

Accessible Parking Advisory Council
Report to the Connecticut General Assembly

December 30, 2024

Senator Christine Cohen, Co-Chair
Representative Roland Lemar, Co-Chair
Senator Rick Lopes, Vice Chair
Representative Aimee Berger-Girvalo, Vice Chair
Senator Tony Hwang, Ranking Member
Representative Kathy Kennedy, Ranking Member
Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee

Sen. Cohen, Rep. Lemar and Members of the Transportation Committee:

It is my pleasure to submit the first report of the Accessible Parking Advisory Council, which was established by 2023 legislation and signed into law by Governor Lamont. As referenced below, provisions within prescribe Council activities to be facilitated by the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles, legislative and executive branch appointment responsibility, and areas of focus for Council deliberations.

Having attended each of the meetings, I have appreciated the thoughtful, candid, and respectful conversations and contributions from members – each of whom brings unique perspectives and ideas on how to strengthen accessible parking in Connecticut. While not every idea discussed has achieved immediate or consensus support, the group is unified in purpose: that accessible parking credentials should be available to those who need it; that individual responsibility is a key tenet of successful programming; and that where resources can be identified and leveraged to support responsible use and boost enforcement, accessible parking can be improved in our state.

In its wisdom the General Assembly conceived of an ongoing meeting and annual reporting structure. As such, you will also note herein reflections and areas for further exploration from individual Council members. I look forward to their continuing engagement and, as always, welcome questions from Transportation Committee members.

Sincerely,



Antonio "Tony" Guerrero
Commissioner of Motor Vehicles

cc: Mr. Samuel Clark, Clerk of the Committee on Transportation
Senate Clerk's Office
House Clerk's Office

I. **Council Authorization - 2023 Legislation**

Substitute Senate Bill No. 994 (www.cga.ct.gov)

Public Act No. 23-40

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES, STUDYING AN EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION DATABASE OR REVISIONS TO MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS AND CONCERNING THE SAFETY DRIVING COURSE, MOTOR VEHICLE DEALERS AND REPAIRERS, MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY RECALLS, THE KNOWLEDGE TEST FOR AN OPERATOR'S LICENSE, RECIPROCAL RECOGNITION OF DRIVER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS, TRESPASS ON WATERSHED LAND, EMERGENCY LIGHTS, REMOVABLE WINDSHIELD PLACARDS, SCHOOL BUSES, REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES AND MINOR REVISIONS TO MOTOR VEHICLE STATUTES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Sec. 36. (NEW) (Effective from passage) (a) There is established an Accessible Parking Advisory Council, which shall be within the Department of Motor Vehicles for administrative purposes only. The advisory board shall: (1) Develop a strategy to detect, deter and prevent fraud and misuse from occurring with regard to the issuance and use of removable windshield placards for persons who are blind and persons with disabilities from occurring without adversely impacting persons who are blind and persons with disabilities, (2) review the laws in other states concerning the issuance and use of such removable windshield placards, (3) recommend best practices for policies and regulations regarding the application for, and issuance and use of, removable windshield placards and the enforcement of subsection (l) of section 14-253a of the general statutes, (4) identify and make recommendations regarding streetscape issues that interfere with the ability of a person who is blind or person with disabilities to access and use public and private areas reserved for exclusive use by persons who are blind or persons with disabilities, (5) make educational materials available to medical professionals, law enforcement officers and the general public regarding the proper issuance and use of such removable windshield placards, and (6) review the status of such removable windshield placards issued to persons who are blind and persons with disabilities prior to January 1, 2010, for the lifetime of such persons.

(b) The advisory council shall consist of (1) the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles or the commissioner's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services or the commissioner's designee, (3) two members appointed by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, who are licensed physicians, physician assistants or advanced practice registered nurses who certify applications for removable windshield placards while in the course of employment, (4) one member appointed by the Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services who represents an organization that advocates on behalf of persons with physical disabilities, (5) one appointed by the House chairperson of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who is a municipality planner, (6) one appointed by the Senate chairperson of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having

cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who uses or advocates on behalf of accessible parking, (7) one appointed by the House ranking member of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who uses or advocates on behalf of users of accessible parking, (8) one appointed by the Senate ranking member of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who is a sworn member of a municipal police department, and (9) and such other members as the advisory council may prescribe. All initial appointments to the advisory council shall be made not later than September 1, 2023. Each member appointed pursuant to subdivisions (3) to (9), inclusive, of this subsection shall serve for a term of two years and may serve until such member's successor is appointed. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, or the commissioner's designee, shall serve as chairperson of the advisory council. The advisory council shall meet at such times as it deems necessary and may establish rules governing its internal procedures.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the advisory council shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, regarding the strategy developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the findings of the advisory council and any recommendations for legislation to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation.

