



**BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND**

**AB 6514  
July 16, 2024  
Regular Business**

**AGENDA BILL INFORMATION**

<b>TITLE:</b>	AB 6514: Town Center Parking Regulations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Receive report and provide feedback. No action necessary.	

<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	City Manager
<b>STAFF:</b>	Jessi Bon, City Manager Robbie Cunningham Adams, Management Analyst Amelia Tjaden, Project Coordinator
<b>COUNCIL LIAISON:</b>	n/a
<b>EXHIBITS:</b>	1. May 2024 Town Center and North Mercer Parking Counts Findings 2. Proposed Time Limit Regulations Map 3. Mobile Parking App Comparison
<b>CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:</b>	1. Develop data-driven economic development and retail plans and strategies to activate Town Center and other business areas.

<b>AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE</b>	\$ n/a
<b>AMOUNT BUDGETED</b>	\$ n/a
<b>APPROPRIATION REQUIRED</b>	\$ n/a

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this agenda item is to review potential actions related to implementation of the [Town Center Parking Plan](#) and receive feedback from City Council.

- The Town Center Parking Plan was adopted by the City Council in November 2023 ([AB 6369](#)).
- The Plan includes a list of recommendations to improve the parking system in Town Center. This Agenda Bill explores the implementation of five potential actions related to the Town Center Parking Plan:
  - Increasing the parking citation fee from \$20.00 to \$54.00,
  - Adding language to the Mercer Island Municipal Code to specify the distance a vehicle must move to be considered reparked,
  - Standardizing the time limit in Town Center to two hours,
  - Implementing an on-street parking system that would facilitate two hours free parking with option for time extension with payment, and
  - Sunsetting the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit program.
- This agenda item is discussion only and no formal action is requested from City Council. Staff will incorporate feedback and return to the City Council for final approval before implementation.

## BACKGROUND

Well-planned and sufficient parking is vital to the success of Mercer Island's Town Center economy and the experience of Town Center residents, businesses, and visitors. In 2022, the City of Mercer Island conducted a parking study to evaluate parking supply, utilization, and management in and around Town Center.

Building off of the parking study, the [Town Center Parking Plan](#) was adopted by the City Council in November 2023 ([AB 6369](#)). The Plan identifies strategies to make parking more functionally available, accessible for different users, and supportive of other options for non-driving travel, like walking and biking, to and around Town Center. The Plan includes strategies and recommendations that will be implemented over time through various City department work plans.

As described in Exhibit 1, Parking counts were conducted in Town Center and the North Mercer Residential Parking Zone on Thursday, May 9 and Saturday, May 11. Town Center parking inventory has 2,750 parking spaces. This includes 2,500 off-street parking spaces and 250 on-street parking spaces. The North Mercer Residential Parking District has 127 on-street spaces and 455 off-street parking spaces, mostly at the Mercer Island Park & Ride.

- Peak parking demand for the study area occurred on Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 12:00pm.
- On-street occupancy in Town Center peaked at 81% system-wide on the weekday count and 76% system-wide during the weekend count.
- At the Mercer Island Park & Ride, occupancy peaked at 69%.

## ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Staff are evaluating several implementation actions of the [Town Center Parking Plan](#) and seek City Council feedback on the following implementation actions. Staff will return to the City Council for final approval before implementation. All implementation actions will involve a comprehensive communications campaign, that includes updates on the [Town Center Parking Plan Let's Talk page](#), outreach to the business community and the Chamber of Commerce, social media posts, communications in the MI Weekly, and promotion in the MI Reporter.

### Parking Citation Fee Increase

The current citation fee for parking infractions is \$20.00. Revenue from parking citation fees goes into the General Fund. The City defaulted to the state established parking citation fee in 2022, as an audit of the Mercer Island City Code (MICC) by the Administrative Office of the Courts revealed that the fee had not been established in the code.

