

# **SECTION 1: IMPOUND LOT**

# **MINNEAPOLIS IMPOUND LOT**

## **Introduction**

The Minneapolis Impound Lot is considered for relocation due to proposed redevelopment in the Bassett Creek Valley Area. The Impound Lot was studied, with the premise that the function is moving, as and update to the Appraisals, Relocation and Operational Analysis from 2001. As the Impound Lot was studied, several opportunities for business improvements to use less land or to use multiple sites were reviewed. Many of the same opportunities and challenges are the same as they were in 2001. However there are also new opportunities and challenges that were considered.

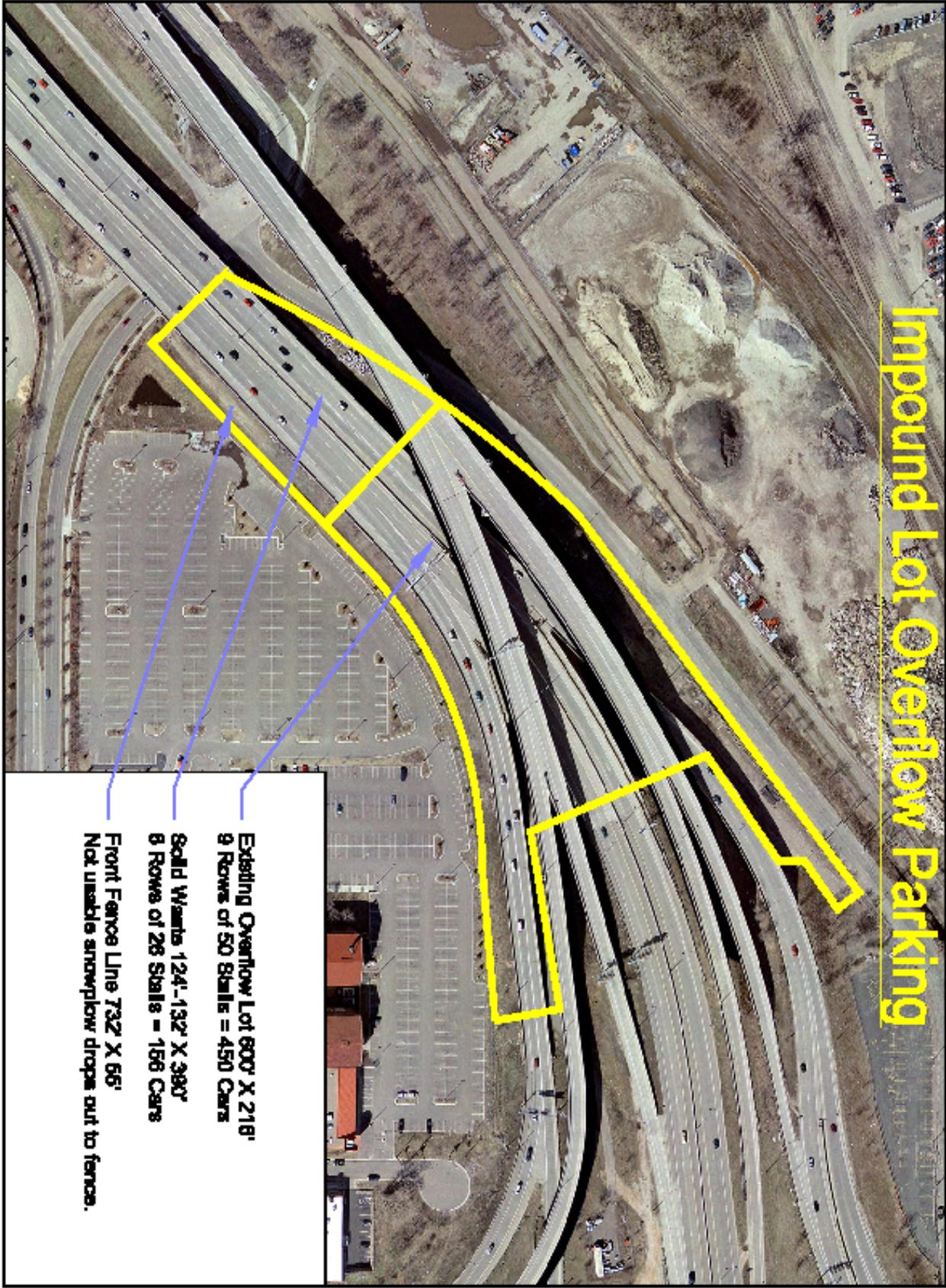
## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The Minneapolis Impound Lot is situated on approximately 23 acres of City owned property located on the north side of the BCV area, bounded by the Burlington Northern Railroad corridor to the south and Bassett Creek to the north (see Figure 2 –Detailed Location Map on page 6 of Executive Summary). The Impound Lot provides vehicle impounding services for the Public Works Department (PW), the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD), and the Regulatory Services Department. This service has been in operation since 1986. The Impound Lot is made up of two functional areas: the General Impound, MPD Impound, and the MPD function consists of impound space for vehicles and the MPD Forensics Garage. In addition to the various impound parking areas, the site includes a main office facility, 24/7 security service, a security monitoring system, a fenced secure perimeter, a fence monitoring system, and also a parking lot lighting system.

The overall site was formerly zoned I2 and is part of a larger industrial area bordering the freeway system on the west side of downtown Minneapolis. The site is currently zoned I1 and is proposed to be Zoned for residential use, both of these zonings would mean that the Impound Lot is a non-conforming use of the site. Appraisals and engineering reports done as part of the original 2001 Operational Analysis (see Attachment A) and environmental investigations completed in 2008 (by Braun Intertec) indicate that soils and groundwater in the area are contaminated and of poor geotechnical quality.

## **General Impound Function**

The General Impound Function is centrally managed and operated by the PW - Traffic and Parking Services Division (T&PS) serves as the base for all towing dispatch, vehicle intake, and vehicle release. The T&PS Division also provides management services for the intake, storage, and release of MPD related towing. The General Impound covers approximately 20 acres of the site, has a parking capacity for storage of approximately 1600 vehicles, separate yard space for auctions (including space for up to 250 vehicles), a 3750 square foot office facility, and space for public parking. The General Impound space is supplemented by the close proximity of overflow contingency lots for approximately 600 cars, located under Interstate Highway 394 (referred to as the under-bridge area, leased from the Minnesota Department of Transportation) and seasonally underutilized portions of the adjacent Linden Yards area as PW operations allow.



