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[Response to 'Parking decks to be built at VSU'](#)

By Staff | ~~April 19, 2007~~ 1:15 pm

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Dear Editor: We must look past our own selfish desires for more convenient parking options and examine the overlooked issues associated with the proposed parking decks.

I have a lot of questions about the parking deck plans which I would like to see answered and hope you will too.

1. Have there been any alternatives explored to building two large, expensive, and ugly parking decks on campus? Parking decks do not produce income and while they might aid in attracting students to our University who want to bring their vehicles to campus, they do not add to the academic value of the University. Parking decks are a waste of valuable University real estate. I think the decision to build these parking decks is going to be looked down upon by future generations who are going to recognize them for what they are, a bad investment, a short-term solution to a long-term problem.

2. Has there been a study done assessing the impact of these parking decks on the local environment? Is there a plan to make these studies easily accessible to the University community or will they be filed away in a drawer over in Auxiliary Services? This is going to be one of the largest construction projects and biggest investments ever taken on by the university (yeah a parking deck, ironic, huh?) Construction waste, noise pollution, and increased car emissions all have to be taken into consideration, in addition to the destruction of habitat. While the rest of the world is cutting back and investing in innovative solutions to solve the climate crisis, VSU seems to be doing the opposite.

3. Speaking of which, have there been any initiatives to cut down on current vehicle usage: carpooling boards, extending the campus bus system to outlying apartment complexes in the city, and dare I say, restricting cars?

Let me stop here and tell you a story. I survived my freshman year without a vehicle at a small college, 800 students, in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Rather than detracting from the college experience, it allowed me to build deeper relationships with those around me, including relationships with people I normally wouldn't hang out or party with. I think campus life would greatly benefit from fewer people leaving campus and greater investments in campus activities. Imagine what CAB could do with just \$15,000—the price of one parking space. Can you say more laser tag? How many freshmen 'need' cars to work off-campus for the sole purpose of financing those cars?

4. Do we want to continue coming across as a commuter college? I think VSU has the potential to be a major economic engine for South Georgia and will host pioneering research one day. The question is, do we want to see that happen in five years or twenty? We have to make the tough decisions and investments now to see that come to fruition in the future.

5. Can't we all think of better ways to spend \$30 million dollars on campus? I think you could think of a few off the top of your head right now. I was thinking building new dorms which use geothermal climate control, composting toilets, environmentally friendly building materials, gray water recycling, rain water collection, and permaculture gardens. How about a food co-op or converting all the campus vehicles to bio-diesel? I would be happy to see remote parking lots for residents and an expanded bus system to begin to start, just like many other schools: the University of Vermont, University of Texas at El Paso, University of Texas at Austin, University of Southern California, Northwestern University, UC Santa Cruz, Arizona State University, University of Wyoming, University of Utah, and many, many more.

Why is the administration bowing to the whims of incoming freshmen, in terms of allowing them to bring vehicles to campus? We know incoming freshmen don't make very good decisions, that's why we have freshmen orientation, the counseling center, alcohol and drug education, and STD testing. I call upon the Faculty Senate and SGA to press for answers to these questions and to ask its own.

I specifically call upon the SGA to rescind its support for the parking garages and the student fee increase until these issues can be further explored.

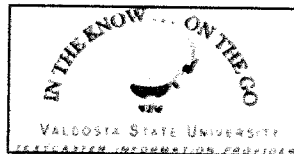
I call upon students, faculty, and staff to think about what you are willing to sacrifice for cleaner air, a more vibrant campus life, and a world-renowned University, sooner rather than later. The ultimate decision to build these parking decks rests with the Board of Regents. Please direct your feedback to the Office of President Zaccari at 229-333-5952.

T. Hayden Barnes

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