As described in the Town Center Parking Plan, and evident in the recent parking counts conducted, the citation fee does not deter people parking in Town Center from violating existing parking regulations. Currently, many vehicles overstay the parking limits, making on-street spaces unavailable for users. An increase in the citation fee could improve compliance and parking turnover rates. Staff recommends the citation fee for parking infractions be increased to \$54.00. This rate was chosen as it is the current penalty for parking infractions for the City of Bellevue. Increasing the citation fee to \$54.00 would create parity between the City of Mercer Island and its neighboring jurisdictions.

Increasing the parking citation fee would be achieved by making amendments to MICC Chapters [10.18](#) and [10.36](#). The amendments would be adopted by ordinance. Staff will continue to monitor enforcement data,

regional trends, and the relationship of the citation fee to the price of any paid parking in Town Center when evaluating any future changes to the citation amount.

Staff is seeking City Council feedback on increasing the parking citation fee from \$20.00 to \$54.00.

### **Required Distance for Vehicles to Move**

Currently, the City has three police vehicles equipped with Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras that can track parking duration. Because City code does not specify how far a vehicle must move to be legally reparked, and the ALPR location-detection capabilities are accurate to around 30 feet, the ALPR does not currently function for parking enforcement. As such, the Police Support Officer must still chalk tires to issue parking citations, which takes significantly more time than an ALPR system.

To increase efficiency and capacity of parking enforcement, staff suggest adding language to Chapters [10.04](#) and [10.36](#) MICC to specify the distance a vehicle must move to extend the vehicle's parking time beyond the time limits established. Staff suggest requiring a vehicle to move to a different block, defined as the stretch of roadway between the two closest public street intersections on either end of the stretch, to renew the parking time limit. This change would allow MIPD to use the ALPR cameras for parking enforcement, thus increasing the efficiency and capacity of parking enforcement.

Staff is seeking City Council feedback on adding language to MICC that would specify the distance a vehicle must move to extend the vehicle's parking time beyond the time limits established, and the distance required to do so.

### **Time Limit Standardization**

Town Center on-street parking is regulated through a mix of two-hour, four-hour, unrestricted, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), loading, permit, thirty-minute, and three-minute zones. Currently, applicable hours for parking restrictions are not established in the MICC, other than the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit restricting parking to permit-holders only on certain blocks between 7:00am-9:00am.

The Town Center Parking Plan recommends converting all on-street parking in Town Center to two-hour limited parking, excluding ADA, three-minute, and loading zones. As shown in Exhibit 2, conversion would include all current spaces regulated as thirty-minute, two-hour, four-hour, and unrestricted.

Applicable hours for parking restrictions would need to be established as current hours for parking restrictions have not been standardized in the MICC. Staff evaluated two options for applicable hours for parking restrictions. First, parking restrictions could be applicable from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday to accommodate the workday schedule. Alternatively, parking restrictions could be applicable from 8:00am to 8:00pm Monday through Saturday to create turnover in parking spaces for evening activities like dining or shopping.

This proposal addresses recommendation 1A of the Town Center Parking Plan, to convert all on-street parking in Town Center to two-hour time-limited parking, excluding ADA and loading zones. A two-hour limit on-street parking is suitable to serve most customer and visitor needs in a business district, allowing enough time to complete errands, dining, and visits, while being short enough to promote turnover of spaces. This change also brings more consistency and ease of use to on-street parking regulations in Town Center. Staff met with the Mercer Island Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Officer who voiced support for standardizing the time limit to two hours.

One consideration for this change is the adverse impacts on the residents and employees of Town Center who require on-street parking for longer than two hours. The May 2024 parking counts show considerable time limit infractions at the 30-minute and two-hour regulated on-street parking spaces. In the two-hour parking zones, 25% of cars overstayed the posted time-limit on the weekday count, with many vehicles parked all day. This, combined with evidence gathered during the data collection for the Town Center Parking Plan and through conversations with Town Center business owners and employees, indicates that many employees and area residents are using on-street spaces all day. Employees of Town Center businesses are often not provided with parking in the six parking garages and thus are subject to the same time restrictions as visitors. Standardizing the time limit in Town Center may push these vehicles into the adjacent neighborhoods or into the off-street parking at other businesses.