## **MPD Impound Function**

The MPD operates two primary functions at the Impound Lot site; the first is the MPD Impound for vehicle storage, and the second is the Forensics Garage. The MPD occupies approximately three (3) acres of space within the Impound Lot. The MPD Impound typically stores approximately 500 vehicles that have been impounded for a variety of reasons ranging in severity and time. The volume of vehicles impounded by the MPD has been consistent on an annual basis and the available space is adequate for current needs. The MPD Forensics Garage is a satellite operation of the MPD Crime Lab Unit and provides space for the detailed examination of vehicles impounded for the purpose of gathering and documenting evidence related to criminal investigations. The MPD Forensics Garage is approximately 2250 square feet in size and contains indoor garage space for vehicle examination and associated staff support spaces. In addition, there is secure outdoor storage for approximately 40 vehicles adjacent to the garage. These spaces are considered adequately sized for current needs. The forensic garage is surrounded by security fencing, camera surveillance, 24/7 security, and must be readily accessible at all times.

## **WHY THE CURRENT SITE?**

The City benefits from the centralized location of the existing Impound Lot; because vehicle's towed from all over the City can be brought to a single centralized location, reducing travel time and minimizing towing costs. The site is adjacent to truck routes and can accommodate large traffic volumes of both towing vehicles and passenger vehicles. The location of the Impound Lot is also generally known by most City residents and is in close proximity to public transportation, a benefit, in that it provides an economically viable option for the general public to pick up their vehicles, especially for those that may not have other transportation options. Consequently, while planning for the relocation of the Impound Lot, maintaining the accessibility by the public and towing vendors is a necessity when considering possible sites for relocation.

Given the visual blight of the overall heavy industrial nature of the area surrounding the BCV, coupled with the ease of accessibility, the existing soil and ground water contamination, the poor structural make-up of the soils and the close proximity to the Burlington Northern Railroad, the Impound Lot Function was a compatible use of the existing site when the site was purchased for use as an Impound Lot. However according to the current zoning for the Bassett Creek Valley area, the Impound Lot would be a non-conforming use of the current location.

## **DEFFICIENCIES AT THE CURRENT SITE**

The Impound Lot is managed out of an office facility adjacent to the site entrance at Colfax Ave. N. The facility is approximately 3750 square feet in size and contains typical office and support spaces for staff and a small customer service area. However, the existing office facility is undersized to accommodate current service levels. The main office cannot adequately accommodate snow emergency occupancy levels. Specifically, the major deficiencies of the existing building are its lack of a public reception/lobby area with adequate waiting room capacity for the general public during Snow Emergency Events (typically 200 to 300 customers per day). It also lacks any indoor public restroom facilities, with outdoor portable toilets as the

only accommodations during events. Customers are forced to queue up in lines outside of the facility during events. These deficiencies have historically been the source of customer service concerns during Snow Emergency events when large numbers of the public are at the Impound Lot waiting for vehicle release. During Snow Emergency Events, public safety is a constant concern due to the potential exposure of customers to harsh winter weather. The lack of adequate facilities and space for the Impound Lot has been needed for some time and was proposed for capital funding as recently as 2004. Just under \$2,000,000 was requested for Capital funding to make necessary improvements to the current Impound Lot site. However, the capital funding process has been postponed due to the proposed BCV Redevelopment and the probability of relocation. Consequently, needed improvements and maintenance have been deferred until further decisions are made regarding the BCV site.

**BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS: WHY DO WE TOW?**

Towing and impounding of vehicles is required in Minneapolis for a variety of different circumstances, the largest volume coming from MPD vehicle impounding, Snow Emergency events and City-wide street-sweeping events. These events have contributed to an averaged annual total of 41,179 tows since 2002 (see Table 1 – Annual Tows). This total can be split into 6 categories for further analysis, these categories consist of: spring street sweeping tows, fall street sweeping tows, snow emergency tows, MPD Red Tag tows, MPD White Tag tows, and Regulatory Services Department related tows.

Vehicles towed for the MPD are categorized as either Red Tag or White Tag tows (see Table 1 - Annual Tows). MPD White Tag tows consist of those vehicles towed for moving violations, scoff law violation, or involvement in serious crimes. There is an average of 20,268 vehicles towed every year for these reasons. MPD Red Tag tows consist of vehicles towed for non-moving violations, parking violations, and traffic accidents. There is an average of 20,678 White Tag tows every year.

**Minneapolis Impound Lot (2002 – 2008)  
Annual Tows**

	Spring Street Sweeps	Fall Street Sweeps	Snow Emergencies	Red Tags	MPD White Tags	Inspections	Total Tows
2002	2,724	3,236	5,630	18,884	23,987		42,871
2003	2,599	3,009	3,514	19,981	21,764		41,745
2004	2,685	2,916	4,878	22,837	19,251	528	42,616
2005	2,554	2,706	3,599	22,487	19,190	340	42,017
2006	2,375	2,580	4,558	17,672	20,599	371	38,642
2007	2,502	2,555	2,859	23,221	21,123	241	44,585
2008	2,402	2,512	3,704	16,794	18,832	151	35,777
<b>Average</b>	2,549	2,788	4,106	20,268	20,678	326	41,179

**Table 1 – Annual Tows**

### **Street Sweeping Tows:**

The spring and fall street sweeping tows occur seasonally as streets are swept curb to curb on a City-wide basis to remove salt and sand in the spring, then leaves and general summer accumulations in the fall. The City sends out advance notice mailings to residents and businesses, and sets up “No Parking” signage in advance of the sweeping operations. However, typically 100 to 400 tows per day occur during the spring and fall sweeps depending on the area in the City being swept, with averages of 2,549 vehicles towed in spring and 2,788 vehicles towed in the fall.

### **Snow Emergency Tows:**

Snow Emergency tows average 1000 vehicles per day for 3 days during a snow event, and generally consists of priority tows to maintain snow emergency routes, emergency vehicle concern areas, and other heavy traffic areas (see Figure 4 - Parking Density). There is an average of 4,106 vehicles towed annually for snow emergencies, but this number can vary greatly year-to-year due to the weather. An average snow emergency event results in the towing of approximately 2000 vehicles, and the tagging of up to 10,000 or more (see Figure 5 - Tow and Tag Locations). Towing also continues until capacity in the Impound Lot is met, and most often not all vehicles that should be towed are, due to current space limitations.

