



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

**AB 6603
March 18, 2025
Regular Business**

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6603: Town Center Parking Regulations Discussion	<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 report and provide feedback.	

DEPARTMENT:	City Manager
STAFF:	Jessi Bon, City Manager Robbie Cunningham Adams, Senior Management Analyst Amelia Tjaden, Management Analyst
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	1. Mercer Island Town Center Parking Map
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	1. Develop data-driven economic development and retail plans and strategies to activate Town Center and other business areas.

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to seek City Council feedback on regulations for on-street parking in Town Center and at the Town Center Parking Area (aka new parking lot at the former Tully's location).

- The Town Center Parking Plan was adopted by the City Council in November 2023 ([AB 6369](#)).
- At the July 16, 2024, City Council meeting, the City Council received a presentation and provided feedback on updating parking regulations in Town Center ([AB 6514](#)). City Council directed staff to increase the citation fee from \$20.00 to \$54.00, to sunset the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Program, and to implement an on-street parking system where a user would register their vehicle for two hours of free parking and have the option to extend this parking up to a four-hour maximum for a paid fee.
- On January 21, 2025, the City Council awarded the contract for the new Town Center Parking Area to OMA Construction ([AB 6611](#)). Construction of the new parking area began in February 2025. The parking area is expected to open by July 2025. Parking regulations need to be established for the new parking area.
- The Sound Transit Light Rail Station (the Station) is anticipated to open in late 2025. Parking demand in Town Center and at the Park & Ride will likely increase when the Station opens. Managing the on-

street parking supply to ensure parking is available for both commuters and patrons of Town Center businesses will be crucial to the success of Town Center.

- Staff are seeking confirmation of the approach to implement an on-street parking system in Town Center where a user would register their vehicle for two hours of free parking and have the option to extend their parking to a four-hour maximum for a paid fee. Staff recommend using a rate of \$2.50 per hour for the on-street parking in Town Center.
- Staff are seeking City Council feedback on the regulations and rate for the new Town Center Parking Area. Staff recommend providing a user with two hours of free parking upon registration and having the option to extend their parking to a twelve-hour maximum for a paid fee. Staff recommend using a rate of \$2.50 per hour and a daily maximum rate of \$12.50.

BACKGROUND

Parking In & Around Town Center

Well-planned and sufficient parking is vital to the success of Mercer Island's Town Center economy and the experience of residents, businesses, and visitors. The Town Center Parking Plan was adopted by the City Council in November 2023 ([AB 6369](#)). Recommendation 1F of the Town Center Parking Plan calls for the consideration of paid parking to increase turnover and aid enforcement of time limits.

On July 16, 2024, the City Council received a presentation and provided feedback on potential actions to update the Town Center parking regulations ([AB 6514](#)). At this meeting, the City Council directed staff to implement an on-street parking system where a motorist would register their vehicle for two hours of free parking and have the option to extend their parking up to a four hour maximum for a paid fee ([AB 6514](#)). Implementation of this parking system will require amendments to MICC Chapter 10 and the Fee Schedule, the use of a mobile application, and an update to the existing parking signage.

On September 17, 2024, the City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 24C-14](#), increasing the parking citation fee and sunsetting the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit Program ([AB 6543](#)). On January 1, 2025, the parking citation fee increased from \$20.00 to \$54.00, and the parking spaces previously reserved for the Town Center Commuter Parking Permit program were converted to unrestricted parking.

Additionally, on January 21, 2025, the City Council awarded the contract for the construction of the new Town Center Parking Area at the former Tully's site (project 90.20.0024 in the 2025-2026 Capital Improvement Program) to OMA Construction ([AB 6611](#)). Construction began on the new parking area in February 2025. The project will construct 33 parking stalls, 2 ADA parking stalls, sidewalks, infrastructure for future electric vehicle charging capability, and include bike lockers and racks. Construction of the new parking area will be substantially completed by July 2025. Parking regulations need to be established for this new public parking area.

Parking Enforcement

In 2024, the City issued 198 citations for violating posted parking regulations. The Police Support Officer (PSO) is predominantly responsible for parking enforcement on the Island. Currently, the PSO must circle Town Center at various time intervals to physically chalk tires and then return to issue citations for parking violations. The current system for parking enforcement is inefficient and makes it challenging for other officers to support enforcement efforts.

The introduction of a parking payment/registration system would change how parking enforcement is

conducted. Payment/registration data would be integrated with the City's existing enforcement software and the Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) camera system. This means that the PSO, or other Patrol Officers conducting parking enforcement, would only need 'one touch' with vehicles parked illegally to issue a citation. The Officer would drive around Town Center and receive alerts when a vehicle has not registered to park or if they are parked longer than permitted. The change to a parking payment/registration system would greatly increase the efficiency at which the Police Department can conduct parking enforcement and allow Patrol Officers to more consistently participate in parking enforcement.

Sound Transit Light Rail Station

The Sound Transit Light Rail Station (Station) is anticipated to open in late 2025, likely increasing the demand for on-street parking in the Town Center.

From 2010-2017, the Park & Ride frequently reached 100% occupancy on weekdays according to the [2017 Park & Ride Utilization Report](#). Occupancy counts conducted in February 2025 showed that the Park & Ride averaged 82% occupancy at noon. Staff anticipate that on weekdays the Park & Ride will reach 100% occupancy when the Station opens.

Managing the parking supply to ensure parking is available for both commuters and patrons of Town Center businesses will be crucial to the success of Town Center. Transportation Goal 11.3 of the [Mercer Island Comprehensive Plan](#) is to "support business development in the downtown area by prioritizing on-street parking spaces in the Town Center for short-term parking and encourage the development of off-street shared parking facilities for long-term parking in the Town Center."

