Subject: Offsite solar canopy parking for Arbor South and other future developments

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From: Jirka Hladis
Sent: Monday, November 17, 2025 5:37 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>; Dohoney Jr., Milton <MDohoney@a2gov.org>; Giant, Joseph <JGiant@a2gov.org>; Sustainability <Sustainability@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; City of Ann Arbor Transportation Commission <TransportationCommission@a2gov.org>
Subject: Offsite solar canopy parking for Arbor South and other future developments

Dear Council, staff, and Planning and Transportation Commission members,

New parking structures are akin to coal power plants: they are not compatible with our community values and goals and are likely to become stranded assets in the near future.

To the extent that additional publicly financed parking capacity is required for the viability of new housing and commercial developments near S State St, building permeable surface lots with solar canopies on the city-owned vacant parcels along Ellsworth Rd would be a much more appropriate solution. With improved AAATA service or dedicated shuttles, it would only be a 5 minute bus ride to both Arbor South and Briarwood.

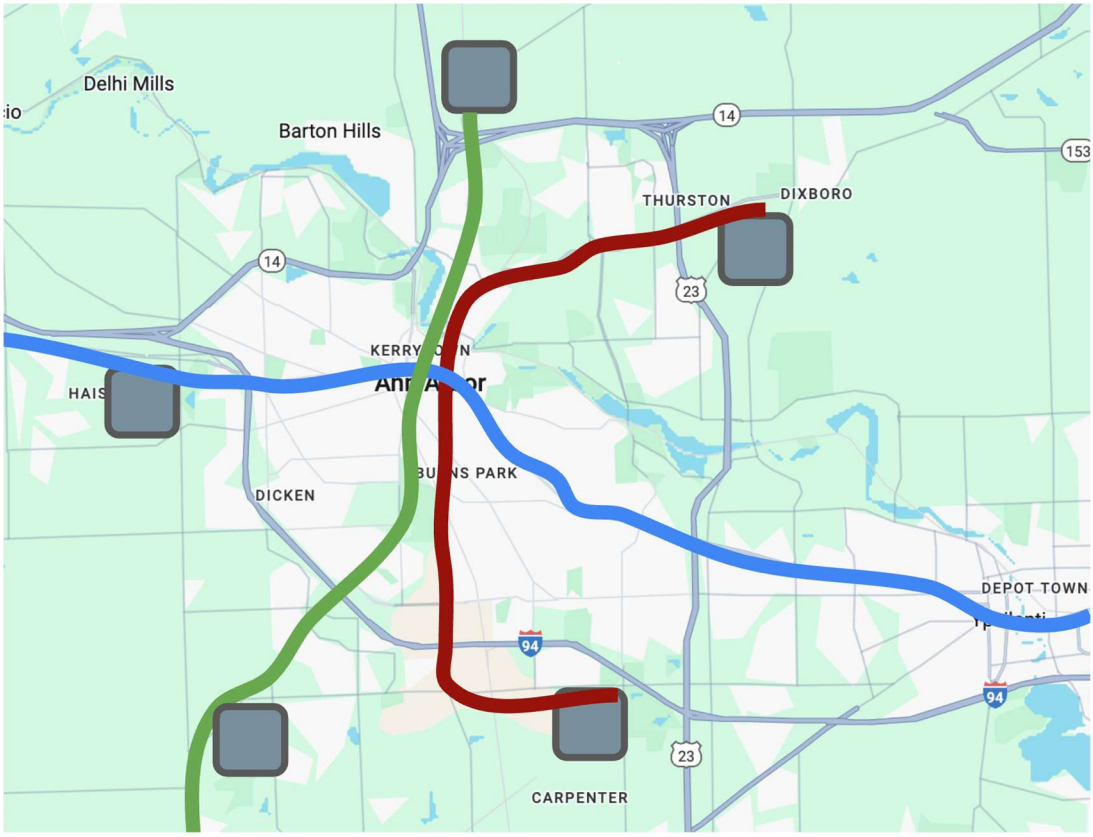
This would be a win-win solution; the developer could use the land for higher value uses and the bulk of the TIF funds could be reserved for desperately needed transit, cycling, pedestrian, and water infrastructure improvements along State St. More importantly, this would be an opportunity to pilot a larger expansion of park and ride facilities around the outskirts of the city to serve commuters and residents alike and dramatically reduce the number of cars operating within city limits.

Here are a few back of the envelope estimates:
150 parking spaces per acre
300 kW of solar capacity per acre, assuming 50% coverage and fixed canopies
400 MWh of generation per acre per year

Typical solar farm construction costs are $1 to $1.50 per watt, so we can assume a total cost of around $600k per acre including the permeable gravel parking surface and site preparation.

Providing 2,500 solar canopy parking spaces for Arbor South would require 17 acres and could generate 7 GWh of renewable power per year, potentially at a cost of less than $11 million.

At a larger scale, 150k parking spots would accommodate the vast majority of current city-wide parking needs on 1000 acres. For comparison, the municipal airport occupies approximately 500 acres. To help visualize the scale, each square in the sketch below represents one 200 acre park and ride lot served by high frequency transit:



Thank you,
Jirka Hladis
Ward 1