## **1. Snow Emergencies**

Snow Emergencies in Minneapolis are not about trying to solve a plowing problem. They are about solving a parking problem. Public Works provides an appropriate response to all winter precipitation events. Driving lanes are always maintained to some level of service. Obviously, streets and the parking lanes cannot be completely plowed with vehicles parked in the way. A Snow Emergency is a set of temporary parking restrictions that allow for the orderly movement of vehicles so PW crews can plow the full width of the streets when snow falls or accumulations reach a certain threshold. The public demands full width plowing and it is necessary for public safety, economic vitality and neighborhood livability in the City.

Unfortunately, with some 250,000 vehicles attempting to park on City streets, all it takes is a small percentage who won't comply with the regulations to cause major problems. If vehicles aren't moved and plowing is incomplete, streets can become dangerously narrow and access for emergency vehicles is impeded, particularly for fire fighting equipment. These problems are most acute in the high density areas of the City where on-street parking volumes are high.



## 2. History of Snow Removal Practices and relation to Impounding

The current Snow Emergency Plan was initiated in 1983 after severe winter storms created major access problems in the City. The odd/even parking restriction methodology was chosen to ensure there was a simple way to communicate and implement a one-side parking ban (formally called Winter Parking Restrictions) on non-Snow Emergency Routes. Originally the one-side parking ban was in place all season. Public intolerance and demand for change over time resulted in a transition over the years, and since 1990, the ban is only used in the most extreme circumstances when snow accumulations result in streets narrowing and becoming severely restrictive to emergency vehicles. However, if enforcement of the rules were somehow diminished, and fewer vehicles were towed, it is likely that Winter Parking Restrictions would be needed much more often.

Originally, Snow Emergency towing was accomplished by a loose arrangement with towing contractors that was fraught with problems. City officials deemed it in the City's, (as well as the public's) best interest to manage all impounding of vehicles through a single municipal Impound Lot operation. Among the many improvements and advantages, it allowed managers of Snow Emergency operations to better manage and coordinate enforcement of the parking rules with plowing activities, which leads to an overall better level of service.

Up until the early 1990's, towing capacity during Snow Emergencies was limited to about 35 tow trucks. Due to public demand, that capacity was increased to the current 67 trucks and the current 6 towing zones were created. However, even with all the advances in public outreach that have been implemented, noncompliance with the rules still far outpaces our ability to write citations, and towing is less than that. Typically there are 2 to 3 Snow Emergencies each season, and there are approximately 8,000 tickets written and 2,000 tows for each. Because of that, enforcement must be prioritized and towing even more focused. However, there has been only one winter since the 1997-1998 winter seasons where Winter Parking Restrictions have had to be implemented.

### **3. Snow Removal Items for Consideration**

If the ability to enforce the Snow Emergency parking rules and move vehicles off the street in the high density parking areas around the City were diminished, it is likely that streets will narrow to restrictive conditions more often. These narrowed streets threatening public safety and require the need for slow and costly "extraordinary plowing methods" combined with enforcement to widen streets, or the drastic measure of implementing Winter Parking Restrictions. It is likely that general compliance levels themselves will drop if the public were to realize that the threat of a tow is less. The public will gamble more and not comply, exacerbating the problem.

Implementing the one-side parking ban on short notice is problematic in that currently a ban can only be done in conjunction with a declared Snow Emergency. When conditions are borderline, many streets become dangerously narrow creating unsafe conditions that remain until the next declared Snow Emergency event. Also, it takes several days to implement it, and transition out of it, causing confusion in some areas. In addition, there are some 200 to 300 block faces, and other zones that must have semi-permanent signage installed so that the one-side parking ban does not contradict preexisting signage.

Any change that would result in less ability to get vehicles off the streets during Snow Emergencies has the potential to lower service levels and have a negative affect on public safety.

