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Subject: Application and permitting process for Shuttle Vehicle Permits, Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones and Shared Transit Stops	Code and Section Reference: Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 3.12.020; Chapters 11.14, 11.16, 11.23, 11.72		
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1.0 References

- 1.1. Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Chapter 11.14 – Definitions
- 1.2. SMC Chapter 11.16 – Director of Transportation, Authority
- 1.3. SMC Chapter 11.23 – Permits
- 1.4. SMC Chapter 11.72 – Traffic

2.0 Background

- 2.1. Several Seattle-area employers operate shuttle services for their employees. Employer shuttles are not allowed to use transit stops operated by public transit agencies, unless permitted by the process outlined in this Rule. Normally, employer shuttles are only allowed to pick-up and drop-off passengers on-street at these types of locations: 3-minute passenger load zones, 30-minute load zones, and designated Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones. Passenger and 30-minute load zones can be used by any vehicles if they abide by the signed time limits, while designated Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones may only be used by shuttles with valid City of Seattle Shuttle Vehicle Permits. These general time-limited load zones can, however, sometimes be unreliable for employer shuttles due to conflicts with other allowed users.
- 2.2. In April 2017, SDOT and King County Metro began operating a pilot program allowing private employer-provided shuttles to share a dozen existing public transit stops with two employer partners. The goals were to: assess transit operations at the shared stops, promote safety for all users, maximize ridership on public transit and employer shuttles, and limit public curbspace allocated to shuttle loading zones. The pilot program evaluation found that transit service operations at all shared stops in the program, including some stops with high transit service usage, were satisfactory. Further, shared use did not degrade overall arterial operations for all modes. The evaluation also recommended best practices for the types of stops that should be considered as shared transit stops going forward which reflect the information requested as part of the application process in this Rule, and affirmed that the pilot program should be made permanent.
- 2.3. In 2021, as the region endeavors to recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic, SDOT staff identified that employer shuttles could become increasingly important post-COVID, as

employers begin to bring employees back to in-person worksites and public health concerns continue to linger with regard to public transit. Recent customer surveys indicate that many people envision driving alone more and riding public transit less, compared to pre-COVID patterns, a trend which runs counter to the City's aggressive goals to reduce drive-alone trips as part of our climate commitment. A well-managed employer shuttle program could help to reduce drive-alone rates post-COVID.

- 2.4. Upon legislative approval of the Employer Shared Transit Stop Program in 2022, shuttles would be approved to establish new Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones and to share select transit stops through the application and review process described below beginning later that year.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1. "**Bus zone**" means a portion of the roadway along the curb that is reserved for loading and unloading of authorized transit agencies' coaches, permitted shuttle vehicles, or school buses when authorized and designated by SDOT. (SMC 11.14.070). No person shall stop, stand, or park a vehicle other than authorized public transit agency buses or shuttle vehicles displaying a valid shuttle vehicle permit and authorized to use the particular zone in a zone established for the specific use. Violators may be impounded without prior notice. (SMC 11.72.050)
- 3.2. "**Farside**" means a location for a bus zone just past a cross-street intersection, relative direction of travel.
- 3.3. "**Midblock**" means a location for a bus zone in-between adjacent cross-streets, but not at an intersection.
- 3.4. "**Nearside**" means a location for a bus zone just before a cross-street intersection, relative direction of travel.
- 3.5. "**Shared transit stop**" means a bus zone where a permitted employer may operate shuttles and where public transit coaches usually load and unload.
- 3.6. "**Shuttle vehicle**" means every motor vehicle designed for the purpose of carrying passengers (having a seating capacity for 11 or more persons) used regularly to transport persons of any organized, charitable, commercial, institutional, or residential organization over a fixed or predetermined route, and possessing a valid shuttle bus loading permit. (SMC 11.14.567)
- 3.7. "**Shuttle Vehicle Load Zone**" means a portion of a street designated by a sign and white paint markings or other traffic control devices that is reserved for the exclusive use of shuttle vehicles possessing a valid shuttle vehicle permit. (SMC 11.14.568) No person shall stop, stand, or park a vehicle other than a shuttle vehicle displaying a valid shuttle vehicle permit in a shuttle vehicle load zone during the hours the zone restriction is in effect; provided that shuttle vehicle load zone restrictions are not effective on Sundays or parking holidays, except where otherwise indicated by sign posting for the zone. (SMC 11.72.357)
- 3.8. "**Transit coach**" (i.e., bus) includes every vehicle designed for carrying more than ten persons and used for the transportation of persons by King County's Metro Transit, Snohomish County's Community Transit, Pierce County's Pierce Transit, the Regional

