

SUMMARY and FISCAL NOTE

Department:	Dept. Contact:	CBO Contact:
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1. BILL SUMMARY

Legislation Title: AN ORDINANCE relating to transportation; providing for the submission to the qualified electors of the City at an election to be held on November 5, 2024, a proposition authorizing the City to levy regular property taxes for up to eight years in excess of the limitation on levies in chapter 84.55 RCW for the purpose of providing City facilities and services, including transportation improvements, both capital and operating, with possible debt financing; creating a new oversight committee; applying RCW 84.36.381’s senior citizens and disabled persons exemption; and ratifying and confirming certain prior acts.

Summary and Background of the Legislation: This ordinance would submit an 8-year levy lid lift proposal to the voters of Seattle for their approval on November 5, 2024, general election ballot. The proposal would renew and expand the previous Levy to Move Seattle. Under the authority of RCW 84.55, the levy renewal proposal would authorize property tax collection up to \$175,000,000 in the first year and an estimated total of \$1,450,000,000 of revenue over 8 years that would be dedicated exclusively to transportation purposes. If the new levy is approved, Council must appropriate at least \$50,740,000 of General Fund revenues to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) for transportation purposes in the first year and adjusted for inflation or 3%, whichever is lower, each year thereafter. If the annual minimum General Fund amount is not appropriated, then the City cannot collect levy proceeds the following year unless a three-fourths super-majority of the City Council determines that economic or financial conditions prevent the Council from making such an appropriation. If the transportation levy is approved by the voters, the 2025 total regular tax limit would increase by approximately \$0.59/\$1,000 in assessed value. Qualifying low-income seniors, veterans and people with disabilities who own their principal residence within the City of Seattle would be exempt from the levied amount as authorized under RCW 84.36.381. In King County, the exemption currently extends to homeowners above age 61 or with a disability rating of at least 80%, with a household income under \$84,000. Revenue projections in this ordinance and fiscal note are inclusive of anticipated exemptions offered under RCW 84.36.381.

This proposal would build on the previous levy’s efforts to maintain a safe and efficient transportation system, while also doing more to invest in the future transportation needs of our city. Programmatic transportation improvement would be focused in the project and program categories as described in ordinance Section 6 and further elaborated on in Attachment A to the ordinance.

The Levy to Move Seattle, approved by voters in 2015, provided \$930 million of SDOT’s local revenue and has allowed the City to leverage an additional \$400 million in Federal and State grants along with other partnership funds. The Levy to Move Seattle funded significant

transportation system maintenance and upgrades, including items such as paving 250 lane-miles of streets, rehabilitation or seismic retrofit of 16 bridges, replacement of 30,888 street signs, enhancement of seven transit corridors, and construction of 250 blocks of new sidewalk.

In addition, the costs of delivering services have grown at a much faster rate than revenue growth. Since 2015, the Consumer Price Index has increased by 45% and the Mortenson construction index for the Seattle Market, which is based on the actual costs of the major elements of construction contracts around the state (e.g., labor, asphalt, concrete, and structural steel), has risen by approximately 66%.

At the same time, the City continues to see tremendous growth in population while SDOT's existing infrastructure continues to age and is increasingly strained to meet the changing transportation patterns of Seattle residents, employers and conveyors of goods, including the exports and imports moved through the City by the Port of Seattle and its partners. The transportation system must continue to work safely and effectively for today's users, while evolving to move more people and more goods through the same amount of right-of-way.

As the current Levy to Move Seattle expires at the end of 2024, the City is preparing for the next phase of investment in transportation infrastructure with an ongoing emphasis on basic programs that invest in the maintenance and modernization of transportation infrastructure while continuing to serve the ongoing growth of the city consistent with the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project? Yes No

3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Does this legislation have financial impacts to the City? Yes No

This legislation provides for a transportation levy proposal to be placed on the ballot, which, if approved, would provide an estimated \$1.45 billion of dedicated revenue for transportation purposes over eight years; approximately \$175 million of this revenue would be generated in 2025. These revenues are not added to the City's budget through this legislation but will be accounted for in separate legislation if the levy is approved.