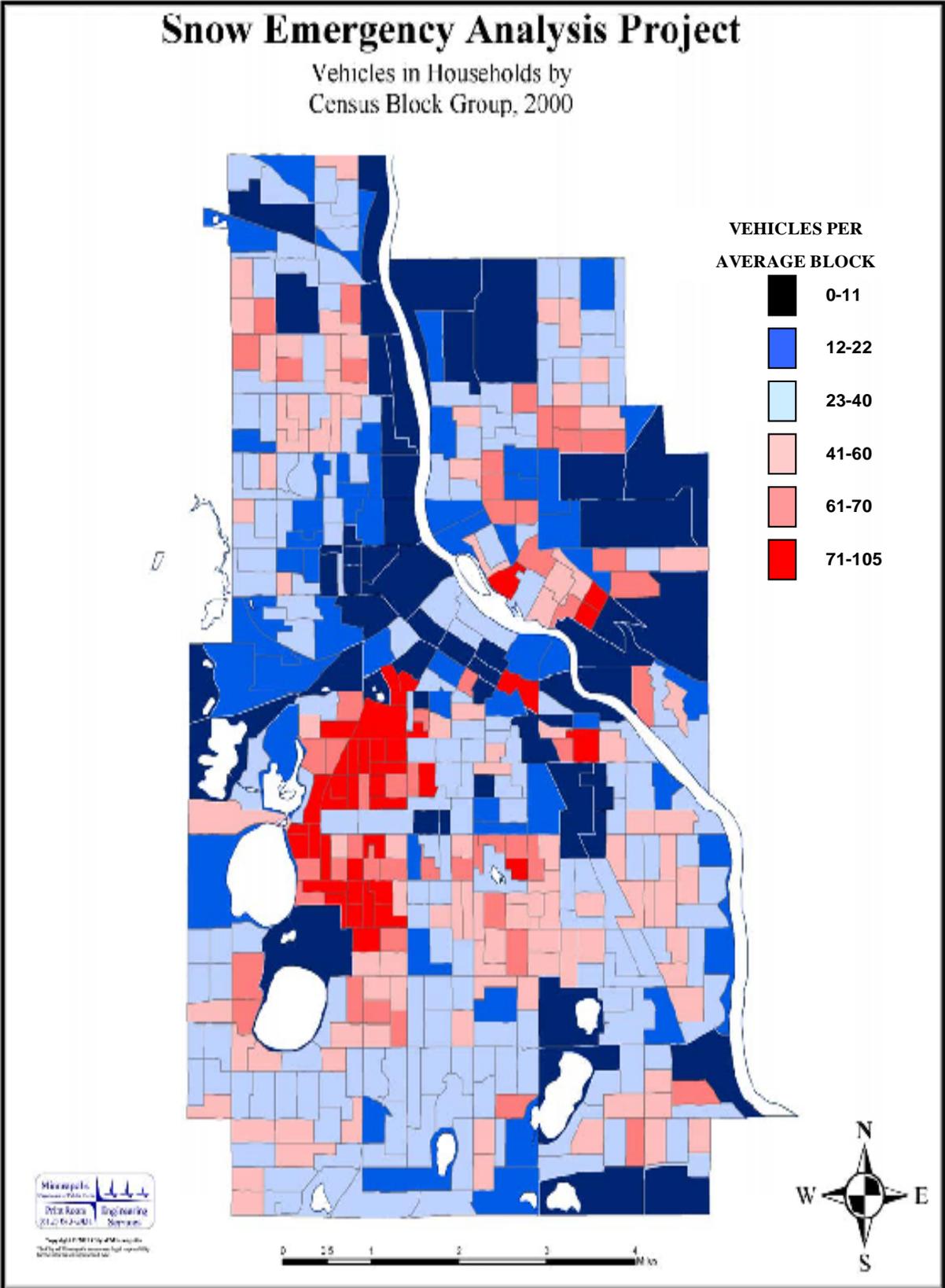


Figure 4 – Parking Density

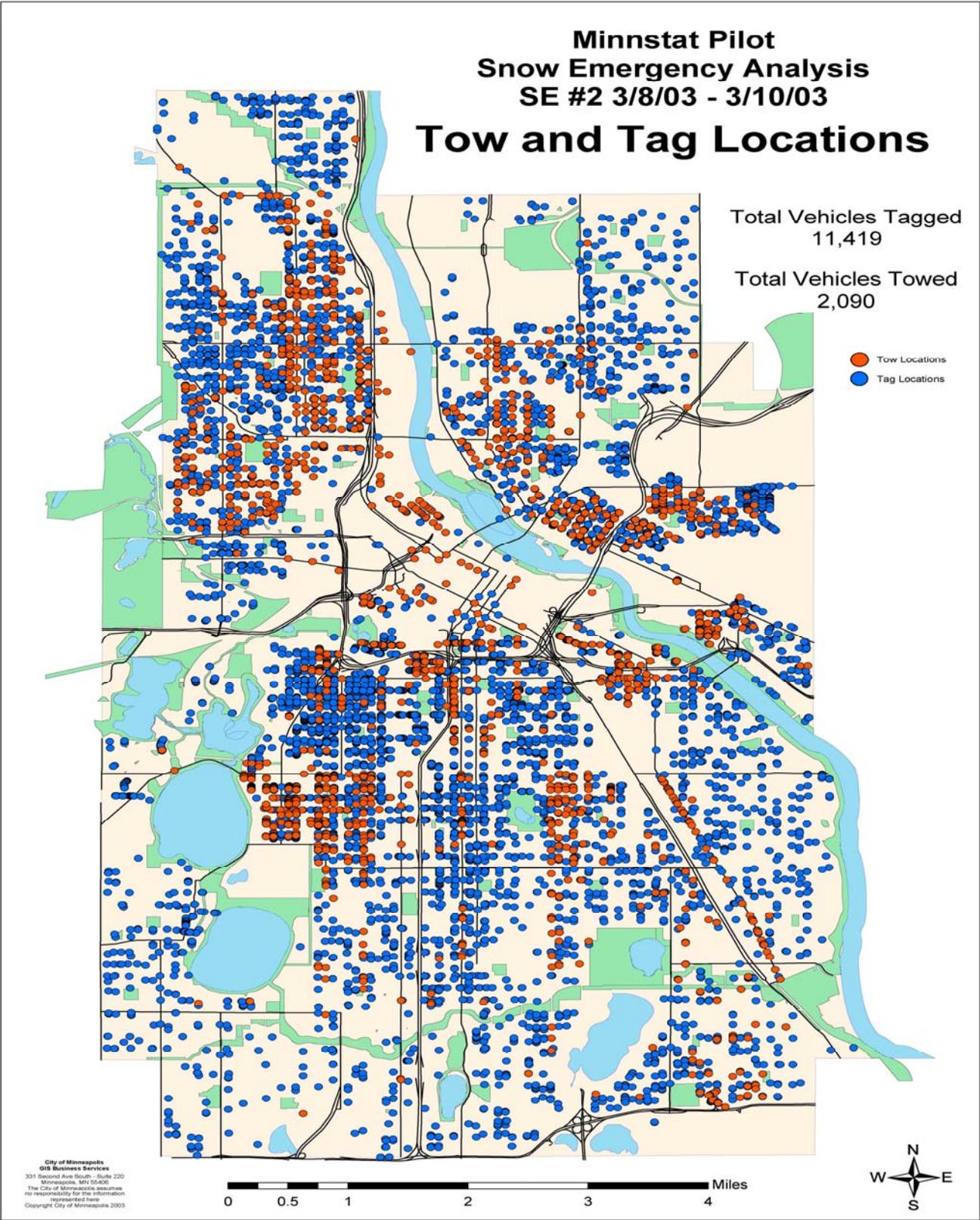
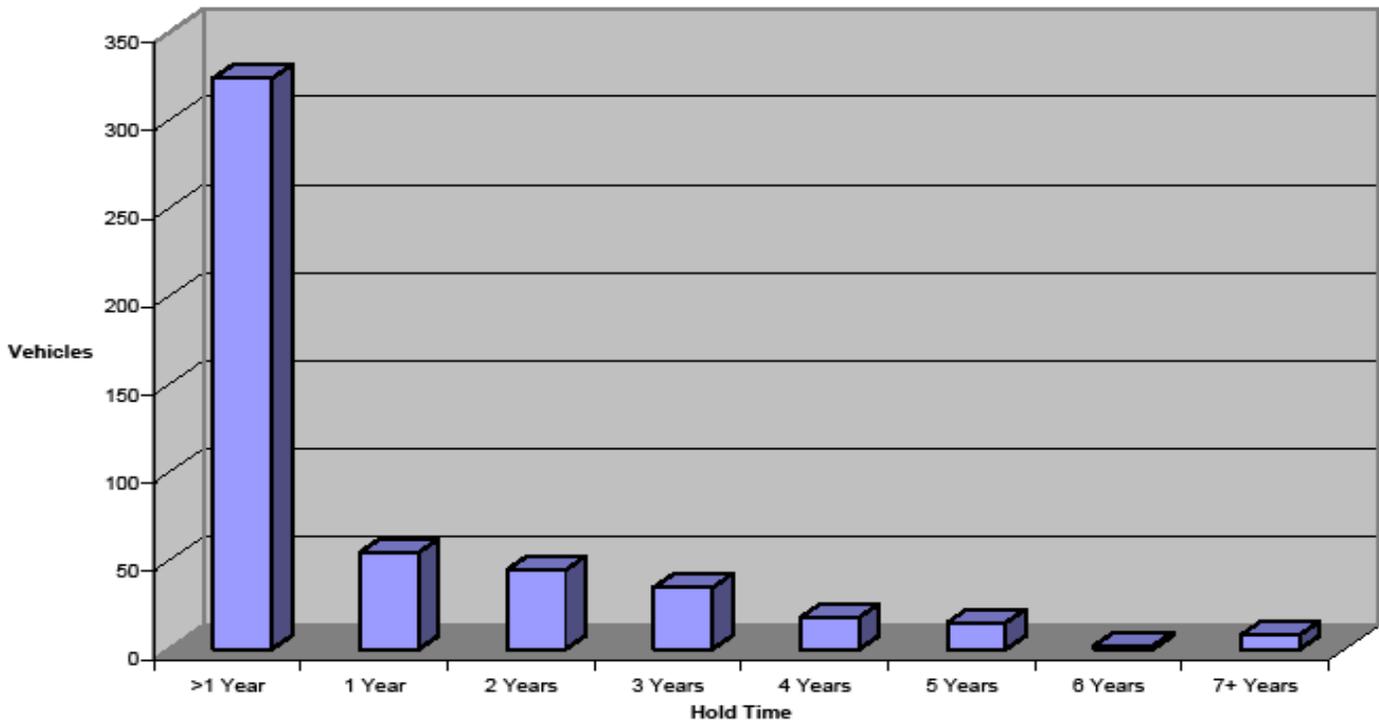


