

December 10, 2024

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation and Seattle Public Utilities Committee
From: Lish Whitson, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 120924 – Pike Place Market Skybridge Renewal

On December 17, 2024, the Transportation Committee (Committee) will discuss on Council Bill (CB) [120924](#), which would repermit a skybridge that connects the Pike Place Market to the Market Garage over Western Avenue north of Pike Street (Council District 7). The skybridge provides a connection between the garage and the market at the main Pike Place level of the Market.

This memorandum describes the skybridge permit. Attachment 1 to this memorandum describes the skybridge repermitting process.

Market Skybridge

The Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority (Market PDA) owns a skybridge over Western Avenue that connects the Pike Place Market Parking Garage (Garage) to the Market. The garage has over 800 parking spaces, and the skybridge provides people parking in the garage with easy access to the main market.

In February 1989, the Council approved construction of the skybridge under Ordinance 114388. That approval ran out in 2019, but provisions of Ordinance 114388 allow the skybridge to continue to be in operation pending a new permit. The proposed bill would allow the Market PDA, or future assignees, to continue to operate the bridge for another 15 years, and would allow for one additional 15-year renewal of the permit.

Because a new permit is required, the Market PDA is required to show public benefit. In this case, the Market PDA will be upgrading the garage's elevator, which is accessible to the public and provides ADA access between the waterfront and the Market. The Market PDA will also provide new fire escape stairs, including ADA accessibility, and four bike racks along Alaskan Way.

The bill is comparable to other skybridge bills and includes requirements that the Market PDA remove the skybridge, if required to do so by the City. The bill also includes maintenance requirements, and indemnification and insurance provisions. The Market PDA would agree to pay standard term permit fees and pay the City for its costs to review skybridge inspection reports, which are required every other year.

Next Steps

The Committee will receive a briefing on the term permit renewal at its December 17 meeting and may act on the legislation in January 2025.

Attachment

1. Skybridge Permit Renewals

cc: Ben Noble, Director
Yolanda Ho, Deputy Director

Attachment 1

Skybridge Permit Renewals and Repermitting

Property owners who seek to build a new pedestrian bridge that would encroach over and above a public place¹ must seek skybridge permit approval from the City Council under Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) [Chapter 15.64](#).

The current practice of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is to recommend 15-year permits that can be renewed for an additional 15-years for a total term of approval of 30 years. After that 30-year period, the skybridge's owner will need a new permit from the Council to continue operating the skybridge. The code provides for two different times when the Council may be called on to review an existing term permit: at the expiration of a term or during the renewal of a term permit if amendments are proposed.

Renewals

The code allows for renewals of a skybridge permit only if permitted in the original ordinance. [SMC 15.64.083](#) provides authority to the Director of the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to recommend amendments at term renewal. Amendments may only be made if consistent with the following terms and conditions listed in [SMC 15.64.090](#) and are made via ordinance:

- the term of years that permission is granted and renewal periods, if any;
- provision for regular inspection of and procedures for closure or removal of the skybridge;
- requirements for performance bonds, public liability insurance, indemnification, conformance with other laws, and annual fees;
- prohibition against assignment without City consent;
- a requirement for execution and recording of a covenant ensuring that obligations and conditions imposed on the permittee run with the land, where applicable;
- public benefit mitigation elements; and
- timely acceptance of permission.

¹ A "public place" is defined as: "public right-of-way and the space above or beneath its surface, whether or not opened or improved, including streets, avenues, ways, boulevards, drives, places, alleys, sidewalks, planting strips, squares, triangles, and plazas that are not privately owned." ([SMC 16.02.046](#))

Repermitting

If, at the end of a permit's term, the skybridge owner determines that they want to continue to operate the skybridge, they must request a new permit. SDOT will review the proposal, including any public benefits to be provided to offset impacts to the public realm. [SMC 15.64.087](#) provides the following requirements for Council consideration of the renewal of a skybridge permit:

Upon completion of final review of an application to continue to maintain and operate an existing skybridge upon expiration of the term of the permission (including any authorized renewals), the Director of Transportation shall transmit a final recommendation to the City Council for its decision to grant or deny the application for a term permit to continue to maintain and operate an existing skybridge. The Council shall include in its consideration those elements set out in [Section 15.64.086.C](#). The City Council shall not approve an application to continue to maintain and operate an existing skybridge upon term expiration unless it finds that continued maintenance and operation of the skybridge is in the public interest and no reasonable alternative to the skybridge exists.

Section 15.64.086.C indicates that the Council should consider these elements in its review of whether to repermit a skybridge:

1. Adequacy of horizontal and vertical clearance;
2. Any known conflicts with existing or proposed utilities, street lighting, traffic control devices, or other upcoming transportation projects;
3. View blockage;
4. Interruption or interference with existing streetscape or other street amenities;
5. Impacts due to reduction of natural light;
6. Reduction of and effect on pedestrian activity at street level;
7. Number of pedestrians that currently use the skybridge;
8. Effect on commerce and enjoyment of neighboring land uses;
9. Availability of reasonable alternatives;
10. Changed conditions in the vicinity since original installation;
11. Effect on traffic and pedestrian safety;
12. Accessibility for the elderly and handicapped; and
13. The public benefit mitigation elements, or changes to the existing public benefit mitigation elements, provided by the proposal.

As with permit renewals, new permits for an existing skybridge must be consistent with the terms and conditions described in SMC 15.64.090, listed above.