Transit Authority (i.e. Sound Transit), or other authorized transit agency. (SMC 11.14.670)

3.9. “**Transit stop**” is synonymous with “bus zone” in section 3.1 above.

4.0 Permit Application and Review

4.1. Shuttle Vehicle Permit - Any shuttle vehicle seeking to use a Shuttle Vehicle Load Zone or shared transit stop shall apply for and receive a Shuttle Vehicle Permit for each vehicle which may operate shuttle services within the City of Seattle. Permit applications shall include the shuttle operator’s business name, address, business license number, status of driver union representation (optional to disclose), applicant contact information, and vehicle license numbers for any shuttles intending to use either type of zone. Permit applicants should also include updated shuttle operations information included in the Section 6.4 regarding Data. Issued permits shall be posted in each shuttle vehicle windshield that will be using Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones or shared transit stops.

4.2. Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones – *(approximately 5-15 hours of staff analysis per location)*

4.2.1. Existing Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones - Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones are available to any shuttle displaying a Shuttle Vehicle Permit and are not exclusive to any shuttle provider. Should existing zones become unreliable to users due to multiple vehicles or long dwell times, SDOT may work with the employers using a zone in question to expand the zone, or assign one or more shuttles to nearby curbspace uses.

4.2.2. New Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones - If a shuttle operator wishes for a new curbspace location be reserved for shuttles when other existing curbspace designations such as passenger-load zones or 30-minute load zones are insufficient or unreliable enough for shuttle needs, the shuttle operator may apply to establish a new Shuttle Vehicle Load Zone. Permit applications shall include: business name, address, business license number, applicant contact information, requested block by street and nearby cross-streets, and a business case explaining why a new Shuttle Vehicle Load Zone is requested that includes: scheduled hours of use, frequency of shuttle use, routes, and vehicle type(s) that will use the proposed shuttle load zone. As part of the review process, SDOT staff will research existing and past curbspace usage along the requested blockface, adjacent land uses and conditions, local area transportation operations, and other transportation demands in and around the requested curbspace area. SDOT will approve, deny, or suggest alternate curbspace designations or locations in order to meet the needs of the shuttle operator for passenger loading needs. Establishing new Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones may result in shuttle operator reimbursement to SDOT for the costs of signs and curb markings according to the fees in the Transit and Mobility Permit Fee Schedule.

4.3. Shared Transit Stop Permit – *(approximately 8-25 hours of staff analysis per location)*

4.3.1. A shuttle operator interested in loading and unloading passengers at a designated public transit stop must apply for and receive a Shared Transit Stop Permit.

4.3.1.1. Calls for Shared Transit Stops applications will occur upon Program launch and again each year in line with the availability of Shuttle Vehicle Permits. Each employer may apply for a maximum of twenty new stops per calendar year. Denied applications will count towards this amount. This limit will reset at the start of each calendar year.

4.3.2. Shared Stop Caps

4.3.2.1. Employer – SDOT will limit the number of permitted transit stops an employer will be allowed to use to a maximum of 50 transit stops within the City of Seattle. If an employer has reached this maximum and wishes to apply for an additional stop, they would need to cease sharing an existing stop in order to add the new stop to their operations.

4.3.2.2. Total Citywide – No more than 250 transit stops (i.e. less than 10% of all transit stops within the City) may be shared at any time by all employers combined. If this maximum is reached, new applications will be taken only when an employer has ceased operations at a stop through a permit expiring or cancelling an existing permit. A single stop shared by more than one employer counts as one shared stop for this count, but counts towards each employer's total separately in Section 4.3.2.1.