3.d. Other Impacts

Does the legislation have other financial impacts to The City of Seattle, including direct or indirect, one-time, or ongoing costs, that are not included in Sections 3.a through 3.c? If so, please describe these financial impacts.

As noted above, this legislation does not directly impact appropriations or position numbers. Appropriations, position changes and acceptance of additional revenue will be approved in separate legislation upon voter approval of the levy.

If the legislation has costs, but they can be absorbed within existing operations, please describe how those costs can be absorbed. The description should clearly describe if the absorbed costs are achievable because the department had excess resources within their existing budget or if by absorbing these costs the department is deprioritizing other work that would have used these resources.

This legislation does not directly impact appropriations or positions. Appropriations, position changes, and acceptance of additional revenue will be approved in separate legislation upon voter approval.

Please describe any financial costs or other impacts of *not* implementing the legislation.

This legislation would authorize a new ballot measure and levy proposal to replace the expiring Levy to Move Seattle, representing a significant loss of revenues that support transportation core functions like maintenance while also supporting the expansion and modernization of our current infrastructure.

Without a new levy, SDOT's budget would not be sufficient to maintain current service levels. Given the current broader financial constraints for the City as a whole, we do not anticipate alternative funding becoming available to support the ongoing operations of the Department in the 2025-2026 biennium. In the event that this legislation is not approved, and that a measure is not placed on the ballot or approved by voters, SDOT anticipates significant reductions to its budget starting in the 2025 fiscal year. These reductions could include: street paving, bridge and structure repair, sidewalk repair, traffic signal maintenance, new sidewalk construction, neighborhood projects and transit improvements. These funding reductions would mean an increased degradation of transportation infrastructure and greater risk of disrepair and failure.

Furthermore, as the current Levy to Move Seattle supports a significant portion of work at SDOT, without this revenue stream, the Department will have to reduce its workforce capacity to a level that it can support with existing funding.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

a. Please describe how this legislation may affect any departments besides the originating department.

This legislation does not directly impact other departments through changes in appropriations or personnel.

If the levy proposed in this legislation is approved, it would increase funding allowing SDOT to implement additional projects to maintain or improve the transportation system. These projects will result in opportunities to integrate infrastructure maintenance and upgrades within the City's right-of-way that could result in the need to relocate, rehabilitate, or replace utility infrastructure managed by Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Seattle City Light (SCL), and Seattle IT. The levy renewal proposal provides increased funding for traffic safety and operational improvements, which could result in efficiencies for the Seattle Police Department (SPD) and the Seattle Fire Department (SFD). SDOT has been actively coordinating with all the above-listed departments, as well as outside agencies, including King County Metro, Sound Transit, and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

If the levy proposed in this legislation is not approved, there could be significant impacts on other City departments such as weight restrictions or closures of bridges (impacting police and fire response) or lower levels of transportation operations staffing, reducing ability to respond to traffic incidents and safety needs (also impacting SPD and SFD).

Lack of funding for transportation improvements would reduce the City's ability to respond to expected growth (impacting the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections and the Office of Economic Development) or to partner with SPU on upgrades to drainage, water and sewer upgrades within the right-of-way, as well as environmental goals (Office of Sustainability and the Environment).

- b. Does this legislation affect a piece of property? If yes, please attach a map and explain any impacts on the property. Please attach any Environmental Impact Statements, Determinations of Non-Significance, or other reports generated for this property.**

No.

- c. Please describe any perceived implication for the principles of the Race and Social Justice Initiative.**

- i. How does this legislation impact vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities? How did you arrive at this conclusion? In your response please consider impacts within City government (employees, internal programs) as well as in the broader community.**

SDOT has developed a Racial Equity Toolkit on the specific investments in the levy proposal that can be located geographically at this time. Generally, investment in transportation options that make the expense of car ownership an option, rather than a necessity, is a benefit to vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities.