II. **Subsequent Council Legislation - 2024**

Substitute Senate Bill No. 183 (www.cga.ct.gov)
Public Act No. 24-20

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND CONCERNING LOW-SPEED VEHICLES, THE TOWING OF OCCUPIED VEHICLES, SCHOOL BUSES, ELECTRIC COMMERCIAL VEHICLES, THE PASSENGER REGISTRATION OF PICK-UP TRUCKS AND REMOVABLE WINDSHIELD PLACARDS FOR PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Sec. 45. Subsection (b) of section 14-253c of the 2024 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective from passage):

(b) The advisory council shall consist of (1) the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles or the commissioner's designee, (2) the Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services or the commissioner's designee, (3) two members appointed by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, who are licensed physicians, physician assistants or advanced practice registered nurses who certify applications for removable windshield placards while in the course of employment, (4) one member appointed by the Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services who represents an organization that advocates on behalf of persons with physical disabilities, (5) one appointed by

the House chairperson of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, ~~[who is a municipality planner,]~~ (6) one appointed by the Senate chairperson of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who uses accessible parking or advocates on behalf of such users, ~~[of accessible parking,]~~ (7) one appointed by the House ranking member of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who uses accessible parking or advocates on behalf of such users, ~~[of accessible parking,]~~ (8) one appointed by the Senate ranking member of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, who is a sworn member of a municipal police department, and (9) and such other members as the advisory council may prescribe. All initial appointments to the advisory council shall be made not later than September 1, 2023. Each member appointed pursuant to subdivisions (3) to (9), inclusive, of this subsection shall serve for a term of two years and may serve until such member's successor is appointed. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, or the commissioner's designee, shall serve as chairperson of the advisory council. The advisory council shall meet at such times as it deems necessary and may establish rules governing its internal procedures.

III. Council Membership

Name	Position	Appointing Authority
Antonio "Tony" Guerrero	Chair	Public Act 23-40
Jonathan Slifka	Member	Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services
Egils Bogdanovics, M.D.	Member	Commissioner of Motor Vehicles
Robert Green, M.D.	Member	Commissioner of Motor Vehicles
Regina Strand, OD	Member	Commissioner of Motor Vehicles
Maryann Colon	Member	Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services
Mary Caruso	Member	Senate Chairperson, Committee on Transportation
Michael Komm	Member	Senate Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation
Raymond Vitali	Member	House Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation
Vacancy	Member	House Chairperson, Committee on Transportation

IV. Meetings To Date

Date	Format	Agenda Items / Discussion Topics
Monday, 03/18/2024	Microsoft Teams	Member introductions; Council charge
Monday, 04/16/2024	Microsoft Teams	Members: share 3 Council goals
Monday, 06/03/2024	Microsoft Teams	'24 session re-cap
Monday, 09/23/2024	Microsoft Teams	Overview: DMV parking placard administration
Monday, 10/28/2024	Microsoft Teams	Review report outline; member report submissions
December 2024	Individual Work	Report drafting and individual member review

V. Accessible Parking – Background Information

The following information has been shared among Council members and used to inform meeting discussion and recommendations, as well as identify areas for further exploration.

A. Recent legislation (in addition to Advisory Council structure provisions above)

[Public Act 23-40, Sections 33-34 \(www.cga.ct.gov\)](#)

- Revised placard design to include words *Accessibility Parking Permit*.

[Public Act 23-40, Section 35 \(www.cga.ct.gov\)](#)

- Required regular collaboration with Public Health on placard user list management.

[Public Act 24-20, Sections 43-45 \(www.cga.ct.gov\)](#)

- Required bona fide medical relationship for placard certification sign-off and prohibits online medical certification ‘selling’ for use on placard applications.

B. Works Shared / Consulted

[Renewable parking placard application](#)

[Temporary parking placard application](#)

Connecticut Motor Vehicles (2024; attached) – www.ct.gov/dmv

[Middletown fines drivers with expired lifetime handicap parking permit](#)

Middletown Press (7/31/2024) - <http://www.middletownpress.com/>

[A look at efforts to improve accessible parking regulation in Connecticut](#)

CT Public Radio (5/9/2024) - www.ctpublic.org/show/where-we-live/

Persons with Disabilities Placards and License Plates: Best Practices

American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (April 2024; attached)

[Los Angeles Accessible Parking Policy Advisory Committee: Recommendations and Summary Report](#)

City of Los Angeles (June 2017; attached)

[Abuse of Disability Placards in Massachusetts: Background](#)

Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General (2016; attached)

[Suggestions for Enforcing Handicap Parking Laws](#)

Connecticut Motor Vehicles (January 2010; attached)

VI. Overview: Connecticut Motor Vehicles Accessible Parking Application Administration

Connecticut Motor Vehicles is responsible for administering statutes and regulations concerning applications for, and issuance of, temporary and renewable parking placards in the state – a responsibility that it takes seriously. The agency has initiated numerous administrative steps identified as best practices by the national American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (see previous ‘Works Shared’). As just one of many stakeholders, the DMV must balance access to a reasonable application process and associated requirements, responsible use, and efficient administration, with limited resources.

