SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
CENTRAL STAFF

The Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit Program Legislative Package

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PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

Agenda

- Overview of legislative package
- Issue identification
- Next steps

Overview of Legislative Package

1. Vehicle Resident Assistance Program RES (RES 32216)
2. Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit Program ORD (CB 121283)
3. Outdoor Storage Land Use Code Changes ORD (CB 121281)
4. Finance and Administrative Services Lease Authority ORD (CB 121279)
5. Junk Vehicle Definition Update ORD (CB 121280)
6. Appropriations ORD (CB 121282)

Legislation 1: Vehicle Resident Assistance Program RES

States the goals for this legislative package:

- Create a structured pathway from vehicle residency to shelter and housing.
- Encourage coordination between the Human Services Department (HSD), Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and Seattle Police Department (SPD) on parking enforcement, service referrals, and permit compliance.
- Support development of safe lots and shelter storage
- Set clear expectations for engagement with service providers and behavior in the City's right of way.
- Removal of eco blocks currently placed on City right-of-way within six months of full implementation of the Vehicle Resident Assistance Program.

Legislation 2: Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit Program (1/3)

- Would establish a permit program for large, lived-in vehicles such as motor homes and travel trailers that have living quarters and cooking or sewage.
- Parking options for these vehicles types would be reduced, unless the vehicle had a permit.

	Vehicle Type	Has a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit	Overnight Parking Restrictions (12 a.m. – 6 a.m.)	Daytime Parking Restrictions (6 a.m. – 12 a.m.)	Can park for 72 hours in one place
Current Law	Commercial and large-sized vehicles over 80 inches, including motor homes and travel trailers that are over 80 inches wide.	N/A	Industrial Zones only	Anywhere, subject to posted signs	Yes, in Industrial Zones
Proposed Permit Legislation	Motor homes, travel trailers, and vehicles converted to accommodate living quarters and cooking or sewage disposal over 80 inches wide	Yes	Geographic Service Areas within Industrial Zones	Anywhere, subject to posted signs	Yes, in Geographic Service Areas within Industrial Zones
Proposed Permit Legislation	Motor homes, travel trailers, and vehicles converted to accommodate living quarters and cooking or sewage disposal over 80 inches wide	No	Cannot park for any length of time in any location	2 hours maximum, and subject to posted signs	No

Legislation 2: Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit Program (2/3)

- Direct SDOT, in consultation with HSD and SPD, to develop a Director's Rule to establish program standards and administrative procedures, including minimum standards in legislation related to permit eligibility, conditions and enforcement.
- Directs HSD to conduct a one-time census of individuals living in motor homes and travel trailers in Seattle. Only people and vehicles identified through this census, who are also the vehicle's registered owner, are eligible to receive a permit. Anyone not captured in the census would not be eligible.
- Permit would be revoked if a permit holder turns down offers of appropriate shelter six times.
- HSD would maintain a certification list and document offers of appropriate shelter.

Legislation 2: Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit Program (3/3)

- Permit holder will be assigned a geographic area they must park in overnight as a condition of their permit; geographic service areas to be established by HSD.
- Permit would also include other conditions related to the maintenance and condition of the permitted vehicle, surrounding streets and sidewalks, and occupant behavior.
- Unpermitted motor homes and travel trailers could be towed without notice. However, there is a whereas clauses that states the intention is to allow three infraction notices before towing.
- The legislation would take effect on April 30, 2027, with warnings issued for the first 90 days of implementation and full enforcement beginning July 31, 2027.

Legislation 3: Outdoor Storage Land Use Code Updates

- Updates the definition of ‘Recreational Vehicle’ to note that it may contain its own motor or may be towed behind a motorized vehicle;
- Updates the definition of outdoor storage to include storage of unoccupied recreational vehicles or other formerly lived-in vehicles
- Adjusts the definition of flexible-use parking to exclude storage of recreational vehicles.

Legislation 4: FAS Lease Authority

- Ordinance 127423, passed by City Council in March 2026, allows the Director of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to execute leases up to 65,000 without needing Council approval, if the site were to be used for transitional encampments (which includes safe lots).
- This legislation would increase the FAS Director's authority to execute leases for sites being used for transitional encampments, outdoor storage of vehicles and overnight respite areas for drivers from 65,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet.
- Also, the legislation would expand the FAS Director's authority to execute leases for outdoor storage for vehicles and overnight respite areas for drivers, including truck drivers.