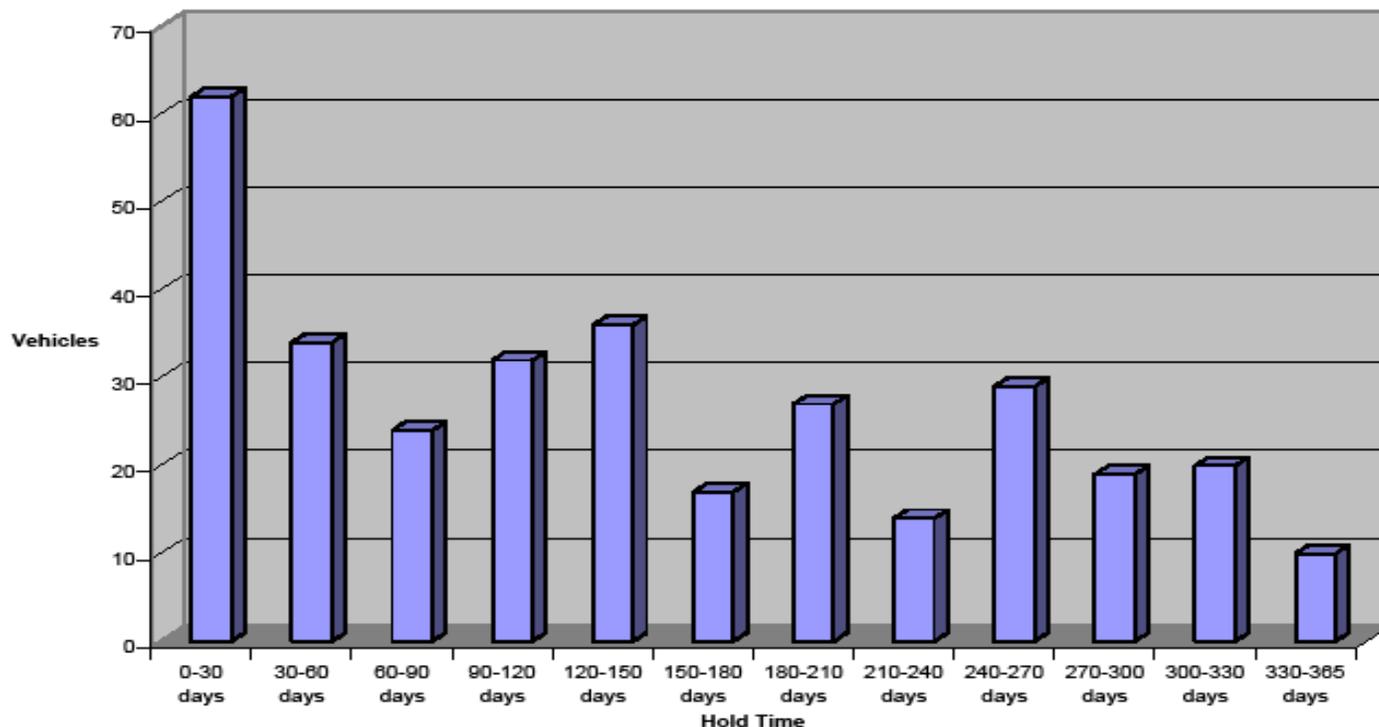
Figure 5 – Tow and Tag Locations

**MPD Tows:**

The period of time that a MPD held vehicle is impounded can range from a few days for minor non-moving violations or up to seven (7) years, or more, for vehicles associated with serious crimes. Recent numbers show that the average MPD Impound vehicle is held for 290 days. These numbers can be further broken down to approximately 320 vehicles (out of 500 total) held at the lot for less than a year, and the remaining vehicles held for a range of two (2) years to seven (7) years (see Table 2 – Long Term MPD Holds). The vehicles held for a period of one (1) year or less were further broken down into 30-day groups (see Table 3 – Short Term MPD Holds). Vehicles held for 90 days or less totaled approximately 120 vehicles, and it was therefore assumed that the remaining vehicles, approximately 200, were held for various amounts of time up to one (1) year.



**Table 2: Long Term MPD Holds  
(502 Total Vehicles – Average of 290 days 2/4/2009)**



**Table 3: Short Term MPD Holds (Under One Year)**

**Regulatory Services Tows:**

Finally, approximately 326 additional vehicles are towed every year for Regulatory Services. These vehicles are most often abandoned on private or vacant properties. The vehicles are towed for a variety of reasons including safety, visual blight, and to help manage problem properties.

