

The City of Seattle

Ordinance _____

Council Bill _____

..title

An ordinance relating to the Traffic Code; creating a new permitting program for owners of motor homes and travel trailers to support a structured pathway to shelter; amending Sections 11.14.350, 11.14.660, 11.16.120, 11.23.440, 11.30.040, and 11.72.070 of, and adding Sections 11.14.672, 11.72.071, and 11.23.170 to, the Seattle Municipal Code.

..body

Recitals:

The City recognizes that motor homes and travel trailers create unique challenges when parked for extended periods in areas not designed to accommodate their size or use.

The City aims to support residents living in vehicles by connecting them to services, housing pathways, and safer designated locations by expanding City outreach, contracted outreach, and services the City provides and funds.

The City has interest in expanding investments in safe lots to provide structured, service supported parking locations offering access to restrooms, showers, case management, and dedicated transition support for people living in vehicles.

The City is seeking to establish shelter storage programs that allow individuals transitioning into shelter or housing to safely store their vehicles while engaging in City contracted services.

The lack of a formalized definition for motor homes and travel trailers contributes to inconsistent and inequitable enforcement, creates uncertainty for people living in vehicles, and limits the City's ability to manage oversized vehicles in a manner that improves neighborhood livability.

To improve safety, predictability, and access to services, the City intends to create a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program that authorizes overnight parking for operable motor homes and travel trailers in designated Industrial zones while establishing requirements that support health, safety, and accountability.

Vehicle Resident Assistance Permits will have geographic service areas that are aligned with City and contracted outreach in order to ensure clients are parking in the areas their outreach workers operate within.

The City seeks to ensure this permit program is paired with case management, geographic assignment rules, and continued engagement with Safe Lot, Shelter Storage, shelter, and housing resources.

This permit program will be made available to individuals and vehicles identified through a one-time census of vehicles on city streets to be conducted by the Human Services Department. Vehicles arriving after that census will not be eligible for the permit, but will still be able to access Safe Lot, Shelter Storage, shelter, and housing resources.

The legislation revises the Traffic Code to allow for impounding of motor homes and travel trailers without notice, however the intention of this legislation is for enforcement to provide for up to three warnings for unpermitted vehicles.

Permit holders would be able to retain the permit for their vehicles until they are able to move into shelter or housing, unless they violate the permit terms, which allow permit holders to turn down up to six offers of shelter or housing. Notice of loss of permit eligibility would start a 15-day appeal period, during which time permittees would be able to appeal the loss of their eligibility.

The legislation intends to support both neighborhood safety and the wellbeing of individuals living in vehicles by creating structured pathways toward safer parking environments, service engagement, shelter, and long-term housing solutions.

The 2026 Adopted Budget contains \$3.5 million in on-going funding to support vehicle residents' transition to shelter. Additionally, \$1.5 million of one-time funding for vehicle residents is available in 2026. Therefore,

Be it ordained by The City of Seattle as follows:

Section 1. Section 11.14.350 of the Seattle Municipal Code, enacted by Ordinance 108200, is amended as follows:

11.14.350 Motor homes(())

"Motor homes" means motor vehicles more than 80 inches wide originally designed, reconstructed, or permanently altered to provide facilities for human habitation, which include lodging and cooking or sewage disposal, and is enclosed within a solid body shell with the vehicle. (((RCW 46.04.305)))

Section 2. Section 11.14.660 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 125253, is amended as follows:

11.14.660 Trailer

"Trailer" means any vehicle without motive power designed to be drawn by or used in conjunction with a motor vehicle constructed so that no appreciable part of its weight rests upon or is carried by such motor vehicle, but does not include a municipal transit vehicle, or any portion thereof. "Trailer" does not include a cargo extension or travel trailer.

Section 3. A new Section 11.14.672 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

11.14.672 Travel trailer

"Travel trailer" means a trailer built on a single chassis transportable upon the public streets and highways that is designated to be used as a temporary dwelling without a permanent foundation and may be used without being connected to utilities.

Section 4. Section 11.16.120 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 126756, is amended as follows:

11.16.120 Director of Transportation—Authority

The Director of Transportation is authorized:

* * *

G. To promulgate rules and regulations for the RPZ program; ~~((and))~~

H. To prepare and recommend for adoption by the City Council a schedule of fees applicable to the reviewing and administering permits and issuing violations for vehicle and curb space uses~~((:))~~; and

I. To promulgate rules and regulations for the Vehicle Resident Assistance

Permit program, pursuant to Section 11.23.170.

