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Shoup on the High Cost of Free Parking on Reason TV

[Samuel Staley](#)

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[Reason TV](#) interviews UCLA [economist and planner Donald Shoup](#) on how parking policy has created widespread distortions and inefficiency in transportation. [The seven minute video](#) is really a concise introduction to parking policy reform. By adopting market-pricing for on-street parking (at meters) and eliminating inefficient planning policies such as parking minimums, we could go a long way toward ensuring consumers make travel decisions based on true costs.

Don has written the definitive book on parking policy in [The High Cost of Free Parking](#). For a critique of Don's approach, take a look at [Randal O'Toole's analysis over at the Antiplanner](#) blog.

Don has an important point (and insight), and I have written favorably about market pricing for parking in [Mobility First](#) and [The Road More Traveled](#). The unwillingness of planners and city officials to recognize parking for the scarce resource it is creates the perception that parking is free when in fact it carries costs that should be part of the travel decision.

Nevertheless, the danger is in taking the concept too far and using it for social engineering. The idea that the cost of my garage and driveway should be priced separately from my home makes no sense; the cost is fully born by me, the homeowner, and doesn't impose any costs on the broader community. Similarly, parking (and access) costs are usually fully born by the developers of retail centers such as shopping malls. The key is when the the infrastructure is publicly provided so that costs are born by the community at large *and* users are subsidized to create the *misperception* that parking is cheaper than it really is.

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