4.3.2.3. These caps on both applications in Section 4.3.1.1 and for shared stops in Section 4.3.2 will be reassessed by SDOT two years after the launch of the program and may be adjusted through a revision to this Director's Rule.

4.3.3. Zones Excluded from Program

4.3.3.1. RapidRide stations - RapidRide stations are some of the busiest zones in the transit system, with buses arriving every few minutes. These transit stops also have branded facilities, a higher level of passenger activity, and capital improvements by Metro and SDOT.

4.3.3.2. Bus Layover/Terminal - Transit layover zones and route termini are identified through curb signage and are needed to provide their full curb extent to transit operations only.

4.3.3.3. Transit Lanes - Stops located along transit-only lanes, including 3rd Ave in downtown Seattle, would require the shuttle to operate using lanes that are already reserved exclusively for transit vehicles. Transit lanes are marked by roadway and adjacent signage as "BUS ONLY" and may also have red markings. Shuttles may not use travel lanes designated as transit-only within the City of Seattle, whether to access passenger stops or as part of their regular or incidental operations.

4.3.3.4. Loading Location – Transit stops located in-lane on streets with a single travel lane in that direction shall not qualify as a shared transit stop with employer shuttles due to potential traffic conflicts.

- 4.3.3.5. Bike Lanes – Transit stops that have an adjacent, non-protected (i.e. “in-street minor separation”) bicycle lane shall be excluded from sharing due to operational and safety concerns.
- 4.3.3.6. High Volume Stops – Transit stops, which due to their existing levels of transit bus volumes, passenger activity, or zone length will be excluded due to existing increased vehicle and passenger activity. In general, the shorter or busier the transit stop with existing bus services, the less able it would be to share employer shuttles without harming all vehicles serving that zone. Depending on zone length and boarding passengers, this limit is reached around six to ten transit buses per hour, but also varies by the frequency and other factors of the requested shuttle service.
- 4.3.4. **Information Requested as part of Shared Stop Applications** – In addition to the requirements listed above, applications for shared transit stops must include the following to determine compatible shared use with existing transit service:
 - 4.3.4.1. Zone Number – Current King County Metro-designated zone number.
 - 4.3.4.2. Street – The street along which the zone is located.
 - 4.3.4.3. Cross-Street – The nearest cross-street to the transit stop.
 - 4.3.4.4. Stop Location – The alignment of the stop to the nearest intersection (Farside, Nearside, Mid-block – see Section 3.0 for definitions.).
 - 4.3.4.5. Number of travel lanes – Lane configuration at the bus stop which informs if an in-travel lane bus stop is eligible for employer shuttles.
 - 4.3.4.6. Type of Bus loading
 - 4.3.4.6.1. Out-of-travel lane – buses pull over from travel lane to serve bus stop.
 - 4.3.4.6.2. In-travel lane – buses stay in travel lane to serve bus stop.
 - 4.3.4.7. Neighborhood – The neighborhood name of the bus stop location to give sense of traffic-generating activity in the area.
 - 4.3.4.8. Sidewalk condition – A description of the waiting/boarding area at the bus stop including condition of the concrete, planting strip and adjacent landscaping, trees, sidewalk slope, sidewalk width, etc.
 - 4.3.4.9. Proximity to Link or RapidRide station – Bus stops nearby Link or RapidRide stations or similar mobility hubs may be ideal for private services such as employer shuttles to connect to other transit services, but may need to be thoughtfully integrated between all public and private transportation services available in the nearby area.
 - 4.3.4.10. Proximity to existing shuttle vehicle zones – Considering the proximity to existing shuttle zone informs the possibility of lower congestion at a specified shared stop if there is capacity at an adjacent (same blockface) shuttle zone.

