

Cobo plans \$9.5 million in parking improvements to add 550 spaces

Authority says demand justifies the expansion

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Parking demand for major events like the Auto Show coupled with need for weekly parking downtown is spurring Cobo Center to add parking spots.

Cobo Center is planning \$9.5 million worth of parking structure projects that will give it another 550 parking spaces.

The **Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority** which oversees Cobo Center feels there enough demand to make it worthwhile, General Manager Claude Molinari said.

"As it is, we lease less than half of our spaces because we're a convention center," he said. "We could lease all of our spaces and still not meet the current demand."

Events including the North American International Auto Show, the Society of Automotive Engineers annual conference and Detroit Autorama are desperate for parking, and Cobo has a long waiting list for midweek commuter parking.

"First and foremost we have to have parking for our guests ... but part of our goal where appropriate is to maximize revenue to offset tax money that supports this building by leasing parking spaces to commuters."

Even as it begins the parking lot refurbishing and expansion projects, Cobo is talking with the Crowne Plaza Downtown Detroit Riverfront about leasing some number of spaces to the hotel, if needed, to meet parking requirements for the second tower it is planning to build across Washington Boulevard.

Cobo has issued a request for proposals on the [Michigan Intergovernmental Trade Network](#) for a \$1.5 million project that will add 70 new spaces to the Washington Boulevard Garage under Cobo at the foot of Jefferson Avenue.

The project will take out a wall on the west side of the garage and pave unfinished space to create the new parking spots. Molinari said the contract will be awarded in late August.

"We're confident we'll be able to have this ready for the (next) auto show."

Cobo also plans to gut the old Cobo Arena garage, which has been closed for over five years, he said. Plans call for removing the second floor and ramps and rebuilding them. Preliminary work for the \$8 million project has begun, and the request for proposals is set to go out before the end of summer, with the demolition contract likely awarded before the end of the year, Molinari said.

The Atwater Street Garage, which is expected to be done by fall 2017 will reactivate 500 parking spaces and be accessible off of Atwater, Molinari said.

They will give Cobo a total of about 2,750 parking spaces between its Washington Boulevard Garage, Congress Street Garage and roof deck parking.