**BEST PRACTICES**

The City has considered numerous “Best Practice Improvements” that could be considered for implementation in the various Impound Lot operations that are located in the BCV area. The main goals of implementation of Best Practice Improvements are to: improve efficiency, reduce costs, and to maintain or improve service levels.

- 1 Several Best Practice Improvements have all ready been implemented since the 2001 Study, including:
  - a. Software upgrades at the Impound Lot that allow for better monitoring and management of vehicle inventory with options for future flexibility for changes in operation.

- b. The Impound Lot management has restructured the process for handling abandoned vehicles and auctioning in order to meet statutory requirements. The Impound Lot maintains flexibility in accommodating both public sale auctions and “scrap or dealer only” auctions based on market demand and the varying condition of abandoned vehicles, thus reducing the time that a vehicle occupies space at the Impound Lot.
  - c. In order to accommodate the right-of-way alignment for the proposed Van White Boulevard, the Impound Lot was reduced in capacity by approximately 600 vehicles in 2005. Impound Lot functionality was able to be maintained at adequate service levels for current needs through strategic planning and rearrangement for efficient use of existing space.
2. Best practices that allow for the overall reduction in the required size of the Impound Lot include:
- a. Event contingency lots could be utilized in remote areas but each site would need to meet minimum requirements. Contingency lots would require a secure perimeter, easy access to transit, transaction space for the public, public restrooms, and be able to operate 24/7 during snow emergency events. The implementation of new software would allow vehicle owners to look up the vehicle location on the City website or by calling 311, thus allowing for the tracking of individual vehicles to different locations.
  - b. Allowing private vendors and towing contractors to store vehicles.
  - c. Allowing private vendors and towing contractors to auction abandoned vehicles.
  - d. Increasing charges for towing and storage fees.
  - e. Assigning a staff attorney to monitor abandoned vehicles, allowing for a more efficient turn-over of vehicles to the auction process.
  - f. Organizing reduced price or free parking areas, in high towing volume areas, for snow emergencies and street sweeping events.
3. Best Practices related to towing that could be considered, but are less likely for implementation include:
- a. “Friendly Tows” which are defined as towing vehicles a short distance (across or down the street), thus allowing for snow plowing or street sweeping. However, a system that provides customers with the new locations of their cars and a system for payment arrangements for these types of tows present an obstacle and would need to be implemented.

- b. “Tow Less”; towing only on main thoroughfares and specified snow emergency routes. Unfortunately, this would ultimately affect the overall quality of snow plowing and impact ability to park.
- c. “Tow Less”; issuing more warning tags or tickets and towing only vehicles with multiple violations.
- d. Alternating parking from one side of a street to the other based on some redefined system that is made generally known to the public.
- e. Expanded use of a “Snow Oasis” program where low or no-cost parking would be available for vehicles in dense areas of the City to accommodate more adequate snow removal and reduced fining and towing. This system is currently used as parking facilities allow in the University of Minnesota Campus area.

Several of these possibilities involve privatizing portions of the vehicle impound business; this practice has been problematic in the past and would not easily be implemented in the City of Minneapolis. These problems include: managing payment for service to the private companies, providing accurate direction to the general public for vehicle impound location, and protecting the public from dishonest business practices and corruption.

4. Best Practices that are used in other metro areas include:

- a. Impound Parking Ramp Structures. These structures are very costly, and are typically of higher cost than a standard parking ramp due to higher ceilings, wider drive-lanes, larger parking stalls, and wider turns that are required for towing vehicles. Consequently, an Impound Parking Ramp structure is not considered an economically viable option in 2001 or today.
- b. Vehicle stacking. The use of racking equipment may be a more viable option and should be considered further in the potential relocation of the General Impound and in particular the relocation of the MPD Impound functions. This would allow for a method to store vehicles in a more efficient manner using less space. These systems range from simple racking systems that utilize forklifts to move vehicles, to more automated systems that move vehicles. The implementation of these systems could also vary depending on the time a vehicle is likely to be held. The systems could also be considered for interior and exterior storage. At this point this option was not considered further, however further investigation and economic comparison to land cost should be studied further as further considerations for relocation of the Impound Lot are made.

Other methods used by municipalities in the surrounding metro area include the use of parking boots or the use of “friendly tows”. These concepts ultimately have a negative affect on level of service provided to the general public, in that the streets are not cleaned as well and sweeping and plowing operations take longer to complete and require operational changes. These methods

also do not provide for towing of abandoned vehicles, thus these vehicles ultimately sit on the streets for longer periods of time, are a source of visual blight, and are also be considered public safety hazards.

5. A variety of “Partnering” opportunities have been looked at as “Best Practice Improvements” and it was determined that existing internal City functions provided the best partnerships and potential operational savings, for which some are already in place, including:

- a. MPD Impound functions are currently located adjacent to the General Impound function, thus requiring a single operations staff at one intake location for administration. All vehicles that enter the Impound Lot are checked in thru the main desk, which has 24 hour security staffing, and the vehicles are directed to the correct impounding location. Other than Crime Lab staff conducting investigations on vehicles in the Forensics Garage, the MPD does not provide any other on-site staff. The consolidation of these two functions provides for operational cost savings for the City. Ideally this partnership would be continued in any further functional models to capitalize on reduced operational costs.
- b. The possibility of combining some portion of the MPD Impound function with the MPD Property and Evidence Unit warehouse function would also be a viable option if the current operations were to be relocated. This concept would require a site with both warehouse space and vehicle storage space. The MPD Property and Evidence Unit is currently undersized and is located in multiple facilities. In addition, a new facility for the MPD Property and Evidence Unit has been included in the City’s Five-Year Capital Improvement Program. Co-locating these functions to one site with adequate space would allow for savings in MPD operational costs, staffing costs and security costs. This combined facility should accommodate for approximately 100,000 square feet of warehouse storage space. Further storage efficiencies would be recognized by using the aforementioned “racking systems” allowing for vertical stacking of vehicles. Further operational and space savings could be recognized if the MPD would allow for storage of portions and components of vehicles as evidence, rather than storage of the entire vehicle.
- c. Other opportunities include partnerships with the City of St. Paul and other metro area suburbs. However a facility would require an even larger site that would be more difficult to acquire. Currently there are approximately 180 vehicles, at any given time, that are held by the MPD for more than one (1) year. These vehicles require less frequent access but still must be stored in a secure lot or facility. The idea that these vehicles could be held in a remote location (outside of Minneapolis) or even in rural areas where the visual blight of vehicle storage is reduced is a positive consideration for potential relocation.

