / ECOS, <http://www.werkstadt-basel.ch> and <http://www.aps-bs.ch>.

chaotic situations in central areas (through illegal parking) and in Blue Zones, where time limits were followed badly.

In Zurich fines have been raised dramatically to the twofold and threefold respectively (dependent on the offence) in 1996; fines amount to CHF 40 to 120 for parking offences since. The increased rates have led to more revenue on the one hand and less offences on the other hand. In the city of Lausanne, for example, where fines were also increased in September 1996, the number of parking offences declined by 40% from 1994 to 1999.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Another measure to improve parking discipline is to *delegate the enforcement to private security companies*. In Bern, for example, a private company has been controlling parking regulations for over six years: As a result, parking discipline has become much better, since controls are made periodically – while the police never had the capacity to fulfil this task regularly. According to the good experience with the outsourcing of control and enforcement of parking regulations in Bern, other cities will follow (e.g. Biel).⁽⁴⁸⁾

47 Direction de la sécurité publique et des affaires sportives (2000), 1999: Prévention générale en matière de circulation.

48 Demmler (1999), Biel: Mehr Bussen.

4 General feelings on parking matters

General feelings on parking matters can be assigned to the following main issues: The number of parking places provided, the level of the fees, time restrictions imposed on parking, the comprehensiveness of application and the restriction of parking places to certain user groups. From the European research project PRIMA⁽⁴⁹⁾ as well as from the other publications studied in this report, the following conclusions can be drawn with respect to general feelings on parking matters.

□ Number of public parking places provided

Of all questioned people in the city of Bern, 65% consider the lack of parking space to be the number one traffic problem. It is interesting to note that the lack of parking spaces is perceived as most serious problem among people commuting by railway. A possible interpretation of this result is that many of them do travel by railway for this very reason (otherwise, they would use their private car).

Shop owners in CBD fear that a reduction of parking places or the raise of fees imposed on parking has a severe (negative) effect on their sales and thus on work places in the respective district. Businessmen driving into town every now and then (for meetings etc.) depend on free parking spaces, regardless their price, whereas the total number provided is of minor importance.

□ Level of fees for parking spaces

The fees imposed for the use of public parking spaces are perceived as a serious problem, particularly by those using a car for their daily trips into cities (commuters). 55% of all questioned people in Bern estimate the price of parking spaces to be the second main traffic problem (besides the lack of parking spaces). The survey carried out in Zurich leads to a similar result: 59% of all questioned people mention the price of parking to be the third main traffic problem (besides the lack of parking spaces and congestion).

□ Blue Zones vs. short-time parking places

Blue zones can generally count on a very high level of acceptance. Residents are privileged, whereas commuters are much more affected. Since the latter are not entitled to vote in the respective municipality, they have no means to prevail over the residents.

49 The aim of the European research project PRIMA on pricing measures acceptance was to analyse the reasons behind the acceptance or non-acceptance of road pricing schemes in urban areas. In Bern and Zurich, as well as in six other case cities, surveys with 500 citizens and interviews with 30 politicians, experts and stakeholders have been carried out. Even though the focus of the PRIMA project was first of all on urban road pricing schemes, some questions asked in the survey and the interviews dealt with parking policy issues.

In contrast, the number and the pricing of short-time parking places in the city centre (CBD) are often subject to heavy political debates.

□ **Comprehensive application of parking policies**

Even conservative politicians estimate fees on parking places in the very centre of cities to be an adequate tool to manage with the scarcity of these places. This holds in spite of the fear of dropping sales in connection with the charging of parking places. Heavy political debates arise, however, especially around the number and the level of the charges imposed. The same is true for the management of parking places of large shopping centres and big public events. While members of conservative parties are very much opposed to managing corresponding parking places, support is likely to be found among members of green and left parties.

In Bern, an ongoing examination is drawing up the possibility to implement a system comparable to the one in use at the World Exposition 2000 in Hannover, Germany. Its main feature is a reservation system for parking places, so as to guarantee the access to parking spaces only to the owners of pre-paid cards.⁽⁵⁰⁾

□ **Parking places restricted to certain user groups**

Recent concepts restrict parking places to certain user groups. Whereas this system is not new for Blue Zones (residents benefit from the possibility to buy annual parking permissions without any time limit being imposed), the idea is to extend this or similar possibilities to car sharing organisations etc.⁽⁵¹⁾ As restrictions of parking places already exist for handicapped people as well as for women (video surveillance of specifically marked places in certain car parks), such ideas are generally well accepted by most involved parties.

50 Der Bund (2000), Gibts auf dem Zentareal ein neues Parkhaus?

51 Polizeidepartement der Stadt Zürich (1999), Blaue Zonen / Änderungen bei den Parkierungsbewilligungen.

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