Section 5. A new Section 11.23.170 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

11.23.170 Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit

A. The Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program is established in order to provide a structured pathway for individuals living in motor homes and travel trailers to transition toward safer parking environments, engagement with human services, shelter, and long-term housing solutions. The Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit allows the permit holder to park a permitted motor home or travel trailer pursuant to subsection 11.72.071.B and the terms of the permit described in this Section 11.23.170. Only one permit per person may be granted.

B. The Director of the Seattle Department of Transportation, following consultation with the Director of the Human Services Department and the Chief of the Seattle Police Department, shall by rule establish standards for, at a minimum, permit eligibility, permit conditions, and permit enforcement consistent with subsections 11.23.170.B.1 and 11.23.170.B.2.

1. Permit eligibility. The rule shall establish standards addressing, at a minimum, the following as well as administrative coordination with the Human Services Department:

a. The list of individuals or vehicles that are eligible to apply for a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit. This list shall be informed by the work of the Human Services Department to establish a one-time census of individuals or vehicles in

Seattle. Only individuals or vehicles identified through this census are eligible for the permit, and the program will not be made available to latecomers.

b. To be granted a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit, the applicant must be the registered owner of the vehicle permitted.

c. The process and procedures for the Human Services Department and affiliated service providers to apply for a permit or support permit application on behalf of the identified eligible individuals or vehicles. This may include support programs to assist eligible applicants and vehicles meet the requirements of the permit.

2. Permit conditions. The rule shall establish standards addressing, at a minimum, the following as well as administrative coordination with the Human Services Department:

a. The permitted vehicle may park in compliance with Section 11.72.440; provided that, between midnight and 6 a.m., the vehicle may park only within a geographic service area stated in the permit.

b. Geographic service areas shall be located within Industrial zones according to Title 23 and designated to allow the Department of Human Services to remain in contact with the permit holder.

c. The term of the permit issued and renewal review cycle, to be determined in consultation with the Department of Human Services, which shall allow for up to six offers to participate in a Safe Lot, Shelter Storage, shelter, or housing program to be made to the permit holder.

d. The permit holder shall remain certified by the Human Services Department. The Human Services Department shall manage the certification list to verify that the permit holder remains engaged with a City, or City-contracted, caseworker and to track when an offer has been made to participate in a Safe Lot, Shelter Storage, shelter, or housing program. If a program participant turns down offers of appropriate shelter six times, then the participant's permit will be revoked.

e. The permitted vehicle must have displayed license plates.

f. The permitted vehicle must have the vehicle identification number visible from outside of the vehicle.

g. The permitted vehicle shall not block sidewalks or parking strips.

h. The permit holder shall comply with the City's noise ordinance.

i. The permit holder and vehicle occupants shall leave no trash, nor store personal belongings, including generators, on any street, alley, sidewalk, or planting strip.

j. The permit holder and vehicle occupants shall not discharge gray water or black water onto any street, alley, sidewalk or planting strip.

k. The permit holder and vehicle occupants shall not host groups of five or more people at the location of the permitted vehicle or adjacent to the vehicle.

l. The permit holder and vehicle occupants shall supervise pets and not leave animals tied up unattended on any street, alley, sidewalk, or planting strip.

m. The permit holder and vehicle occupants shall comply with all laws.

3. Permit enforcement. The rule shall establish standards addressing, at a minimum, the following as well as administrative coordination with the Seattle Police Department and the Human Services Department:

a. The process and procedures for the Seattle Police Department to enforce the terms of the permit.

b. The process and procedures for the Human Services Department to document and report violations of the terms of the permit, initiate revocation of the permit, and assist in reviewing appeals of permit revocation decisions.

c. The process and procedures for the Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Police Department, and the Human Services Department to manage work and communications across departments related to the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program.

C. Violations. Violations of any of the terms of the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit may result in a loss of permit and removal from future eligibility for the permit.

D. Appeals of permit revocation. Permit holders will be notified of their permit revocation 15 calendar days before the revocation goes into effect. During that time, the permit holder can appeal the permit revocation to the Director of the Seattle Department of Transportation, who shall consider such appeal after consultation with the Human Services Department. The request shall identify the decision for which review or reconsideration is requested and the objection(s) to the decision. The Director shall designate a review officer, who shall make a recommendation to the Director. The Director may stay implementation of a decision pending review or reconsideration. The Director's decision on review or reconsideration shall be final.