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

The purpose of this agenda bill is to seek City Council feedback on regulations for on-street parking in Town Center and at the Town Center Parking Project.

- Staff are seeking confirmation of the approach to implement an on-street parking system in Town Center where a user would register their vehicle for two hours of free parking and have the option to extend their parking to a four-hour maximum for a paid fee. Staff recommend using a rate of \$2.50 per hour for the on-street parking in Town Center.
- Staff are seeking City Council feedback on the regulations and rate for the new Town Center Parking Area. Staff recommend providing a user with two hours of free parking upon registration and having the option to extend their parking to a twelve-hour maximum for a paid fee. Staff recommend using a rate of \$2.50 per hour and a daily maximum rate of \$12.50.

On-Street Parking Payment Rate and Revenue

Staff are seeking City Council feedback on the appropriate payment rate for on-street parking in Town Center. Table 1, on the next page, provides a comparison of paid parking rates for the parking garages on Mercer Island and four Washington cities. Staff recommend a rate of \$2.50 per hour for the on-street parking in Town Center as this rate is regionally comparable.

Table 1: Regional Paid Parking Rate Comparison	
Mercer Island	
77 Central Garage	3 hours free, \$2.00 each additional hour
Island Square Garage	2 hours free, \$3.00 each additional hour
Region	
City of Kirkland (surface lot)	\$1.00/hour
City of Redmond (surface lot)	2 hours free, \$1.00 each additional hour
City of Seattle (on-street)	Maximum of \$6.00/hour (rate varies by location)
City of Vancouver (on-street)	Maximum of \$2.50/hour (rate varies by location)

Town Center Parking Project (at the former Tully’s Site)

Staff are seeking City Council feedback on the regulations for the new Town Center Parking Area. Staff recommend that the City provide motorists with two hours of free parking upon registration and have the option to extend their parking up to twelve hours for a paid fee. Staff recommend that the City charge \$2.50 per hour to mirror on-street parking rates in the Town Center. Additionally, staff recommend a maximum daily rate of \$12.50. Under this approach:

- A motorist who registers their vehicle for 0-2 hours would receive free parking.
- A motorist who registers their vehicle for 2-7 hours of parking would receive two hours of free parking and pay \$2.50 per each additional hour.
- A motorist who registers their vehicle for 8-12 hours of parking would receive two hours of free parking and their total would be \$12.50, the daily maximum rate.

This approach increases the capacity of Town Center parking supply by providing flexible parking for people that need to park in Town Center for longer than four hours. This approach also supports the overflow from the Park & Ride should it reach 100% occupancy. Garage parking rates in downtown Seattle and downtown Bellevue range from \$20 to \$30 per day; \$12.50 per day provides a less expensive alternative to parking downtown and incentivizes the use of public transportation.

First/Last-Mile Solutions

Staff are continuing to explore first/last-mile solutions to provide better access to the new light rail station for Mercer Island community members. Bike lockers and bike racks will be installed at the new Town Center Parking Area to encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation. Staff are also in conversations with King County Metro regarding the potential to reevaluate bus lines and bus stops on the Island, many of which saw service reductions or were eliminated post-COVID.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will need at least four months to implement and launch a parking payment/registration system for both on-street parking in the Town Center and at the new parking area.

Code Changes

Staff will return to the City Council with an ordinance that establishes the framework for paid parking by amending Chapter 10 MICC. The ordinance would remove language that specifies parking restrictions on each block face and give the City the authority to erect official signs that establish time limits.

Additionally, staff will return to the City Council with a resolution amending the Fee Schedule. The rate for parking on-street and at the new parking area will be established in the Fee Schedule, as well as the provision of two hours of free parking. Both the rate and the provision of free parking will be subject to annual review as part of the Fee Schedule adoption. Staff will continuously evaluate parking usage data from the mobile application and will present findings to the City Council.

The Town Center Parking Area is scheduled to open in July 2025. Staff anticipate there will be an implementation gap between the opening of the parking area and the activation of the parking payment/registration system.

Mobile Application

Implementing the parking payment/registration system will require the use of a mobile application. Staff recommend using ParkMobile for its mobile application. ParkMobile has a large presence in King County through Diamond Parking. On Mercer Island, the Island Square garage uses the Park Mobile app for parking registration. Notably, ParkMobile will not charge a transaction fee for free parking under two hours. For paid parking, ParkMobile would charge a \$0.45 transaction fee that would be paid by the user.

Parking Signage

The City will need to replace most of the parking signage in Town Center, as the existing signage will need to be updated to reflect the new regulations. Additional signage providing directions on how to register a vehicle using ParkMobile will be installed in the right-of-way by City crews as part of the signage update.

Community Engagement & Outreach Campaign

Staff will implement a comprehensive outreach campaign over the four-month implementation timeframe to communicate the changes to the Town Center Parking regulations. Staff will post updates on the [Town Center Parking Plan](#) Let's Talk page, provide outreach to the business community and the Chamber of Commerce, promote information on social media and in the MI Weekly.

Revenue from Paid Parking

Staff recommend that revenue generated from the parking program first be directed to support parking enforcement and parking signage. Revenue that exceeds the cost of enforcement and signage will remain in the City's General Fund for use and appropriation at the direction of the City Council.

Parking Enforcement

Once implemented, it would be under the discretion of the Police Department to issue warnings before citations for violations of the new parking regulations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report and provide feedback.