

Reserved: On-Campus Parking for People with Disabilities at Collegiate Football Games

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A college football game can nearly quadruple the population of many campuses each fall Saturday. The tailgating atmosphere becomes as much a part of the experience as the game for many fans, and a prime parking spot at the game is as highly valued as a 50-yard line seat.

Finding the right parking spot for people with disabilities is less about tailgating and proximity and more about accessibility to the stadium. Thus, the purpose of this research is 1) examine case law dealing with disability parking issues, 2) examine the football parking policies of universities in the Southeastern Conference, and 3) provide recommendations to address disability parking to ensure institutions are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines without reinforcing social isolation.

Recommendations come from the Americans with Disabilities Act and how courts have ruled on general disability parking issues. The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) states accessible parking spaces serving a particular facility shall be located on the shortest accessible route of travel from adjacent parking to an accessible entrance. Courts have held this by ordering the move of disability parking to an adjacent lot because disability spaces were not located in the shortest route to an accessible entrance. Courts have also addressed fees associated with disability parking privileges, deeming a fee to be acceptable as long as the same fee is applied to anyone else seeking such privileges.

University parking policies vary in regard to disability parking. Some provide parking adjacent to the stadium while others provide parking on campus and shuttle people to the stadium. Some policies provide reasonable accommodations and are therefore not required to relocate to an adjacent lot, per the ADA. Still, corralling fans with disabilities into a lot separated from the mainstream tailgate scene and bussing them to the stadium and back approaches a fine line of social isolation by failing to integrate disability parking within the heart of the campus.

Disability parking would be easier to measure if one lot provided parking for all fans in attendance at a college football game, and the ADA guidelines would be set forth in the lot's design. However, the natural layout of a university dictates an island-like community of parking lots spread across the campus. No matter the landscape, this study aims to provide a template for parking policies based on legal precedents and legislation.