Section 6. Section 11.23.440 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 127102, is amended as follows:

11.23.440 Parking privileges((=))

No person shall be granted a franchise, special privilege, or permit to the exclusion of any other person for parking vehicles on any roadway, except for the following uses:

* * *

C. The Director may approve Vehicle Resident Assistance Permits pursuant to Section 11.23.170.

Section 7. Section 11.30.040 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 127102, is amended as follows:

11.30.040 When a vehicle may be impounded without prior notice

A. A vehicle may be impounded with or without citation and without giving prior notice to its owner as required in Section 11.30.060 only under the following circumstances:

1. When the vehicle is impeding or is likely to impede the normal flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
2. When the vehicle is illegally occupying a music venue zone, truck, commercial load zone, restricted parking zone, bus, loading, hooded-meter, taxi, street construction or maintenance, or other similar zone where, by order of the Director of Transportation or Chiefs of Police or Fire or their designees, parking is limited to designated classes of vehicles or is prohibited during certain hours, on designated days or at all times, if the zone has been established with signage for at least 24 hours giving

notice that a vehicle will be removed if illegally parked in the zone and where such vehicle is interfering with the proper and intended use of such zones.

3. When a vehicle without a special license plate, card, or decal indicating that the vehicle is being used to transport a disabled person as defined under chapter 46.16A RCW, as ~~((now or hereafter))~~ amended, is parked in a stall or space clearly and conspicuously marked as provided in subsection 11.72.065.A, ~~((as now or hereafter amended,))~~ whether the space is provided on private property without charge or on public property.

4. When the vehicle poses an immediate danger to the public safety.

5. When a police officer has probable cause to believe that the vehicle is stolen.

6. When a police officer has probable cause to believe that the vehicle constitutes evidence of a crime or contains evidence of a crime, if impoundment is reasonably necessary in such instance to obtain or preserve such evidence.

7. When a vehicle is parked in a public right-of-way or on other publicly owned or controlled property and there are four or more parking infractions issued against the vehicle for each of which a person has failed to respond, failed to appear at a requested hearing, or failed to pay a parking infraction for at least 45 days from the date of the filing of the notice of infraction.

8. When the vehicle is a "junk motor vehicle" as defined in Section 11.14.268, and is parked on a street, alley, or way open to the public, or on municipal or other public property and the vehicle does not have a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit pursuant to Section 11.23.170.

9. When the vehicle is impounded pursuant to subsection 11.30.105.A, but if the vehicle is a commercial vehicle and the driver is not the registered owner of the vehicle, then the police officer shall attempt in a reasonable and timely manner to contact the registered owner before impounding the vehicle and may release the vehicle to the registered owner if the registered owner is reasonably available, was not in the vehicle at the time it was stopped and the driver arrested, and has not received a prior release under this subsection 11.30.040.A.9 or subsection 11.30.120.C.2.

10. When a vehicle with an expired registration of more than 45 days is parked on a public street.

11. When the vehicle is impounded pursuant to Section 12A.10.115 or RCW 9A.88.140.

12. When the vehicle is impounded pursuant to RCW 46.55.360.

13. When the vehicle is impounded pursuant to subsection 18.12.235.B.

14. Upon determining that a person restricted to use of only a motor vehicle equipped with a functioning ignition interlock device is operating a motor vehicle that is not equipped with such a device in violation of subsection 11.56.350.A.

15. When the vehicle is parked in violation of subsection 11.72.071.A.

B. Nothing in this ((section)) Section 11.30.040 shall be construed to authorize seizure of a vehicle without a warrant where a warrant would otherwise be required.

Section 8. Section 11.72.070 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 123420, is amended as follows:

11.72.070 Commercial and large size vehicles((-))

No person shall park a vehicle on any street or alley, except in an Industrial ~~((Zone))~~ zone as defined in Title 23, between the hours of midnight and ~~((six-))6(())~~ a.m. if the vehicle is a truck or trailer, and/or other conveyance, ~~((which is))~~ over ~~((eighty-))80(())~~ inches wide. This Section 11.72.070 does not apply to motor homes or travel trailers, which are governed by Section 11.72.071.

Section 9. A new Section 11.72.071 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

11.72.071 Motor homes and travel trailers

A. Effective April 30, 2027, and except as provided in subsection 11.72.071.B, no person shall park a motor home or a travel trailer on any street or alley for more than two hours or for any length of time between midnight and 6 a.m. A motor home or travel trailer found to be in violation of this subsection 11.72.071.A may be impounded without prior notice.

B. A holder of a valid Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit issued under Section 11.23.170 may park a permitted motor home or travel trailer, subject to official signs and the conditions of the permit. When parked between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m., the permitted motor home or travel trailer may only park in an Industrial zone according to Title 23 and within the geographic service area established by the permit.