Implementation of the time limit standardization would be achieved through code changes to MICC Chapters [10.36](#) and [10.74](#). The changes would be adopted by ordinance. Staff suggests adding an 'effective date' to the ordinance to allow for coordination with the Public Works Department as the changes require updating the current parking signage. The cost for updating current signage with these changes would be around \$5,000 for the placards, posts, and bindings. Like the parking citation fee increase, it would be under the discretion of the Police Department to issue warnings before citations for violations of the new time limits.

Staff is seeking City Council feedback on standardizing the time limits in Town Center to two hours and the applicable hours for parking restrictions.

### **Free Two-Hour Parking with Registration**

Recommendation 1F of the Town Center Parking Plan calls for the consideration of paid parking in Town Center and deploying technology to create easier use and enforcement. Parking management systems, like shared pay stations and app-based payment, provide flexibility in assigning the geography, time, and fees for paid parking. Moreover, using technology-based payment can aid enforcement of parking time limits.

During prior City Council discussions, the idea was raised to explore implementation of a system where motorists would register their vehicle, using a mobile app or a kiosk, for two hours of free parking. Parking beyond two hours would require a fee. This registration system would apply to the 250 on-street parking spaces in Town Center. In short, implementing a registration system would require the use of a mobile parking payment service, and a second registration system (a kiosk or a pay station) for patrons who either do not have a mobile device or do not have a credit card.

Exhibit 3 describes existing parking payment services and their expected costs. To enforce the parking registration system, the City would need to integrate the parking payment service with the City's existing parking enforcement software, Brazos. Cost of the integration depends on the chosen service and software.

Staff is seeking City Council feedback on using a mobile parking payment service to regulate parking in Town Center that allows for two-hours of free parking and the ability to pay for extended parking during applicable hours.

### **Sunsetting the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Programs**

The City operates two parking permit programs: the North Mercer Restricted Parking District (RPD) and the Town Center Parking Permit Programs. The North Mercer RPD Permit Program was created in 2003 to prevent spillover of commuter users of the Mercer Island Park & Ride onto neighborhood streets when the Park & Ride is full. Permits cost \$5 per year for each vehicle legally registered to a resident in the RPD.

Similarly, the Town Center Parking Permit Program was created in 2001 to eliminate parking for non-Mercer Island commuters from City streets. Permits are available for Mercer Island residents, as well as a limited number of Mercer Island businesses grandfathered into the permit program for \$5 per year. The permit grants priority access to designated on-street spaces from 7:00am to 9:00am on weekdays.

Staff recommend suspending the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Program and shifting permit holders to the Park & Ride and the future Commuter Parking Lot at the former Tully's site. The May 2024 Parking Counts showed that Park & Ride occupancy peaked at 69% during the weekday count and declined throughout the afternoon into the evening at the Park & Ride. Moreover, during the 8:00 am weekday count, 27 vehicles were parked in the spaces reserved for the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit, however only 2 vehicles, or 7% of vehicles parked in this area, had valid permits.

Staff recommend sunsetting the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Program to preserve valuable on-street parking for Town Center customers and visitors. Sunsetting the permit program would also create consistency for parking restrictions around Town Center and better facilitate future changes to parking regulations.

Sunsetting the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Program would be achieved through code changes to Chapter [10.74](#) MICC. The changes would be adopted by ordinance and would require an effective date for implementation. It is important to note that the North Mercer RPD would not be affected by this change and staff will continue to monitor the RPD program.

Staff are seeking City Council feedback on the sunsetting of the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Program.

## NEXT STEPS

Staff are seeking City Council feedback on:

- Increasing the parking citation fee from \$20.00 to \$54.00,
- Adding language to the Mercer Island Municipal Code to specify the distance a vehicle must move to be considered reparked,
- Standardizing the time limit in Town Center to two hours,
- Implementing an on-street parking system that would facilitate two hours free parking with option for time extension with payment, and
- Sunsetting the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit program.

Following this Council agenda item, staff will review feedback and return to the City Council with ordinances to implement these changes.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report and provide feedback. No action necessary.