Examples of current policies that support this work include: only one accessible parking placard is issued per applicant; the former ‘lifetime’ parking placards have been discontinued (prior to the phase-out there were upwards of 300,000 placards in circulation); the use of placards with blue (renewable) and red (temporary) backgrounds, as well as split-color layout with a hole-punched renewal date, which can reduce fraud by making it difficult to replicate placards; and an individual’s parking placard renewal is now aligned with credential renewal, at which time medical certification must be updated.

Type	Placard Duration	Fee	Color
Renewable Placard	Up to 8 years	No	Blue
Temporary Placard	6 months, no renewal	\$5	Red

The application process includes the following elements. The agency:

1. Receives a one-page placard application (available online, via mail, or in-person);
2. Confirms a complete application with resident information and medical certification;
3. Confirms applicant holds an unexpired Connecticut credential;
4. Consults a registry to confirm certification by a legitimate medical professional; and
5. Issues the temporary or renewable accessible parking placard.

Assigned Placard (Spring 2024)	Total
Renewable Placard	197,562
Temporary Placard	4,358

VII. Council Areas of Focus

Through its dialogue, the Council has established three primary areas of focus (responsibility):

- A. Administration of the placard application process (Connecticut Motor Vehicles)
- B. Education and awareness (multiple stakeholders)
- C. Enforcement (law enforcement and Connecticut Motor Vehicles)

VIII. Findings and Challenges

- Accessible parking in Connecticut would benefit from greater understanding of rules, compliance measures, and responsibility of both placard users and non-users.
- Bringing attention to the above via earned public affairs and media opportunities, as well as direct communication with the placard-holding community, should be prioritized.
- Commitments to additional public education and resource allocation can help develop conditions that support responsible placard use and enforcement. Systems integration of licensing, registration, and placards – as well as enhancements to the COLLECT system for enforcement purposes - have been previously identified but are resource dependent.
- Solutions should attempt to address inherent tensions associated with responsible and efficient administration (getting placards in the hands of those who need it), individual perceptions of use and misuse ('there are too many placards out there' or 'too many placard holders'), and anecdotal rather than actionable data. Coordinated, unified, intentional, and data-driven action by multiple sources will help achieve progress.

It is important to note that Public Act 23-40 did not allocate funding for ongoing Council activities, nor to implement Council recommendations. Moving forward, Connecticut Motor Vehicles will do its very best within existing resources to support the administrative goals identified herein.

IX. Near-Term Recommendations

Develop and enhance processes leading to the collection of old and/or unused accessible parking placards, including a one-to-one 'exchange' at the time of permanent placard renewal.

Optimize the opportunity to deliver responsible parking placard messaging in direct mailings to new and renewal placard applicants. The letter that accompanies a newly mailed placard is one such option.

Widen the scope of Council deliberations to include other stakeholders and subject matter experts, including but not limited to non-profit providers; advocates (AARP; ARC; CT State Independent Living Council); municipal organizations (CCM; New Haven Disability Services); and others.

Identify opportunities to promote awareness of accessible parking and responsible placard use throughout Connecticut. For example, seek legislative recognition for an Accessible Parking Day and use executive branch communication channels – including the Motor Vehicles website and social media – to initiate public awareness messaging.

Leverage Council member relationships with doctor offices (who serve as important gatekeepers to placard applications), medical groups, insurers, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to update, deliver and promote key messaging about responsible placard use. Consider suggesting

accessible parking as part of P.O.S.T.C. annual or semiannual recertification, which could be an additional element on the police Recruit Proficiency Review sheet completed by field training officers and their trainees. To further explore opportunities, contact with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association has been initiated.

Provide accessible systems that allow citizens to register a complaint on accessible parking misuse, keeping in mind time and place considerations (those illegally parked in an accessible parking spot do not do so on a reliable schedule), either through reporting to Motor Vehicles, local officials, or random auditing measures.

Identify funding opportunities for dedicated enforcement. For example, the non-profit Peace Love & Accessibility has sought grant funding for accessible enforcement activities in partnership with the Clinton Police Department. Such public/private/non-profit initiatives hold great promise in efforts to scale awareness and education.

