FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 14, 2017

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Supporting Neighborhood Parking Options
City proposes legislation to allow flexible parking choices

SEATTLE – Today, the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) posted draft legislation to improve parking availability in neighborhoods by providing flexibility for building owners to make parking facilities with excess capacity available for public use. These policies will help more residents, consumers and visitors have better access to parking across the city.

As recommended by the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA), this legislation also clarifies existing regulations that provide flexibility for residential projects to tailor their supply of off-street parking in accordance with demand in Urban Villages, Urban Centers and other areas served by frequent transit. By reducing the provision of excess parking, this policy decreases construction costs and encourages more housing in communities best served by transit, lowering the cost of building housing overall.

“We are working to address housing affordability from all angles, including lowering the cost to build housing,” said Nathan Torgelson, director of SDCI. “By lowering the cost of construction and encouraging more housing near public transit, we will make Seattle more accessible and affordable to everyone who lives and works here.”

In Urban Centers and Urban Villages with frequent transit service, we’ve found that 87% of housing units are in developments where parking is provided. However, a recent King County study that surveyed hundreds of residential buildings countywide (including 95 in Seattle) found that 35% of residential parking garage spaces were not in use. This proposal aims to remove code barriers to allow more daily and overnight use of these unused off-street parking spaces, creating more parking opportunities for residents, visitors, and shoppers to store their vehicles off-street and walk, bike, or ride transit to get around town.

SDCI’s proposal will:

- Promote efficient use of off-street parking in garages to expand neighborhood parking availability
- Establish limits on the number of parking spaces that may be provided for, or converted to flexible use
• Clarify existing rules that provide flexibility for projects to supply parking as needed in areas with scheduled frequent transit service
• Allow limited surface parking for car-share vehicles in building setbacks
• Align bicycle parking requirements with industry standards (quantity, location, security)
• Align parking requirements in Northgate with those in other Urban Centers citywide
• Allow flexibility in the supply of parking in association with income-restricted housing, including housing for people with disabilities

This legislation clarifies the City’s approach to parking in transit served areas to be consistent with King County Metro policies and practices for bus scheduling and operations. It also reflects the City’s recent investments in transit service, including the 2014 Proposition 1, which provided funding to improve frequency, reliability, and the span of service hours each day on up to 60 bus lines serving the city of Seattle. Maintaining parking supply flexibility will continue to support housing production in the neighborhoods closest to robust transit service.

In coordination with other agencies, Seattle has made significant investments in transit options and service, including the voter-approved Levy to Move Seattle and Sound Transit 3 light rail expansion:

• The Levy to Move Seattle, a 9-year, $930 million levy adopted in 2015, provides funding to improve safety for all travelers, maintain our streets and bridges, and invest in reliable, affordable travel options for a growing city, including buildout of RapidRide frequent transit corridors across the City.
• Approved by voters in 2014, the Seattle Transportation Benefit District has added Rapid-Ride service and improved bus frequency in many areas. Seattle has added over 270,000 annual service hours, improving frequency on 38 routes.
• By 2021, light rail will extend further north, connecting a segment from the U District to Northgate, with plans to add new lines into Ballard and West Seattle

A public comment and SEPA appeal period runs until October 5.

Please submit comments on the proposal to:

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