

Truck Tractor Parking Community Meetings

City of Seattle, Port of Seattle/Northwest Seaport Alliance

August 2022

Background

Residents of South Park, Georgetown, and other Duwamish Valley communities have long felt frustrated about the impacts of truck tractor parking in their residential neighborhoods. To address these concerns, the South Harbor Truck Parking Work Group was established in 2009. The Work Group brought together the Port of Seattle, truck drivers, and local residents to discuss the challenges and realities of truck parking and routing. The collaborative process resulted in 18 specific policy recommendations to address various aspects of truck parking and routing in residential neighborhoods, including the development of truck parking in City of Seattle right-of-way. While several of these policies have been implemented, some have not, and the impacts of truck parking on South Park and Georgetown remain.

The sudden closure of the West Seattle High Bridge in March 2020 disrupted normal travel patterns and resulted in an increase in vehicular traffic through many neighborhoods, particularly in South Park and Georgetown. Along with increased congestion and vehicular traffic, the closure came with the need to quickly assemble funds to repair the bridge, provide alternate travel options, and to ameliorate the burdens borne by the neighborhoods most impacted by detour traffic. To secure \$9 million in emergency funding, the City of Seattle entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Port of Seattle and agreed to carry out a variety of projects related to port operations.

Included in the MOU was this longstanding issue for community groups – a need to find appropriate parking locations for short-haul truck drivers. In July 2022, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) introduced legislation to the Seattle City Council to establish specific industrially-zoned areas where truck tractors would be permitted to park overnight with the intent to reduce the amount that park in residential communities and to keep truck tractors closer to the Port and reduce the environmental impacts.

As part of the MOU and outreach process for this legislation, SDOT sought feedback and commentary from the communities most likely to be impacted by the proposed changes: South Park and Georgetown. In July 2022, an in-person meeting was held in each neighborhood as well as a third online meeting. SDOT and NWSA staff presented on the goals of the legislation, the status of the Work Group's recommendations, and listened to community feedback regarding both. The following themes emerged from these discussions.

Themes

The mechanics of enforcement

At all three meetings, community members expressed concern about the impacts that enforcement of the proposed legislation may have on truck drivers. Several commented that they would like to see SDOT and the NWSA reach out directly to truck drivers and to prioritize education over enforcement. When enforcement is necessary, some hoped that the trucking companies would be the ones held accountable, not the drivers.

Community members also voiced their frustration about the lack of enforcement regarding extended RV parking, which many said has increased in recent years. Some attendees commented that SDOT/SPD's inability to enforce existing law made them skeptical that the agency could enforce new rules.

Safety and truck routing

In addition to concerns about overnight truck parking, many community members spoke about traffic safety and truck routing. Meeting attendees in both neighborhoods shared their experiences with trucks speeding and driving recklessly down their streets. In South Park, attendees described several corridors where reckless driving is particularly common: S Cloverdale St, Dallas Ave S, and 14th Ave S. Community members at all meetings described instances of trucks driving down residential streets that are too small, causing damage to adjacent properties.

Trucks and RVs

Residents shared that the negative impacts of truck parking continue to have consequences for their neighborhoods. Some residents commented that parked trucks pose a safety concern as they have often "rolled forward" and damaged buildings. One frustrated resident said that parked trucks "block the neighborhood" hiding houses and businesses and that, overall, they feel like a "big giant blob in our neighborhood."

Some meeting attendees said that many of the negatives associated with unwanted truck tractors had been replaced by unwanted RVs. One community member mentioned that much of the "seediness" that trucks once brought—drugs, sex work—had increased as a result of more RVs parking in their neighborhood. Some community members expressed a preference for parked truck tractors over RVs—though ideally, they would prefer neither.

Community outreach and engagement

Attendance was low, despite a large amount of promotion for the meetings. Although, there were interpreters at the events, attendees made the case that holding the meetings only in English may have had a negative impact on attendance, particularly given the linguistic diversity of their communities.

The outreach effort was met with skepticism. Because of low turnout, one community member made the case that SDOT was unaware of the magnitude of the problem and that further engagement with the community was essential. Several attendees expressed bemusement at the fact that many of the Work Group's original proposals from 2009 had not yet been addressed. Some feared they would have to wait another decade before SDOT/NWSA returned. This led others to question exactly how community feedback would be incorporated in SDOT/NWSA efforts to address the problem of truck parking moving forward.

The low attendance numbers lead us to believe that this topic is not as pressing as it was since the last time we checked in with community. While it is still a problem, other issues have taken greater precedence since the beginning of the pandemic.

Next steps

As a result of this community outreach effort, we will:

- **Amend the legislation** - There was concern about how the outreach around choosing parking areas in the right-of-way would be determined. This has led to amending the legislation that includes specifics for outreach and criteria for choosing future sites. The forthcoming Director's Rule will be open for public comment and feedback before it is finalized.
- **Conduct Driver Education**- We will reach out to truck drivers to let them know about the new overnight parking that was created by the legislation to draw trucks away from residential neighborhoods, like Georgetown and South Park.