X. Items for Further Exploration

Examine equalized fee treatment of placard recognition for on-street vs. off-street parking. Currently, it is generally recognized that there is no charge for on-street parking for vehicles displaying an accessibility placard. Off-street parking is not necessarily treated similarly.

Consider equalized administrative treatment for processing of permanent and temporary parking placards, including consequences of the removal of the \$5.00 fee associated with a temporary placard.

Examine elements of placard design that could enhance enforcement and help identify the placard holder, including but not limited to an easier-to-read expiration date, non-mobile window sticker or license plate emblem (these measures do have related consequences), a credential number on the placard, or inclusion of individual holder's photograph on placard.

To optimize responsible parking placard use, consider development of a simple quiz at issuance or renewal, and a re-training course for violators who fall short of responsibility in their use of accessible parking (such violations may include illegal parking in an accessible spot or using another's parking placard).

Revisit the current model of permanent placards that are subject to renewal with an individual's Connecticut credential. The current choice of permanent-or-temporary may not reasonably capture the circumstances of those who are permanently disabled.

Given the scope of accessible parking, explore and attempt to scale a 'volunteer corps' to engage with citizens in real time about responsible accessible parking and its importance.

XI. **Additional Considerations**

Upon request, the following were also identified by individual members as priorities and areas for further study as the first calendar year of Council deliberations winds down, some of which intersect with items above:

- Explore larger and more accessible parking spots per ADA requirements.
- Enhance community awareness, volunteers, and engagement.
- Conduct new and updated social media outreach to reach a broader audience.
- Develop annual awareness campaigns.
- Develop meaningful partnerships with law enforcement and medical professionals.
- Expand resources and training for police departments.
- Gain further insights into the DMV's accessible parking process.
- Study best practices in other states.
- Develop professional education resources for medical certification on placard application.
- Apply diligence and persistence to issuing penalties to individuals abusing the system.
- Obtain PSA funding aimed at the general public and placard holders.

XII. **Selected Reflections**

“As a dedicated observer of accessible parking challenges and a member of a family with two wheelchair users who hold placards, I am honored to serve on the Accessible Parking Placard Advisory Board. Over time, my family and I have seen the gradual decline of the placard program, with a rise in complacency among both placard holders and non-holders that has enabled misuse. This council represents a critical first step in Connecticut toward restoring the program's integrity and providing hope for future improvements, ensuring that those who rely on accessible parking can fully participate in their communities.” - **Mary Caruso, Council Member**

“Thus far, this group has had many robust discussions around several varying topics leading to several items either currently worthy of recommendation or further study. For me, the top priorities to focus on going forward would be to bring in outside key stakeholders or policy makers that we can speak to that can provide us advice and counsel and can also affect change. Outreach and inclusion are the best ways to make our work known.” - **Jon Slifka, Council Member**

“The committee has brought together several stake holders, each of whom brings a unique skill set and perspective to the issue of accessible parking. As the work of the Council is on-going, a long-term goal may be to include requirements for having one or more electric vehicle charging stations designated as Accessible Parking spaces to ensure that people who own EVs have access to both Accessible Parking and the ability to charge their vehicles.” – **Dave Cardone, Connecticut Motor Vehicles**

“I’m amazed at the knowledge within the group to make changes on the accessible parking placard. My concerns are with enforcement and education of regulations and laws that are already on the books. As a person in municipal government, we create many ordinances that never seem to be enforced. Meeting the criteria recommended to the commissioner and commitment to strict enforcement is extremely important. It is extremely important to disseminate all information to the public in a timely fashion. This can be achieved in many ways by creating posters that can be hung in a variety of places. For example: doctor’s offices, health departments, senior centers, city halls, motor vehicle offices and a myriad of other places that would attract the attention of those in need.” - **Raymond Vitali, Council Member**

“First, I have learned a tremendous amount from all the participants on the committee. Hearing all the different perspectives has been very eye opening. On that note I would say my first reflection would be to emphasize the educational component. This is foundational from my perspective to all that follows. If after 20 plus years in law enforcement I still am not fully aware of all the issues surrounding accessible parking, it is safe to say I am not the only officer with something to learn. Second, giving officers additional tools to make them more confident in enforcing accessible parking violations would be a tremendous help. Speaking with officers it is apparent to me that the idea of approaching and questioning someone’s handicap status is very uncomfortable. Placing a picture on a placard and/or adding handicap placard information to include a picture to our DMV files would be very helpful. If an officer on patrol observes someone parked in a handicap space with a placard but wants to verify if the operator is the owner of the placard, prior to making contact, they can run the plate and access the expiration date and picture of the owner. They will then feel more comfortable approaching the operator to dispel their suspicion. Combined with a picture on the portable placard this would be very helpful from an enforcement perspective.” – **Michael Komm, Council Member**

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