- 4.3.4.11. Transit routes serving requested stop – The transit route or routes serving the requested stop. For a specific public transit route, the number of stops in common between a shuttle and route should be evaluated. If there are a great number of common stops between shuttles and a transit route, then a specific requested stop may not be ideal for an employer shuttle as an existing transit route already serves this travel market.
- 4.3.4.12. Bus stop customer amenities – Existing customer amenities including shelters, benches, street furniture, real time information signs, trash cans, and lighting that improve the waiting experience for customers will be evaluated.
- 4.3.4.13. Routing – The pathway or alignment of the entire employer shuttle route, including layover locations, to understand turning movements before and after service a bus stop as well as to recommend alternative bus stop or shuttle loading zones, should an application be rejected.
- 4.3.4.14. Frequency – The frequency of the shuttle route will inform the expected congestion with the frequency of public transit at a requested bus stop.
- 4.3.4.15. Peak direction – Depending on the time of day, a bus stop may have less congestion and deemed acceptable for an employer shuttle if the peak demand is reverse that of public transit.
- 4.3.4.16. Span of service – The hours that the employer shuttle will be in service transporting passengers.
- 4.3.4.17. Ridership – The estimated ridership, or for renewal applications the measured ridership, of shuttle passengers boarding or deboarding at the stop.
- 4.3.4.18. Vehicle type – The type and specifications of vehicle including width, length and the number of boarding doors used for an employee shuttle will inform the expected congestion at the bus stop.
- 4.3.4.19. Average distance between shuttle stops within Seattle – The number of stops per route informs if an existing transit route already serves this travel market.
- 4.3.4.20. Boarding policy – The proof of payment system for boarding shuttle riders informs the boarding and dwell time. If customers must show a badge or scan a pass to board, the accumulative boarding time may be longer.
- 4.3.4.21. Seating policy – The seating policy informs the length of time a shuttle will sit before departing the bus stop. If the shuttle operator must wait until all passengers are seated, more delay at the bus stop can be expected.
- 4.3.4.22. Licensed operator – Contact information for the shuttle operators (bus companies) if not operated directly by the employer.

- 4.3.4.23. Applicant Contact Information – Contact information for the applicant submitter, developing routing and stop locations.
- 4.3.4.24. Stakeholder Contact Information – If different from above, contact information for the employer transportation or communications office, conveying route information to employees or with the general public.
- 4.3.4.25. Dispatch Contact Information – Contact information for shuttle operations dispatch center or supervisor, for operational issues that occur during the day-to-day operations of the shuttle, if known at the time of application.
- 4.3.5. **Requests for Common Stops** – Should multiple employers apply to share the same transit stop, SDOT will evaluate the existing transit service levels and capacity of the stop in question, as well as the amount and frequency of proposed shuttle use of the requested stop. SDOT may allow multiple employers to share the stop or may allow only the employer with the lowest potential impact to the requested stop and reject other requests. Should employers propose similar shuttle service levels but SDOT determines only one employer may satisfactorily add the requested stop, SDOT may select one employer for sharing that stop by lottery. SDOT may also work with requesting employers to identify other types of curbspace besides shared transit stops, per Section 4.3.8.
- 4.3.6. **King County Metro Review and Initial Recommendation** – Upon reviewing applications for shared stops, SDOT will share and confer with staff from King County Metro for their input on SDOT's initial recommendation, to conditionally approve, deny, or request additional information. SDOT will communicate its decision with the applicant, and coordinate information and application flow between the employer and King County Metro.
- 4.3.7. **Shared Stop Outreach** – Upon conditional approval for a shared stop, the applicant will work with SDOT and King County Metro to post a notice via a SDOT-approved form on the applied-for stop for a minimum of ten business days. This notice will contain information about the shuttle service levels and hours of operation, and include contact information for the employer and shuttle operator, SDOT staff, and King County Metro staff. Results of the outreach may impact SDOT's initial recommendation and may lead to further revisions of the application under Section 4.3.8.
- 4.3.8. **Revised Application and Curbspace Alternatives** – SDOT staff may request additional information from the applicant to make a final decision to approve or deny the application. SDOT may work to suggest a nearby transit stop for sharing, if capacity for shuttle use is available, or suggest other curbspace options for passenger loading and unloading.
- 4.3.9. **Permit Issuance** – Before a shuttle may use a shared transit stop, a permit shall be issued by SDOT. Before a permit is issued, SDOT will verify that outreach was completed, and that all applicable review and permit fees were paid. Verbal or electronic staff approval of a shared stop is not approval for use of a shared stop until all fees have been paid and the applicant has received the permit. Permits are issued for one year for a specific transit stop and a specific employer and are not transferrable. Any known changes to shuttle service using a permitted