Legislation 5: Junk Vehicle Definition Update

This ordinance would update the Traffic Code's definition of Junk Vehicles by:

- Clarifying what is meant by a vehicle that is 'extensively damaged'
- Clarifying what is meant by a vehicle that is 'apparently inoperable'
- Clarifying that part of having a current vehicle license/registration is having current vehicle license tags
- Adding two new criteria that can cause a vehicle to be considered a junk vehicle:
  - The Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is obscured or not easily visible
  - The vehicle has no license plate

Legislation 6 - Appropriations Bill (1/2)

- The 2026 Human Services Budget contains $3.5 million in on-going funding and $1.5 million in one-time funding to support vehicle residents' transition to shelter.
- The appropriations bill would:
- Create eight new positions, one Permit Technician in SDOT and seven outreach staff (Counselors) in HSD, related to implementation of the new Vehicle Residency Permitting Program.
- Transfers $216,000 in appropriation authority from HSD to SDOT to pay for IT and staffing costs related to implementation of a Vehicle Residency Permitting Program:
  - $100,000 for IT system updates in Accela
  - $116,000 is for half of the annual cost of a new Permit Technician.

Legislation 6 - Appropriations Bill (2/2)

- Modifies an existing HSD proviso on $2 million in funding, to allow funding to be spent on outreach and expand population that can be served to all vehicle residents.
- Imposes a new proviso of $2 million, restricting funds for:
  - Service providers engaged in outreach to persons living in vehicles, including capacity building and increased staffing in order to reduce case management ratios
  - To help vehicle residents meet code requirements related to their vehicle

Issue Identification (1/5)

Issue #1: Enforcement Challenges

- The effectiveness of the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit will depend, in part, upon effective enforcement – namely the City's ability to impound motor homes and travel trailers that do not have a permit.
- The City currently has a 20% vacancy rate within its PEO team (about 20 vacant positions), making it challenging to enforce even the City's existing parking laws.
- The permit program would create new enforcement responsibilities for a new class of vehicle (permitted motor home and travel trailers) with special rules for compliance.
- Impounding motor homes and travel trailers has unique challenges, which this legislation does not fully address
- Once impounded, there are also other specific challenges, including those related to the Homestead Act.

Issue Identification (2/5)

Issue #2: Operational Complexity

- Successful implementation of the Vehicle Resident Assistant Permit program would require the creation of a new permitting program that requires extensive coordination across SDOT, HSD, and SPD. This level of interdepartmental collaboration may be difficult.
- Strong Executive sponsorship and sustained operational leadership would be key to the program's launch and implementation.
- Legislation calls for a Director's Rule to give departments discretion in how to best implement the permit program. However, this strategy also carries risk that unclear roles and responsibilities will hinder implementation, especially around enforcement.

Issue Identification (3/5)

Issue #3: Uncertain Budget Implications

- Given operational complexity, actual costs to implement the program may be higher than what is included in the fiscal note for the bill. Such costs are, however, likely to be one-time or temporary in nature.
- In HSD's 2026 budget there is $5 million for activities related to supporting vehicle residents. If the $5 million were also used to pay for higher than anticipated permit implementation costs, it is likely that would come at the expense, at least in the short term, of services like shelter or safe lots unless additional funding is identified.

Issue Identification (4/5)

Issue #4: Eligibility Criteria, including one-time permit window

- Eligibility is based solely on a one-time census developed by HSD. Individuals whose motor home or travel trailer were not in the census or who begin living in their motor home or travel trailer after the census was taken will not have access to the permit program.
- Only registered owners of a motor home or travel trailer can receive a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit. This requirement may potentially leave out a sizable share of people currently living in motor homes or travel trailers.
- Residents of unpermitted motor homes and travel trailers would still be eligible for other services, such as shelter, housing and vehicle storage. However, as is currently true today, demand for those services would likely exceed supply, and people living in these unpermitted vehicles may not be able to obtain other assistance.
- People living in unpermitted vehicles may seek other types of shelter, such as tents or smaller vehicles that do not require a permit

Issue Identification (5/5)

Issue #5: Impact to Motor Homes and Travel Trailers Not Used as Residences

- There are motor homes and travel trailers parked on the right of way that are not used as residences.
- For example, Seattle residents may live in a house or apartment and park a motor home or travel trailer they own on the right of way, or they may have guests that come and visit them who park their motor homes or travel trailers on the right of way.
- Under the proposed legislation, these motor homes and travel trailers could only be parked for a maximum of two hours during the day and nowhere overnight. They are subject to impound without notice, although the legislation contains a whereas clause citing that the intention is to issue three infraction notices prior to towing.

Timeline & Next Steps

September 8

Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection issued a Determination of Nonsignifigance for the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit Program, Outdoor Storage Definition Update Ordinance, and Junk Vehicle Definition Update Ordinance

September 15 – Public Safety Committee

Discussion, issue identification concepts at Public Safety Committee

September 22 – Public Safety Committee

Public Hearing for Outdoor Storage Definition Bill; discussion and possible vote on all six bills, including amendments

September 29

21-day comment and appeal period ends for the determination of non-significance.

October 20

First possible Full Council vote

Questions?