

7. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY REVIEW THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON PARKING ENFORCEMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (JANUARY 1997), INCLUDING THE MINORITY REPORT, AND GIVE FULL AND DUE CONSIDERATION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION THEREOF. WE FURTHER RECOMMEND THE EXPLORATION OF MORE INTENSIVE CITIZEN ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS SUCH AS ARE IN PLACE IN NUMEROUS PLACES ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHERE THEY HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROPER ENFORCEMENT OF HANDICAPPED PARKING PROGRAMS.

The problem of handicapped parking enforcement continues to be an unusually vexing one. The Connecticut Public Transportation Commission has heard repeated testimony at its public hearings on the illegal use of the designated spaces and has direct firsthand experience with such parking violations as encountered by two of its members who use these accommodations. In 1996, a task force was convened by the Connecticut General Assembly pursuant to Public Act 96-245 (37). The task force consisted of three chiefs of police, representatives of State agencies, including the Departments of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety, and members of the community including some with physical disabilities. The Task Force issued its final report in January 1997. The recommendations on enforcement are incorporated in this Annual Report and found on pages 55-61.

Handicapped parking enforcement is a very complex issue. It encompasses not just the matter of issuing a citation to someone who is illegally parked but also such issues as:

- (1) illegal use of handicapped parking permits,
- (2) what constitutes a proper handicapped parking space that an enforceable citation can be issued for,
- (3) whether or not the space is on public or private property,
- (4) if on private property, does the custodian of the property concur,
- (5) do the designated parking spaces meet the requirements of the state building code, and
- (6) who can and will enforce the building code.

Lack of uniformity of the signs designating the handicapped parking spaces causes enforcement difficulties as many newer signs do not contain the required wording "handicapped parking permit required" and "violators will be prosecuted". This has resulted in many parking citations being unenforceable. Standardization of signage should be the ultimate goal. Deleting the requirement for the two above phrases but incorporating the international access sign is recommended to simplify the signage requirements and to make the requirements conform to the signs more commonly in current usage.

A lack of police department resources in most municipalities and the lower priority often assigned to handicapped parking enforcement, combined with the short-term nature of the violations which makes it difficult for police to respond to reported violations before the offenders have left the scene, has also made enforcement more difficult. Citizen enforcement programs have worked out very well in other places around the country in responding to such problems in enforcement and, while not providing a total solution,

have certainly contributed to the overall enforcement of handicapped parking programs. Such programs rely on police-trained, volunteer enforcers, generally themselves handicapped citizens, who have limited citation-issuing powers and who appear in court, if necessary, to prosecute the violations.

The January 1997 Report of the Task Force on Parking Enforcement for Persons with Disabilities should be readily available within the offices of the Transportation Committee, for whom it was prepared. This report contains all of the recommendations of compliance and enforcement, as well as a minority report which advocates a minimal citizen enforcement program. As mentioned earlier, the findings of the Task Force on enforcement issues are reproduced on pages 55-61 of this report.