shared stop during the life of the permit shall be communicated to SDOT within five business days and may be reviewed per Section 6.5.

- 4.3.10. **Pilot Program Transition** – Upon legislative approval of the permanent Employer Shared Transit Stop Program, any existing stops in operation as part of the pilot program will be transitioned to permanent status per Section 7.0 as renewals and will not require new applications by employers that participated in the pilot. Pilot stops will not count against employer’s limit on the inaugural yearly application review cycle but will count towards their total as given under Section 4.3.2 and will count towards the citywide limit as given under Section 4.3.2.2.

5.0 Fees

- 5.1. Fees are incurred for the hourly application review by SDOT staff, Shuttle Vehicle Permit, Shared Transit Stop usage, and reimbursement for signage changes in the right-of-way to establish Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones. Consult the current Transit and Mobility Fee Schedule for fee amounts.
- 5.2. Per Sections 4.3.9 and 7.2.2, all fees shall be paid before permits are issued in order for employers to use Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones and approved Employer Shared Transit Stops.

6.0 Operating Guidelines

- 6.1. **Permit Conditions** – As part of Shuttle Vehicle Permit applications, shuttle operators shall sign an agreement with SDOT, agreeing to indemnify for use of the public right-of-way. Shuttles shall also agree to comply with all traffic laws, agree to keep dwell times at shared stops to a maximum of 60 seconds, and to respond to communications from SDOT or other partners in a timely manner.
- 6.2. **Business License** – All employers and shuttle operators are required to possess a current City of Seattle business license.
- 6.3. **UTC & Vehicle Registration** – All shuttle vehicles will be registered with the Washington State Department of Licensing, and all operators registered with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC).
- 6.4. **Data** – As part of permit conditions, the employer agrees to share relevant data on a regular basis about the shuttle route serving the Shuttle Vehicle Load Zone or shared transit stop, including but not limited to routing pathways, service levels, delay and crash incidents, and passenger utilization. Data such as these can help SDOT determine if Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones are being appropriately designated, and that use of shared transit stops are not negatively impacting transit or arterial operations. SDOT encourages employers to remain in regular communication about these data needs, their cadence, and the quantitative and qualitative information that is available to assess performance of employer shuttle operations. SDOT acknowledges that transit data standards continue to advance rapidly; we may update this rule to reflect changes, and we will engage in regular conversations with each employer as part of their application and renewal processes.
- 6.5. **Changes to Service** – Any changes to shuttle service including service levels, span of service, vehicle size, or passenger loading practices at shared transit stops shall be

communicated to SDOT at least one month before the change. SDOT reserves the right to modify, cancel, or relocate use of a shared transit stop due to changes in shuttle service occurring after the original permit application. Cessation of the use of a shared transit stop will credit that employer towards their application review cycle limit, employer total limit, and the total citywide limit of shared stops for all potential employers.

7.0 Annual Permit Review and Renewal

7.1. **Shuttle Vehicle Load Zones** – Designation of a Shuttle Vehicle Load Zone is considered permanent until SDOT establishes a different designation of that space, including other curbspace uses or right-of-way needs.

7.2. Shared Transit Stop Permits

7.2.1. **Vesting** – Shared stop permits, while issued for one year, do not vest any rights to the applicant or user during the permitted year or in perpetuity, and may be changed or revoked during the period of the permit (according to Sections 6.5 or 8.4) or at the time of annual renewal.

