



City of Seattle
Disposable Bag Green Fee & Foam Food Container Ban
Overview & Transition Plan
June 18, 2008

Disposable Bag Green Fee

Seattleites use 360 million throwaway paper and plastic shopping bags every year.

- That equals 8,500 tons of greenhouse gases.
- Almost 240 million bags end up in the garbage, almost 4 percent of all residential garbage, by volume.
- Compared to plastic, paper bags have four times the environmental impact — from logging, manufacture, distribution and disposal.

To encourage shoppers to switch to reusable bags and cut down on waste, Mayor Greg Nickels and City Council President Richard Conlin are proposing a 20-cent green fee on disposable shopping bags, both paper and plastic.

- Subject to City Council action expected in July, the fee would begin Jan. 1, 2009. It would be charged at grocery, drug and convenience stores — the source of almost 75 percent of all bags. This will save 4,000 tons of greenhouse gas per year, that's the same as taking 665 cars off the road
- The fee would not apply to bags used inside stores to contain bulk items; bags for prepared food, such as deli or bakery goods; newspapers; and dry-cleaner bags
- Merchants will retain 5 cents per bag for taxes and administrative costs. Businesses that gross less than \$1 million will keep the entire 20-cent fee.
- City revenue — 15 cents per bag — will be used to keep solid waste rates down and support waste prevention, recycling, city cleanup and environmental education programs.

Foam Food Container Ban

Mayor Nickels and Council President Conlin also propose a ban on the use of expanded polystyrene (EPS, sometimes called “Styrofoam”) containers and cups in all restaurants.

- Subject to City Council action expected in July, the ban would begin on Jan. 1, 2009.
- It would apply to all food service businesses and include some of the foam packaging used in grocery stores, such as meat and vegetable trays.
- Food service businesses are encouraged to switch now to compostable and recyclable alternatives, which are already available from local distributors.
- The proposal requires all food service businesses to switch from one-time-use, disposable plastic and plastic-coated paper food and beverage containers and utensils to fully compostable and recyclable substitutes by July 1, 2010.

Transition Plan

During the rollout and first year of these programs, the City will:

- Set aside up to \$1 million to support distribution of free or low-cost reusable bags.
- Establish business advisory committees representing retail and restaurant sectors.
- Help food service businesses work together for lower prices on new compostable products.
- Make significant investments in public education to promote reusable bag use and tell customers about composting programs at home and at restaurants.
- Set aside funding for joint promotions with stores and restaurants.
- Provide complete program information on the Web.
- Reach shoppers and diners using regular direct mail.
- Establish programs to make sure low-income families and the elderly have the reusable bags they need.

For more information see <http://www.seattle.gov/util/bagsandfoam>