



BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 6718
July 1, 2025
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6718: Shopping Cart Regulations (First Reading of Ordinance No. 25C-18)	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Schedule Ordinance No. 25C-18 for second reading and adoption on July 15, 2025.	

DEPARTMENT:	Police
STAFF:	Michelle Bennet, Acting Chief of Police Mike Seifert, Police Commander Amelia Tjaden, Management Analyst
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Ordinance No. 25C-18
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	n/a

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ n/a
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ n/a
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to present a first reading of Ordinance No. 25C-18 (Exhibit 1) to address shopping cart misuse as a public safety tool.

- On October 15, 2024, the City Council passed a motion to amend the 2025-2026 Work Plan to include the consideration of several public safety ordinances. This included the development of shopping cart regulations aimed at deterring retail crime by regulating cart containment, retrieval, and misuse.
- Ordinance No. 25C-18 is a proactive measure that intends to prevent the illegal removal of shopping carts from business premises, to mitigate the illegal possession and accumulation of shopping carts on public or private property, and to limit the operation of shopping carts in public right of ways.
- Shopping cart regulations are common across the region. Staff researched ordinances and implementation in several other cities including Auburn, Bellevue, Federal Way, Issaquah, and Renton when developing this ordinance
- The proposed regulations will improve the ability of the Mercer Island Police Department (MIPD) to investigate crimes and deter theft.

BACKGROUND

On October 15, 2024, the City Council passed a motion to amend the 2025-2026 Work Plan to include the following items to be considered individually:

1. A shopping cart regulation ordinance aimed at deterring and managing organized retail crime by regulating cart containment, retrieval, and misuse to prevent their use in organized theft.
2. An ordinance to amend business license criteria, allowing for revocation or suspension in cases where businesses fail to take proactive measures against organized retail crime and do not collaborate with law enforcement.
3. An ordinance introducing mandatory minimum sentences for repeat offenders of public disorder crimes, with treatment options as alternatives, to reduce recidivism and encourage rehabilitation.
4. A public awareness campaign, with the suggested title “See Something, Say Something – A Community Response to Shoplifting and Organized Retail Crime,” aimed at educating the public on the impact of organized retail crime, encouraging safe reporting practices, and promoting community involvement in crime prevention.

On Mercer Island, five Town Center businesses—Metropolitan Market, QFC, Rite Aid, True Value, and Walgreens—provide shopping carts for their patrons. When shopping carts are removed from the premises and abandoned on public or private property throughout the City, they can create blight, obstruct access to sidewalks, streets, and rights-of-way, interfere with pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and impede emergency services.

Shopping cart regulations are common across the region. Staff researched ordinances and implementation in several other cities including Auburn, Bellevue, Federal Way, Issaquah, Lakewood, Maple Valley, Renton when developing this ordinance. The regulations in these ordinances include requirements for cart signage, shopping cart containment and retrieval plans, prohibition of operating a shopping cart in the right of way and illegally possessing or accumulating shopping carts.

[RCW 9A.56.270](#) prohibits individuals from removing shopping carts from parking areas of retail establishments. While the state law makes it a misdemeanor offense to remove a shopping cart from a premise if properly marked, neither the RCW nor current City code require businesses to have signage on their shopping cars and retrieve the carts. Many cities have addressed this issue by adopting shopping cart ordinances. The ordinance presented for adoption was a result of researching other cities' ordinances and implementation success.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Ordinance No. 25C-18 is a proactive measure that intends to prevent the illegal removal of shopping carts from business premises, to mitigate the illegal possession and accumulation of shopping carts on public or private property, and to limit the operation of shopping carts in public right of ways.

Ordinance No. 25C-18 adds a section to Title 9 MICC – the City’s criminal code – that includes the following regulations:

- All shopping carts are required to be labeled, and signage posted on the business' property, in accordance with RCW [9A.56.270](#).
- Removal of shopping carts from the premises of the retail establishment is illegal.
- Operating a shopping cart in the right-of-way, or in a park, is illegal.

- Owners are required to retrieve a shopping cart within 48 hours of the City providing notification of a lost, stolen, or abandoned cart.

The Sound Transit Light Rail Station (Station) is anticipated to open on Mercer Island in early 2026. When the Station opens, staff anticipate changes in the foot traffic in Town Center and the potential for increase in unlawful activities. These regulations were proposed to provide MIPD with another tool to deter retail crimes.

NEXT STEPS

On Mercer Island, five businesses – Metropolitan Market, QFC, Rite Aid, True Value, and Walgreens – would be impacted by this ordinance. Staff will contact impacted businesses to communicate changes to the City's code upon adoption. The ordinance will go into effect 90 days after its adoption, giving businesses ample time to react to the changes.

In addition, staff will share information about these regulation changes with the broader community via our communication channels.

Finally, staff will continue to work on the other public safety ordinances, including updating the business license criteria and minimum sentencing for repeat offenders of public disorder crimes. Staff will present an update to the City Council in Q3 2025 on this work.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Schedule Ordinance No. 25C-18 for second reading and adoption on July 15, 2025.