

August 17, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation and Utilities Committee  
**From:** Lish Whitson, Analyst  
**Subject:** Council Bill 119745: University of Washington Skybridges

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On August 19, 2020 the Transportation and Utilities Committee will discuss and may vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 119745](#), which would grant approval to maintain five skybridges linking the University of Washington's central campus to other parts of the campus. The CB would grant approval to operate and maintain the skybridges for an initial ten-year term, which can be renewed for two subsequent ten-year terms, up to a total of thirty years. The skybridges are located as follows:

1. One skybridge, the 15th Avenue Bridge, crossing 15th Avenue NE north of NE Campus Parkway, connecting Schmitz Hall to the Henry Art Gallery;
2. Two skybridges, the Pacific/Hitchcock and Pacific/T-Wing bridges, crossing NE Pacific Street, between 15th Avenue Northeast and Northeast Pacific Place, connecting the UW's Medical Center and Health Sciences buildings to the central campus; and
3. Two skybridges, the Montlake/Wahkiakum and Montlake/Whatcom bridges, crossing Montlake Boulevard NE, connecting the central campus to the athletic facilities and parking lots in the east campus.

Because these skybridges each cross a city street, approval must be granted by the City Council pursuant to [Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) Chapter 15.64 "Skybridge Term Permits"](#). Each skybridge was approved under an individual ordinance whose term has expired. CB 119745 grants approval for all five skybridges for a new term and consolidates all University of Washington skybridge approvals under one bill.

The Transportation and Utilities Committee received a [briefing](#) on this bill at its March 4, 2020 committee meeting. At that meeting, Councilmember Pedersen requested an amendment to clarify and strengthen provisions related to accessibility. Attachment 1 to this memorandum contains an amendment to address those issues.

### Attachments:

1. Amendment 1 to CB 119745 – Accessibility Plans and Strategies

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Executive Director  
Aly Pennucci, Supervising Analyst

Lish Whitson  
Date: August 17, 2020  
Version: 1

**Amendment 1**  
**to**  
**CB 119745 SDOT UW Skybridges ORD**  
**Sponsor: CM Pedersen**  
Accessibility Plans and Strategies

Amend Section 3 of Council Bill 119745, as follows:

\* \* \*

Section 3. **Basis for renewal.** The Permittee shall provide to the City, by the end of the third year of the initial term, a copy of an Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Transition Plan for the University of Washington Seattle Campus that includes information regarding how student input was solicited and incorporated into the Plan. The Permittee shall provide to the City, by the end of the eighth year of the initial term, an analysis and evaluation of the necessity of all skybridge campus connections, with specific attention to the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast and Pacific/Hitchcock bridge crossings; an evaluation and analysis of any feasible at-grade crossing alternatives to the Campus Pedestrian Skybridge Network; an evaluation and analysis of combining the Montlake/Wahkiakum and Montlake/Whatcom skybridges located over and across Montlake Boulevard Northeast into one pedestrian crossing; identify means to address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance standards for all skybridges; and include a recommended timeline for addressing any proposed work. The Director, in reviewing the application for renewal, shall make the application decision based on the Permittee's evaluation, analysis, and recommendations. If ADA accessibility for any of the skybridges is not feasible, but the Permittee has identified alternatives that would provide equivalent access, the Permittee should include that information with its analysis and evaluation. If the Director accepts the

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recommendations, or determines that additional modifications to or removal of the Campus Pedestrian Skybridge Network or any individual skybridge is required, the Permittee will be provided with a written determination and given a timeline for making the modifications or removals. Nothing in this section impairs the rights of the City Council and the Director under other sections of this ordinance, including to require removal of the Campus Pedestrian Skybridge Network, or any individual skybridge, pursuant to Section 5 of this ordinance.

\* \* \*

**Effect:**

This amended language would require that the University of Washington (UW) transmit an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan within three years of approval of the legislation. The UW is currently working to develop such a [plan](#) to achieve ADA compliance on its three campuses: Bothell, Seattle and Tacoma. According to the UW, the plan will be a “comprehensive built environment accessibility improvement plan.”

The transition plan will identify a schedule for ADA improvements over the next fifteen years. This work has started with an assessment of campus facilities, including:

- accessible paths of travel,
- parking,
- transportation,
- exterior signage, and
- estimated cost ranges for the improvements recommended.

Work to date has also included a survey of the student body, staff and faculty and visitors to each of the campuses.

The proposed amendment requires the UW to send the ADA Transition plan so that the City can assess the plan for the skybridges in the context of recommendations and priorities for meeting ADA compliance across the three campuses. The amendment also directs the University to identify other opportunities for ADA accessibility if it is not possible to make the skybridges ADA compliant.