## **RELOCATION**

The General Impound, the MPD Impound, and the Forensics Garage can be relocation and/or reorganization to accommodate the BCV redevelopment plans. However, numerous considerations should be evaluated as part of any relocation plan. In addition to considering the existing operations and its advantages, and understanding the reasons for towing and impounding vehicles; relocation options must take into account the programming requirements that need to be satisfied at a new location, and the impact on operational costs associated with a new location. However a new site may require the Functions to operate differently or use less land and may ultimately cost more to operate.

### **Program Requirements & Considerations:**

Operationally the location of the existing General Impound is desirable because of its central location, adjacency to truck routes (see Attachment F – Designated Truck Routes), and proximity to mass transit routes. All MPD operations are currently located inside of the secure perimeter of the General Impound. Consequently, the operational efficiencies of a single secure perimeter, one intake system, a common entrance and exit gate, and one service counter for intake and release of vehicles results in reduced operational costs to the MPD. Other program requirements and considerations that impact location include the following:

1. Industrial Zoning (I2 and I3), close proximity to mass transit, easy access for truck traffic, centralized location, 24/7 operations, round the clock security, security cameras, interior storage, blight management, exterior lighting needs, pavement requirements, stormwater management, and fencing requirements.
2. The building program requirements for the General Impound, the MPD Impound, and the MPD Forensics Garage (see Attachments B – General Impound Program Requirements and Attachment C – MPD Impound and Forensics Garage Program Requirements) outline building square footage along with the various exterior parking and storage areas. However, the building program does not account for storage lot circulation space, snow storage areas, buffer areas, landscaping, or any stormwater management areas that are site dependant, and may vary greatly depending on site layout.
3. When considering the relocation of the MPD Impound to a separate site, the additional costs of separate site security, additional staffing, a service counter, public and staff parking, and facility maintenance must be evaluated.
4. Also the MPD Impound proximity to the General Impound should be considered if “long term holds” are separated, in order to reduce costs for transporting vehicles between facilities.
5. Managing Visual Blight while maintaining a functional facility is a major concern in the relocation of all Impound functions.

6. The MPD stated that it may be conceivable to make a logical decision within a 60 to 90 day window on whether a vehicle was going to be held for a longer period of time or be released. In considering a split impound function that would use the General Impound to receive all towed vehicles and a second MPD Impound for vehicles held for longer periods of time, it was assumed that most vehicles that are to be held over 90 days could be transferred directly to the separate MPD Impound facility. This would mean that space for approximately 120 MPD vehicles would need to be provided at the General Impound and space for 380 MPD vehicles would be provided at the separate long term MPD Impound facility. This use of two facilities for MPD Impound would require extra tows for those vehicles not towed directly, and would result in higher operational costs.
7. Currently there are not opportunities currently being assessed for joint MPD operations with an outside partner, but further consideration of partnerships may be possible in the future and should be looked into as efforts for relocation move forward.

### **Relocation Options:**

After an evaluation of the existing site, its advantages and deficiencies, understanding the reasons for towing and impounding vehicles, and taking into account programming requirements; a number of relocation options were developed. Initially the relocation of the entire Impound Lot was considered, however, due to the size (approximately 23 acres), the potential availability of an equivalent site was not considered further.

Consequently, seven (7) relocation options were developed centering on the existing site, continuing to utilize the under bridge overflow impound area, splitting functions between different locations, and best practice improvements to reduce the overall site size requirements.

### **Option 1 – Single Site:**

Option 1 involves moving all of the current functions located on an approximately 23 acre site in Bassett Creek Valley to one site at a different location. This option, again allows for the City of Minneapolis to recognize no further additional operational costs due to shared personnel and infrastructure costs, similar to that of the current Impound Lot. The idea of implementing Best Practices and Business Process Improvements likely allows for the new site to be somewhat smaller than the current site. The new location would require Storm Water treatment, adequate office facility, parking, security, and relatively close proximity to public transportation. The new site would need to be at least 14 to 15 acres in size, without accommodations for an aboveground retention pond. However the larger the site size requirement is the harder it will be to find an available site that meets the current needs. During the study time frame, no sites were found to be available that were large enough for this option to be examined further.

### **Option 2 – Split Operations (Two New Sites)**

Option 2 considers splitting the General Impound, MPD Impound, and MPD Forensics Garage, between different locations in order to take advantage of the availability of

smaller sites within Minneapolis. Two (2) different variations of this option were considered with the intent to maintain an acceptable level of service for all customers and minimize increases to operational costs.

This option requires the acquisition of two (2) new sites, the first being a site for the General Impound and intake of all MPD towed vehicles. The Forensics Garage would also be included at this location so that vehicles could be examined as they are received. This option maintains the efficiency of a single vehicle intake operation as part of the General Impound function. The second site would accommodate the long-term MPD Impound. As in Option #7, the decision to transport long-term MPD Impound holds would take place after the vehicle has been held for approximately 60 days, and then require an additional tow of the vehicle to the new long-term MPD Impound, and finally a second tow back to the General Impound for release. Requirements for the new long-term MPD Impound site are identical to those described in Option 7 below.

**Note: The following Options enhance Option 2 by addressing potential partnerships and implementing best practice improvements.**

### **Option 3 - Partnership with MPD Property and Evidence Unit:**

A potential partnership exists within the MPD that could be considered as part of the options for a Split Operation. As discussed earlier under “Best Practice Improvements”, the possibility of combining the MPD Impound with the MPD Property and Evidence Unit would be a viable option if current operations are to be relocated. This concept would require a site with both warehouse space and exterior vehicle storage space. The combination of these two functions would require storage for approximately 380 impounded vehicles, 57,000 square feet of warehouse space, approximately 2,500 square feet of space for the Forensics Garage function, and other typical staff spaces.

The MPD Property and Evidence Unit is currently undersized and is located in multiple facilities. In addition, a new facility for the MPD Property and Evidence Unit has been included in the City’s Five Year Capital Improvement Program. Co-locating these functions to one facility with adequate space would allow for savings in MPD operational costs, staffing costs and security costs. Further storage efficiencies would be recognized by using the aforementioned “racking systems” that would allow for vertical stacking of vehicles. Further operational and space savings could be recognized if the MPD would allow for storage of portions or components from vehicles as evidence, rather than storage of the entire vehicle.

