

Date:

Honorable Mayor and Members of the San Jose City Council
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Agenda Item 5.2 (File No. 26-1004) — Parking Meter and Garage Rates and Hours — September 29, 2026 Council Meeting

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I am writing as a Downtown San Jose business owner to share my perspective on Agenda Item 5.2, the parking meter and garage rate and hours proposal before you on September 29. My concerns are less about my own bottom line and more about the employees who make my business, and this Downtown, run. Many of them rely on nearby street parking or a City garage to get to and from work.

I can support the FY 2026-27 increases to garage event rates and garage hourly rates. A modest, one-time adjustment to garage pricing this year is manageable, and I understand the City's budget shortfall is real. What concerns me is what comes after, and how it lands on employees like mine.

Many Downtown employees are not high earners, and for those who depend on tips to get by, current rules for the Downtown Employee Discounted Permit Parking Program work against them by counting gratuities toward the income limit and locking out workers who are functionally minimum-wage earners. That is why I strongly support DOT's recommendation to raise the eligibility threshold to minimum wage plus 50%, excluding gratuities. This change would let far more Downtown employees access a \$55-per-month garage permit instead of feeding a meter or absorbing higher hourly rates every shift. I would ask the Council to treat this as a priority, not an afterthought, in whatever is approved on September 29.

I am also concerned about the proposal to extend meter enforcement hours from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Many Downtown businesses do significant business in the evening, which means many employees' shifts start or end well after 6 p.m. Extending paid enforcement into the evening does not affect customers as much as it affects the people working the shift, who cannot always justify even a \$55 monthly permit on a part-time schedule. I would ask the Council to hold enforcement hours at 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and not extend into the evening as currently contemplated.

Beyond the current fiscal year, I encourage the Council to direct staff to find other ways to fund the ongoing \$1.2 million General Fund transfer rather than relying on repeated increases to meter and garage rates. That revenue comes out of the pockets of the same workers and customers who keep Downtown businesses open, and it should stay invested in the parking system itself. As part of that, I ask the City commit to keeping 90 minutes of free parking at all City garages. This matters for customers, especially those who are more price-sensitive about a quick trip Downtown.

Finally, safety is a real and daily concern for Downtown employees, many of whom are walking to their cars alone late at night after a closing shift. Before any further rate increases are approved, I ask that the City to work with the Downtown Parking Board and the San Jose Downtown Association to jointly create a garage investment plan that improves lighting, security presence, and elevator reliability in our garages. Employees should not feel unsafe getting to their car at the end of a shift.

Thank you for taking the time to hear from a small Downtown business owner. I am not opposed to fair and gradual rate increases, but I ask the Council to keep the people working the evening and night shifts in mind as you finalize this proposal, particularly by expanding the discounted permit program and holding the line on evening enforcement hours.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,