Transportation is second only to housing as a share of the average King County household's monthly expenditures, and much of that expense is car ownership. Additionally, more efficient mobility options, including transit improvements such as partnering with King County Metro on the RapidRide R project on Rainier, or the adding new sidewalks or making other safety improvements in Race and Social Equity Index high priority areas of the city such as Rainier Beach, Haller Lake, South Park and Highland Park can lead to more equitable outcomes and improved access to opportunity and even help minority business districts thrive, similar to how past safety and infrastructure improvements on 23rd Ave S have facilitated the work of the Africatown Community Land Trust.

- ii. Please attach any Racial Equity Toolkits or other racial equity analyses in the development and/or assessment of the legislation.**

The Transportation Levy Racial Equity Toolkit is attached here as Summary Attachment A.

iii. What is the Language Access Plan for any communications to the public?

SDOT has provided Levy materials through an online engagement hub in Spanish, Chinese (Traditional), Korean, Amharic, Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese in addition to English. Cultural Liaisons and interpreters were also available based at public tabling locations based on Tier 1 languages for the surrounding community.

The most critical input for the draft and final proposed levy proposals is the recently adopted Seattle Transportation Plan (STP), which is the product of two years of extensive outreach. SDOT contracted with community-based organizations and worked with numerous community liaisons to ensure extensive input from communities who have historically been underrepresented in previous long-range planning efforts and in underinvestment of transportation improvements. Through both the STP and Levy engagement, SDOT worked with as many as 15 multicultural media outlets to bring people to tabling events and online engagement opportunities. Online and community engagement in support of the STP was accessible via 16 languages, including all Tier 1, 2, and 3 languages.

d. Climate Change Implications

i. Emissions: How is this legislation likely to increase or decrease carbon emissions in a material way? Please attach any studies or other materials that were used to inform this response.

The Mayor's Levy Renewal proposal supports reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in several ways. First and foremost, the proposal continues to support the ongoing climate strategies of current and past comprehensive plans expected to continue under the final One Seattle Comprehensive Plan by supporting increased residential development within short distances to job growth and commercial and industrial development within urban centers and other nodes of development and transit access. The proposal also supports improved and safer access to transit, as well as short trips to neighborhood business districts and other destinations via pedestrian pathways and bikeways. More specific to Climate, the Mayor's proposal includes \$22 million in investments supporting transportation electrification and \$8 million to pilot Low Pollution Neighborhoods, consistent with the Mayor's Executive Order 2022-07: One Seattle Climate Justice Actions to Reduce Emissions from the Transportation Sector.

ii. Resiliency: Will the action(s) proposed by this legislation increase or decrease Seattle's resiliency (or ability to adapt) to climate change in a material way? If so, explain. If it is likely to decrease resiliency in a material way, describe what will or could be done to mitigate the effects.

A substantial portion of the Mayor's Levy Renewal proposal is focused on preventative maintenance funding that will help ensure SDOT can continue to adapt to increasing numbers of extreme temperature and precipitation events due to climate change that impact our streets and bridges. The proposed plan also allocates \$29 million for tree planting and expanded tree species diversity in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods, as well as ongoing maintenance of our existing street tree canopy.

- e. **If this legislation includes a new initiative or a major programmatic expansion: What are the specific long-term and measurable goal(s) of the program? How will this legislation help achieve the program’s desired goal(s)? What mechanisms will be used to measure progress towards meeting those goals?**

This ordinance requires annual reporting on delivery of levy commitments along with annual work plans. Additionally, the ordinance establishes a new Levy Oversight Committee made up of Seattle residents charged with assessing and reporting on SDOT’s progress on delivering on levy commitments.

5. CHECKLIST

- Is a public hearing required?**
- Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required?**
- If this legislation changes spending and/or revenues for a fund, have you reviewed the relevant fund policies and determined that this legislation complies?**
- Does this legislation create a non-utility CIP project that involves a shared financial commitment with a non-City partner agency or organization?**

6. ATTACHMENTS

Summary Attachments:

Summary Attachment A – Racial Equity Toolkit: Draft Transportation Levy Proposal