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Lifts can solve parking crunch

Company hopes its hydraulic systems take hold in Southland

By Virginia McCrum
Staff Writer

Hydraulic lift systems that essentially allow two cars to be stacked into one parking space are stirring interest among Southern California businesses as real estate becomes increasingly precious.

Developers of densely populated parts of Northern California are already embracing the German-made parking system that has attracted Europeans since the 1960s and New Yorkers since the 1950s.

"I hope we penetrate Southern California, too, pretty soon," said Helmut Bradigam, president and chief executive officer of Luflytic, Calif.-based Klaus Parking Systems Inc., a franchisee of the German manufacturer.

Bradigam said the first company in the San Gabriel Valley to inquire about his company's parking lifts is Curry Insurance Agency in Pasadena.

"We haven't signed any deals in Southern California yet, but we have prospective clients in West Hollywood, Santa Monica and two or three in San Diego and Irvine," he said. "Those interested are mostly in dense urban areas and are conducting feasibility studies right now, and some are coming up to the Bay Area to inspect our units up here."

Whether the systems will take off in the region is unclear, especially since many city officials and developers are still unfamiliar with the technology.

"It all depends on price," said William Chang, vice president, of Asian American Economic Development Enterprises Inc. in Monterey Park. "It's hard to find a parking space, and it causes a lot of inconvenience. If the pricing is reasonable, compared with other parking rates, then the system has a place here. But if it's too expensive, then they might have a

problem."

At least one San Gabriel Valley city plans to look into the technology.

"There is a seminar in June that I will be attending with the International Parking Institute in Las Vegas that will be going over the pros and cons of the systems," said Jennifer Jenkins, Pasadena's parking manager.

There are two types of Klean systems.

The less expensive type is the Tandem Lift, which costs an average of \$7,500 per unit and involves moving cars in and out of the lower level when access is needed to the top story.

Double the Tandem's average cost is the Independent Access System, which works like an elevator and takes 45 seconds to load or unload a car on either platform. This system involves digging a 6-foot hole for the "elevator" shaft.

Both systems, which each have two-car and four-car designs, are not just for business use, as they fit into most home garages. While the two-car "elevator" system costs about \$15,000, its four-car version costs \$28,000.

"The Tandem Lift is good for car dealers who don't have to move their car stock a lot and for families, as a married couple usually have access to each other's car keys," Broadgum said.

Using valet parking is one way some businesses in Northern California are working with the Tandem system.

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