



## BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

**AB 6734**  
**July 15, 2025**  
**Consent Agenda**

### AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	AB 6734: Shopping Cart Regulations (Second 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
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	Adopt Ordinance No. 25C-18 related to shopping cart regulations as presented in Exhibit 1.	

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

<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 present a second 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.
- On July 1, 2025, City Council conducted the first reading of Ordinance 25C-18 ([AB 6718](#)). The ordinance was amended from the first reading to differentiate between shopping carts used in a

retail setting and for private use, remove a reference to class 3 civil infraction, and clarify roles in cart retrieval.

## 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 obstruct access to sidewalks, streets, and rights-of-way, interfere with pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and impede emergency services.

[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.

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. The ordinance presented for adoption was a result of researching other cities' ordinances and implementation success.

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.

## 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 retail shopping carts are required to be labeled, and signage posted on the business' property, in accordance with RCW [9A.56.270](#).
- Removal of retail shopping carts from the premises of the retail establishment is illegal.
- Operating a retail shopping cart in the right-of-way, or in a park, is illegal.
- Owners are required to retrieve a retail shopping cart within 48 hours of the City providing notification of a lost, stolen, or abandoned cart.

Ordinance No. 25C-18 was amended from the first reading to differentiate between shopping carts used in a retail setting and for private use and to remove a reference to class 3 civil infraction.

## **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 October 1, 2025, giving businesses ample time to prepare for the changes.

In addition, staff will share information about these regulation changes with the broader community via our communication channels. Once the Ordinance has gone into effect, a community member wanting to report an abandoned shopping cart should call the Police non-emergency line at (425) 577-5656. MIPD would then notify the corresponding business about the lost shopping cart, and the business would have 48 hours to retrieve the cart. If the cart has not been retrieved after 48 hours, MIPD will coordinate with City staff and store ownership to remove/return the shopping cart.

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**

Adopt Ordinance No. 25C-18 related to shopping cart regulations as presented in Exhibit 1.