Portions of the current MPD Impound function and MPD Forensics Garage could be combined with the MPD Property and Evidence Unit, thus gaining efficiencies through combined staff and security services for the MPD Impound site as a whole.

#### **Option 4 - Snow Emergency Lots:**

The concept of Snow Emergency Lots (or contingency lots) has been considered numerous times by the City over the years. The City would make arrangements with private businesses and property owners for access to existing parking lots in strategic areas of the City. The Snow Emergency Lots would then be available for storage of towed vehicles during events. These lots would be used an average of 2 to 3 times per year; but would require accommodations for security, fencing, lighting, and mobile office and restroom facilities. Newly implemented software by the Traffic and Parking Services Division for management of the intake and release of vehicles would provide customers with the ability to look up the impound location their vehicle. Once in place, this system will allow for vehicle towing to multiple contingency lots, located at various sites throughout the City. However, the concept has not been attempted and would likely take some time to work out the operational model and associated costs.

#### **Option 5 - Minneapolis and a Rural Location:**

This concept consists of one centralized General Impound (as described in Option #2 and #7) located in Minneapolis, and a second long term hold MPD Impound facility in a rural location. This option would allow for a smaller facility footprint requirement in Minneapolis and capitalize on lower property acquisition costs in a rural location (such as rural Hennepin or Anoka County). However, this concept would result in significantly higher towing costs for travel to and from the rural location. Additional security costs, operational costs, and staffing requirements would also be part of this option. The potential for joint operations with another municipality (partnership) at a rural location would be the likely scenario in order to recognize operational savings.

#### **Option 6 - Minneapolis and a Private Facility:**

The idea of long term storage of vehicles at a private facility or having contingency lots that are privately owned and managed by the City in times of need could be considered as a future possibility. However the possibility of these types of partnerships with the MPD Impound functions is problematic due to “chain of custody” requirements for evidence and other issues associated to MPD criminal investigations.

#### **Option 7 – Split Operation (BCV Near Term plus a New Site)**

This option would maintain the General Impound and intake for all MPD vehicles that are towed at the existing BCV site. The Forensics Garage would also stay at the current location so that vehicles could be examined as they are received. This option also provides for the necessary upgrades to the existing office facility to correct identified deficiencies. In addition vehicle storage areas would be rearranged to resolve visual blight concerns. The efficiencies of having a single office facility to receive and release vehicles (both General and MPD) would continue to be recognized, and the public knowledge of the General Impound at its current location would be maintained.

A new site would be acquired to accommodate long-term MPD Impound holds. MPD staff would decide between a 60 and 90 day period if a vehicle is likely to be released soon or if it will be considered a long-term hold. If it is likely that the vehicle will be held longer than 90 days it would be towed to the new long-term MPD Impound facility. Conversely, when a long-term hold is released, the vehicle must be towed back to the General Impound for formal release. These additional tows in the process would be at additional cost that is not currently accounted for in the MPD operational budget.

The new long-term MPD Impound would provide storage space for vehicles ranging from 90 days to seven (7) years. In order to maintain evidence and meet chain-of-evidence custody requirements for these extended time periods, the lot would need to be highly secured, including CCTV camera monitoring, secure fencing, adequate exterior lighting, and 24/7 security staff. Typically, MPD staff requires access to these vehicles on short notice, consequently easy access to the MPD Impound would need to be maintained at all times. Ideally the MPD Impound would be located within the City to keep towing costs and travel distances at a minimum.

#### **Other - Existing Site Consolidated With Best Practices:**

If the Impound Lot were to stay in place, for the short term until Phase II of Redevelopment takes place, with some modifications made to accommodate aesthetic concerns and space efficiency. This idea was recommended by Ryan Companies if development of the Impound Lot was delayed to a future date. Modifications would involve Impound operational changes and site improvements to manage visual blight. Aesthetics would be addressed by making layout changes in the current Impound Lot (to give it a more orderly look), and to move long-term MPD Impound vehicles to the east side of Van White Memorial Boulevard. This option would use the future overpass of Van White Memorial Boulevard (crossing the existing BN rail lines and the Cedar Lake Trail) as a visual buffer. This option would also require fencing changes, minor grading, drainage, and resurfacing work. There would likely be increases to Impound Lot operational costs, due to the lot re-arrangement and the resulting impact on towing vehicles.

Maintaining the Impound Lot in its current location would also require that the deficiencies of the existing office facility be addressed to better accommodate customers. The existing office facility is undersized and cannot adequately accommodate the typical customer occupancy levels during snow emergency events. The existing building lacks an adequately sized waiting room with capacity for the general public; and it lacks indoor public restrooms. Consequently, customers are forced to queue up in lines outside of the facility, exposed to the weather, during events. Improvements to the facility, including more public lobby space, public restrooms, and the associated mechanical and electrical changes have been proposed for capital funding several times but are currently on hold due to the potential BCV Development.

## SUMMARY

The current City of Minneapolis Impound Lot operations are performed by the Public Works Department, Traffic and Parking Services Division and the Minneapolis Police Department and MPD Crime Lab Unit. The operations at the City of Minneapolis Impound Lot can be broken into 2 primary function groups; the General Impound and the MPD Impound (including the Forensics Garage). The current operations house both major functions on one site, and also have a very close proximity to the contingency overflow lots that are located just South or East of the Impound Lot. The Impound Lot also has an established location that is known by most of the residents, is in a centralized location, and is easily accessible by public transit. The current Impound Lot is located in what is currently a blighted area along a rail corridor, with a large amount of industrial use.

Also the unsure future of the Impound Lot and the re-development of the area, there are items that need to be resolved as current deficiencies need to either be addressed at the current site or at a new site. The current facilities are lacking adequate public lobby space and restrooms to accommodate the customer volumes that are seen in Snow Emergency events. The site has also had little to no improvements to comply with current zoning codes, and other regulatory requirements that have come about since the Impound Lot has been in the current location.

In conclusion any significant reconfiguration or the current site or relocation to a new site would require significant changes in operations and associated service provide would change and could have cost increases. Also the current operations could be split into two separate site or kept together as on one site in the future. The Impound Lot operations are of value to the City of Minneapolis, they can be relocated, and the costs are not able to be covered by the Public Works Department or Police Department. Losing any portion of the functions that are performed at the Impound Lot site would ultimately affect the level of service provided, or the cost of services provided to the residents of the City of Minneapolis.