

# Students fill fewer parking spots

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Although recent construction has blocked parking lots on Grand Valley State University's Allendale Campus, the limited space does not necessarily pose a problem.

Annual trends show that parking permit sales—including those eventually returned or exchanged—continue to decline each year as more and more students turn to mass transit systems like The Rapid.

Records from the sales week of Sept. 16 each year reveal a steady decrease in total permits from 12,508 in 2007 to 9,725 in 2012, and recent data collected by the GVSU Department of Public Safety suggest that this year's students will not deviate from the trend. The university is already behind in its sales compared to 2012, with move-in week—the busiest week of the year—seeing 1,829 fewer permit sales than in 2012.

Lisa Garringer, parking systems coordinator for the Department of Public Safety, said she does not think the continued annual cost increase has significantly contributed to the decrease in sales, as the raises have been "minimal" amounts of about \$10 each year. Instead, price combined with economic trends could be the major factor.

Capt. Brandon DeHaan

of the Grand Valley Police Department said a greater cost consciousness—both ecological and financial—might contribute to the decrease in student drivers.

"It's less expensive to go to a remote parking area or hop on a bus near where they live," DeHaan said, adding that a reduction of the carbon footprint is also a suspected motive behind the choice not to park a vehicle on campus.

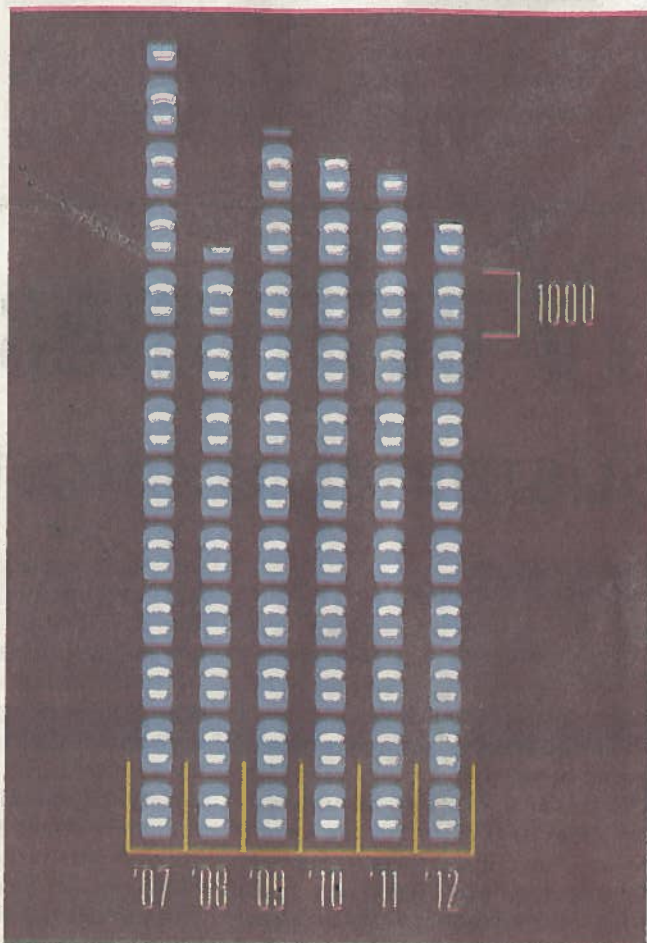
There is still hope that the trend may take a turn this year, though, as DeHaan said the current measured decrease could be caused by students delaying their purchase rather than choosing not to buy at all. However, DeHaan also cited studies that found urban dwellers of the traditional student age group to be more interested in public transit than owning and maintaining a car, so history does not appear to be in favor of the delayed purchase theory.

Neither do ridership records.

According to Rapid documents, Route 50 has grown significantly from carrying 179,000 in 2002 to transporting 1.4 million in 2012.

"(We) encourage students to use mass transit," DeHaan said.

Still, the university is looking to entice some stu-



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**Park it, pal:** Student drivers become increasingly scarce over the years even as the university population grows.

dent drivers with lower-priced parking options.

"The university has identified a solution for offering low-cost parking to students," DeHaan said of Lot J located behind Laker Village.

The lot opened this fall to accommodate 300 student

commuters at \$50 per permit. As of last week, the new lower-cost commuter lot is only two-thirds filled to capacity.

For more information about different parking permit options, visit [www.gvsu.edu/gvpd/parking-and-permits--101.htm](http://www.gvsu.edu/gvpd/parking-and-permits--101.htm).

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