7.2.2. **Annual Review** – *(approximately 5-15 hours of staff analysis per location)*
Approximately one month before the expiration of a Shared Transit Stop permit, SDOT will work with the permit holder to assess their use of the permit and conditions for permit renewal. Using the most recent data available about transit service and roadway conditions, some of the factors considered in analyzing and approving renewal include:

7.2.2.1. Transit vehicle volumes – Increasing or decreasing levels of service at transit vehicles sharing the stop with shuttle service, including any changes to the transit route network or shuttle network.

7.2.2.2. Passenger boarding and deboarding volumes – Current levels of transit passenger boarding and deboarding that may impact the capacity of the shared stop.

7.2.2.3. Stop configuration – Including length of zone, stop amenities, and condition of adjacent sidewalk and rear door bus pad.

7.2.2.4. Complaints – Complaints, observations, or comments from transit customers, adjacent property owners, or other users of the right-of-way about the performance of shuttle vehicles at the shared stop. Repeated impacts to transit service or adjacent arterial operations by shuttle vehicles may lead to denial of permit renewal and may impact renewal of permits for other shared stops used by that employer or shuttle operator.

7.2.2.5. Utilization – If a permitted shuttle operator has not started or has ceased operations at a shared stop at the time of permit renewal, SDOT may deny renewal and open the shared stop for application by other employers.

- 7.2.2.6. Unpaid fees – Outstanding unpaid fees for this or other Shuttle Vehicle or Employer Shared Transit Stop locations, or other unpaid fees otherwise related to this program.

8.0 Conditions for Change or Revocation of Permit

- 8.1. **Temporary Change of Permit** – If temporary construction or other activity impacts the ability for shuttles to share a transit stop for a limited time, SDOT will contact the permit holder and endeavor to accommodate shuttle loading at an alternate location for a defined period of time. After stop conditions return to normal, the permit holder may resume operations at the shared transit stop.
- 8.2. **Permanent Change of Permit** – If an employer contacts SDOT regarding changes to shuttle service under Section 6.5, SDOT will re-issue a permit and reset the permit to one year from the new issuance date.
- 8.3. **Changes to Roadway Configuration** – Excluding emergency work or repair, should SDOT or another public or private entity plan to construct a project or change in roadway operations impacting the temporary or permanent use of a shared transit stop, SDOT will endeavor to contact the permit holder as soon as the potential change is known, or at least one month before the planned change is to occur. SDOT will analyze the factors in Section 6.5 and will endeavor to relocate the shared use activity to an adjacent transit stop or other curbspace. For permanent changes, this new permit will be considered as an annual renewal under Section 7.2.2 and will be issued for one year.
- 8.4. **Revocation of Permit** – Upon receipt of a safety or operational complaint that identifies an issue that may endanger shuttle passengers, transit vehicles or transit passengers, or other right-of-way users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, freight, or general-purpose vehicles, SDOT may revoke the issued permit and the employer shall cease sharing the formerly permitted stop within 24 hours of receiving notice that the permit has been revoked, and shall confirm to SDOT that the use has ceased. No fees will be returned or reimbursed upon revoking the permit or permits at issue. Violations and or use revocations at one stop may be considered for other shared stops used by the employer or operator at time of their annual renewal under Section 7.2.2.4.

9.0 Resources

- SDOT Employer Shared Transit Stop Program:
<https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/transit-program/employer-shared-transit-stop-pilot>
- Seattle Parking Map:
<http://web6.seattle.gov/SDOT/SeattleParkingMap/seattleparkingmap.htm>
- Seattle Neighborhood Map:
<http://clerk.seattle.gov/~public/nmaps/fullcit2.htm>
- Local transit providers
 - King County Metro bus:
<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/schedules-maps.aspx>
 - Sound Transit ST Express regional bus: <https://www.soundtransit.org/schedules>
 - Community Transit commuter bus service:
[https://www.communitytransit.org/busservice/schedules#seattle-\(downtown\)](https://www.communitytransit.org/busservice/schedules#seattle-(downtown))

- One Bus Away: <http://pugetsound.onebusaway.org>
 - *(Provides information such as zone number, transit route information, and current trip schedule serving each stop)*

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