



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

**AB 6118
July 19, 2022
Study Session**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6118: Town Center Parking Study Check-in	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive presentation on preliminary findings of the Town Center Parking Study and provide initial feedback on preferred alternatives.	

DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
STAFF:	Jason Kintner, Chief of Operations Jeff Thomas, Interim Director, CPD Mike Seifert, Operations Commander, MIPD Sarah Bluvas, CIP Project Manager
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Town Center Parking Study Project Scope 2. June Parking Data Collection Summary 3. Town Center Parking Study Public Participation Plan
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	1. Prepare for the impacts of growth and change with a continued consideration on environmental sustainability.

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	\$ 80,000
AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ 80,000
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	\$ 0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide an update on the Town Center Parking Study, including preliminary findings, and to receive initial direction and feedback from the City Council on preferred alternatives.

- The City Council approved \$80,000 in the 2021-2022 biennial budget to conduct a new Town Center Parking Study (50% funded by General Fund via the Street Fund and 50% funded by Sound Transit Mitigation dollars for study elements related to mitigation impacts).
- During two scoping sessions in May and July 2021, the Council identified three main study goals related to Town Center activation: small business support, resident access to public transportation, and understanding parking supply and use.
- The City selected Walker Consultants to conduct the parking study, and staff have been working with Walker to collect data, develop the public participation plan, and begin engaging the community on this topic via Let’s Talk.

- The presentation will include preliminary findings from data collection in June and July 2022 to inform a working session with the City Council to begin identifying preferred alternatives for recommendations to be included in the final report.

BACKGROUND

Well-planned and sufficient parking and access is vital to the success of the Town Center economy and the experience of Town Center business owners, patrons, residents, and visitors. Moreover, as the City prepares for the opening of the East Link light rail station, ensuring that residents have access to commuter parking is critical.

The City Council identified the following goals for the Town Center Parking Study:

1. Create a parking program that activates Town Center, supports small businesses, and enhances the Town Center visitor experience.
2. Ensure Mercer Island residents have priority access to public transportation.
3. Determine if on-site commercial and multi-family residential parking is adequately supplied and utilized. Identify options for increasing and/or regulating its use.

After a competitive RFP process that yielded submittals from five qualified firms, the City Council unanimously selected Walker Consultants (“Walker”) to conduct the study. Walker is a global parking and mobility consulting firm with offices in Seattle and around the U.S.

The project team kicked off the Town Center Parking study in March 2022; a summary of major project milestones reached to-date is provided below (see Exhibit 1 for the full project scope).

Gathered Background Information

The project team reviewed City processes and policies as well as Mercer Island Municipal Code (MICC) pertaining to Town Center parking. Their review included:

- MICC Chapters [10.74 Permit Parking](#), [19.11.130 Town Center parking, vehicular and pedestrian circulation](#).
- Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan and Town Center Vision
- Traffic counts (2018)
- 2023-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Sound Transit project information
- Previous Town Center Parking Study reports
- Public comment submitted to-date via e-mail and the Let’s Talk project page
- 2020 and 2021 Small Business Needs Assessment
- 2022 Community Survey Report

Additionally, the project team interviewed Officer Anna Ormsby to learn more about the parking permit program and Town Center parking enforcement as well as Lia Klein, Transportation Engineer, for information about Town Center traffic safety, curb management, and other street/sidewalk improvements, issues, and plans.

Collected Parking Counts

The data firm IDAX was selected to collect Town Center Parking counts on Wednesday June 8 and Saturday June 11. IDAX first inventoried all on- and off-street parking in the Town Center zone. IDAX then collected on-

street and off-street parking occupancy at 10am, 12pm, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm, and 8pm as well as turnover data (i.e. how long cars stay parked). A “heat map” showing peak utilization at 12pm as well as high-level observations for each inventory hour are included as Exhibit 2; the project team will share more about the data collection strategy and detailed observations during the study session.

Launched Let’s Talk Engagement Features

The project team also launched new community engagement tools for the study on [Let’s Talk](#), including four quick polls and a map for community members to pin locations related to parking issues, areas for opportunity, and ideas. Additional features will be deployed later this summer with other public participation opportunities (Exhibit 3).

Visited Town Center

The project team visited Town Center in late June to further understand the study area, collect on-the-ground observations, and meet with Councilmembers to learn more about their primary concerns and high-level desires for study outcomes and recommendations. General observations include the following:

- There are many upcoming changes in Town Center with new developments that will impact parking and require greater access to Town Center restaurants/retail and transit. This includes better infrastructure for walking and biking as well as traffic calming.
- There is parking available in Town Center but not necessarily where there is the most demand for parking.
- Some private parking garages (especially in areas of high parking demand) are underutilized.
- There is a lack of regular parking enforcement of time limits.
- There are several underutilized private lots and garages that offer opportunities for shared parking with the public and zoning reforms to encourage redevelopment of these assets.
- Commercial delivery is occurring in parking spaces and in turning lanes, which causes safety hazards.
- There are opportunities for street calming and greater access through active mobility.
- The Park and Ride lot was underutilized, but that is likely due to current “work from home” practices and trends due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

STUDY SESSION DISCUSSION

At the Council meeting on Tuesday, the project team will share preliminary findings from the data collected in June and facilitate a discussion with the City Council on the following topics:

- Updating parking time limits and enforcement;
- Expanding short-term parking and loading;
- Parking code reforms to allow new development on underutilized lots (such as reducing or eliminating the parking requirement for restaurants or private parking agreements);
- Shared parking between private garages for public access to maximize existing assets;
- Improved parking wayfinding and signage;
- Traffic calming and street reconfiguration to improve walking and biking connections to transit; and
- Monitoring Park and Ride utilization and providing greater access to transit for residents by improving bus or shuttle connections.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Additionally, the project team will update the City Council on the Public Participation Plan (Exhibit 3) and timeline for engagement through the summer and into early fall.

NEXT STEPS

The project team will return for a second study session on October 4, 2022, to share the draft study report with the City Council and receive additional feedback to inform development of the final recommendations. The final report will be complete by the end of the year.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive presentation on preliminary findings of the Town Center Parking Study and provide initial feedback on preferred alternatives.