

November 24, 2025

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Committee
From: Lish Whitson, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 121022 – Westin Skybridge Permit Renewal

On December 2, 2025, the Transportation Committee (Committee) will discuss on Council Bill (CB) [121022](#), which would repermit a skybridge that connects the Westin Hotel to the Westin Garage over Virginia Street between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue (Council District 7). The skybridge provides a connection between the garage and the hotel at the second floor.

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

Westin Skybridge

HST Lessee West Seattle LLC owns a skybridge over Virginia Street that connects the hotel to the garage. The garage has approximately 400 parking spaces, and the skybridge provides people parking in the garage with easy access to the hotel.

In April 1981, the Council approved construction of the skybridge under [Ordinance 109848](#). Approval of the skybridge was renewed under Resolution 28344 and amended in 1996 under [Ordinance 118303](#). That approval ran out in 2011, but provisions of Ordinance 109848 allow the skybridge to continue to be in operation pending a new permit.

The proposed bill would grant HST Lessee West Seattle LLC, or future assignees, a new permit to continue to operate the skybridge for another 15 years and would allow for one additional 15-year renewal of the permit. Because a new permit is required, the skybridge owner is required to show public benefit. In this case, the skybridge owner performed maintenance on a giant sequoia tree between Olive Way, Stewart Street, and 4th Avenue.

The bill is comparable to other skybridge bills and includes requirements that the owner remove the skybridge, if required to do so by the City or at the end of the permit term. The bill also includes maintenance requirements, and indemnification and insurance provisions. The skybridge owner 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 skybridge permit renewal at its December 2 meeting and may act on the legislation at that meeting or at a future time.

Attachment

1. Skybridge Permit Renewals

cc: Ben Noble, Director



Skybridge Permits

Property owners who seek to build a pedestrian bridge over a City street, alley, or other public place¹ must seek skybridge permit approval from the City Council under Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) [Chapter 15.64](#).

The City's skybridge regulations state that:

It is the intent of the City Council to limit the proliferation and adverse effects of Skybridges. Council will consider requests for new skybridges, and the repermitting of existing skybridges upon expiration of the term of the permission, with regard to how well they serve the public interest, and their relationship to the cityscape. The provisions of Chapter 15.64 shall be liberally construed in carrying out the intent of the Council.

Consistent with that intent, in the last ten years, new skybridges have only been approved for hospitals and medical centers, where the need to safely move patients between buildings without exposure to the weather is essential.

After receiving a skybridge application, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) files the application with the City Clerk and circulates it to interested City departments, utilities, and the Seattle Design Commission (SDC). SDOT convenes a Skybridge Review Committee to consider the application and make a recommendation to the SDOT Director who makes a recommendation to the City Council based on the Committee and Commission's recommendations.

SMC 15.64.050.C lays out a series of topics to consider in determining whether to approve a skybridge application:

1. Adequacy of horizontal and vertical clearance;
2. View blockage;
3. Interruption or interference with existing streetscape or other street amenities;
4. Impacts due to reduction of natural light;
5. Reduction of and effect on pedestrian activity at street level;
6. Number of pedestrians projected to use the skybridge;
7. Effect on commerce and enjoyment of neighboring land uses;
8. Availability of reasonable alternatives;
9. Effect on traffic and pedestrian safety;
10. Accessibility for the elderly and handicapped; and

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](#))

11. The public benefit mitigation elements provided by the proposal.

Skybridges must allow continued use of the street, alley or other public place for travel, utility purposes, and other public purposes.

When the Director is ready to make a recommendation, SDOT will transmit the recommendation along with background information to Council. A recommendation to approve the skybridge application will take the form of a Resolution.

Council Action

Upon receiving the Director's recommendation, the Council may "approve, deny, or approve with requirements or conditions" the skybridge application by Resolution. The Council's decision must consider the topics listed in SMC 15.64.050.C. According to SMC 15.64.065, the Council may not grant approval for a new skybridge "unless it finds that the skybridge is in the public interest and no reasonable alternative to the skybridge exists." If the Council seeks to approve the application, it will adopt a resolution that provides "conceptual approval." Council denial of an application is the final step in the process for a skybridge that is not approved.

Conceptual approval of the skybridge allows for publication of Master Use Permit decisions for development that includes the skybridge and allows for submission of construction plans for the skybridge. Once SDOT and the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) have determined that the construction plans are consistent with the initial plans and meet all applicable codes, SDOT will prepare a final Ordinance for Council consideration. The Ordinance will reflect any conditions for approval. SDOT will typically include conditions responding to [SMC 15.64.090](#) with language developed in consultation with the City's Risk Managers. The conditions will include the following:

- the term of years that permission is granted and renewal periods, if any;
- provision for regular inspection of the skybridge;
- 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 recorded covenant ensuring that obligations and conditions imposed on the permittee run with the land, where applicable;
- public benefit mitigation elements; and
- repeal of approval in the face of untimely acceptance of permission.

Every skybridge permit must allow the City to require that the skybridge be removed for any reason.

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 30 years, 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, which requires a new permit, or during the renewal of a term permit if amendments are proposed.