

May 14, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation and Utilities Committee
From: Lish Whitson, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 120074 – Grange Insurance Company Skybridge

On May 19, 2021, the Transportation and Utilities Committee will discuss and possibly vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 120074](#), which would renew and extend approval to maintain a skybridge across the alley between 2nd Avenue and 3rd Avenue, north of Cedar Street. The skybridge connects Grange Insurance’s offices at the southeast corner of 2nd Avenue and Clay Street to a parking garage on the southwest corner of 3rd Avenue and Clay Street. The legislation would provide a new fifteen year term for the term permit, which could be extended once.

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is proposing that the terms of significant structure term permits and skybridge permits be extended. Instead of a ten year permit renewable twice, SDOT proposes to move to a fifteen year permit, renewable once. This shift responds to the volume of term permits, the amount of work required to process a permit renewal, and the rarity of significant changes to approvals during term permit renewals. As a result of this shift, this bill would extend the potential term of the permit by 11 years to 2051.

Permission to build and use the skybridge was first granted through [Ordinance 109660](#), in 1981. In 2010, [Ordinance 123723](#) regranted that approval for ten years, eligible to be renewed for two additional ten year terms. CB 120074 would amend Ordinance 123723 to allow the approval to run for a new 15-year term, which could be renewed for one additional 15 year term.

Skybridge Permit Renewals

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

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](#))

[SMC 15.64.090](#) provides the terms and conditions that may be included in a term permit ordinance. These include, but are not limited to:

- 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.

Grange Insurance Skybridge

Grange Insurance Association is an insurance company in operation since 1894. Their corporate headquarters has been in the four-story office building at 200 Cedar Street in Belltown since 1981. A publicly-accessible plaza located on the southwest corner of the block is located south of the office building. On the northwest corner of the block is a two-and-a-half story parking garage. The skybridge connects the second story of the office building to the second story of the parking garage across an alley.

CB 120074 would amend Ordinance 123723, which granted approval to operate the skybridge between 2010 and 2020. Ordinance 123723 provided for up to two additional ten year terms, requiring renewal in 2020 and 2030 and requiring re-permitting in 2040. The proposed bill would extend approval to Grange Insurance to operate the tunnel for a new fifteen year term, starting in 2021. Permission to operate the tunnel could be renewed for an additional 15-year term running to 2051, after which time Grange Insurance would need to seek a new permit.

Next Steps

If the Transportation and Utilities Committee recommends approval of Council Bill 120074 at its May 19 meeting, it could be considered by the City Council as early as May 24.

cc: Dan Eder, Interim Director
Aly Pennucci, Policy and Budget Manager