

Christmas Puts a Strain On Limited Parking Areas

By SENATOR RICHARD RICHARDS

The severe strain on shopping-center parking facilities during the holiday season has given new emphasis to a problem directly related to those of freeway congestion and the lack of a mass rapid transit system.

Ever since 1943, when it enacted the Vehicle Parking District Act, the Legislature has tried to keep pace with this problem, as have the cities where it has become increasingly more acute.

This first attempt at state-wide enabling legislation permitted the formation of local parking districts either in cities or unincorporated areas. These were to be formed upon the petition of property owners holding 20 per cent of the total assessed value of all land in the proposed district and financed by assessment of property in that district.

Six years later a second step was taken with the enactment of the Parking Act of 1949, permitting the setting up of Parking Authorities—within cities only and not in unincorporated areas—authorized to create parking facilities financed by

area. No mention of the land area was made in the previous law.

Levy Increased

Also, the amount of the allowable assessment levy was increased from the former limit of 35 per cent of the assessed value of all land in the district to 35 per cent of the assessed value of land "and improvements" in the district. This last is now permissible if the petition is signed by owners representing 60 per cent of the aforementioned land "and improvements."

A Third Step

A third step was the Parking District Act of 1951, allowing parking districts within cities to issue bonds on revenue from facilities and, should these be insufficient to pay principal and interest, to levy a property assessment as well.

Amendments to all three of these laws were enacted in the 1955 Session earlier this year. The 1943 Act was amended to provide that petitioners for a parking district must own at least 51 per cent of the total assessed value of all land in the proposed district, rather than only 20 per cent as previously, and that this must constitute more than one-half of the land

Amendments to the 1949 Act relate largely to the powers of Parking Authorities created by that law, while the 1951 Act was amended to provide greater freedom in financing.

Alternate Provided

Where the 1951 law permitted ad valorem assessments only to meet yearly premium and interest payments, amendments now provide an alternate meth-

od whereby both sources of revenue may be used simultaneously if so agreed in the original petition.

Unfortunately, all this still leaves us with many problems, among them the objections of private lot owners who are fearful of further encroachments by parking districts and authorities.

A closer look at the whole picture is obviously needed, and this project has been assigned to a Senate Interim Committee on Parking, of which I am chairman.

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