Section 10. The City will create a process for receiving, processing, and maintaining Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit applications pursuant to Section 4 of this ordinance by April 30, 2027. Enforcement of Section 11.72.071 of the Seattle Municipal Code shall commence by July 31, 2027.

Section 11. The provisions of this ordinance are declared to be separate and severable. The invalidity of any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, or portion of this ordinance, or the invalidity of its application to any person or circumstance, does not affect the validity of the remainder of this ordinance or the validity of its application to other persons or circumstances.

DRAFT

This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections
1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council and signed in open session in authentication of its
passage on _____.

President _____ of the City Council

_____ on _____.

Katie B. Wilson, Mayor

Attested on _____.

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

Seal

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Summary and Fiscal Note

1. Legislation Summary

Department: Legislative Department

Title: An ordinance relating to the Traffic Code; creating a new permitting program for owners of motor homes and travel trailers to support a structured pathway to shelter; amending Sections 11.14.350, 11.14.660, 11.16.120, 11.23.440, 11.30.040, and 11.72.070 of, and adding Sections 11.14.672, 11.72.071, and 11.23.170 to, the Seattle Municipal Code.

Background:

This legislation would establish a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program for owners of motor homes and travel trailers. Permitted motor homes and travel trailers would be allowed to park for 72 hours in an Industrial Area or for up to a maximum of two hours anywhere else. The permit would also define a geographic service area as a permit condition for overnight parking to allow outreach workers to contact permittees. Unpermitted motor homes and travel trailers would only be able to park for a maximum of 2 hours, and they would not be allowed to park overnight. If a motor home or travel trailer does not have a Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit and is parked for more than 2 hours or overnight, it would be subject to being impounded without notice.

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) would be responsible for administering the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit in consultation with the Human Services Department (HSD) and the Seattle Police Department (SPD). SDOT, HSD, and SPD would develop eligibility, permit conditions, and enforcement protocols for the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit via Director's Rule, which must address criteria specified in the legislation. These criteria include that the permittee must remain on an eligibility list for a safe lot, shelter storage, shelter or housing and be engaged with a city or city-contracted caseworker. If the permittee turns down offers of appropriate shelter six times, their permit will be revoked.

The legislation directs departments to create the process for administering Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit applications by April 30, 2027. Parking enforcement of motor homes and travel trailers would begin by July 31, 2027.

Summary Attachments:

None.

2. Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project?

☐ Yes

☒ No

3. Summary of Financial Implications

Does this legislation have financial impacts to the City?

☒ Yes

☐ No

a. Expenditure Change to General Fund

2026	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.	2030 est.
\$359,000	\$804,000	\$804,000	\$804,000	804,000

20026 costs reflect:

- \$100,000 to make needed updates to SDOT's Accela permitting system to incorporate the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit. This is a preliminary cost estimate as the full scope of necessary changes will need to be assessed and may be informed by the departments' work to establish administrative procedures.
- \$116,000 for half of the annual cost of a Permit Technician at SDOT to implement the Vehicle Residency Assistance Permit program.
- \$143,000 for four FTE outreach staff (Counselors) for the last quarter of the year. These HSD staff would verify service engagement by vehicle owners to qualify for a permit or maintain their permit. Appropriations and position authority to support implementation are addressed in separate budget legislation. HSD has indicated that they would need four outreach staff to implement this legislation. The accompanying Vehicle Resident Permitting and Outreach Appropriation legislation, a separate bill, creates 7 new Counselor positions in order to give HSD additional capacity if needed.

2027 and future costs include:

- Full annual cost for four FTE outreach staff (Counselors) in HSD at a cost of \$143,000 per outreach staff
- Full annual cost for a Permit Technician at SDOT at a cost of \$232,000.

There are likely to be other staffing and program costs that are not included in this estimate. Such costs may vary significantly based on the number of permits managed and the level of enforcement actions necessary. These additional costs have not been estimated at this time and may result in departments requesting additional resources in future budgets or reallocating resources within existing budgets which may impact service levels. Such costs may include:

- SDOT staffing and program costs to support permit intake and administration.
- SPD Parking Enforcement staffing and program costs to support additional enforcement emphasis.
- FAS contract costs related to impound and storage services.
- HSD contracts with service providers for outreach to vehicle residents
- HSD program costs to provide structured pathways to housing and shelter.

The 2026 Adopted Budget contains \$3.5 million on-going funding for programs and activities to support vehicle residents transitioning to shelter. In addition, there is \$1.5 million in one-time funding for this purpose that was appropriated in the 2025 Adopted Budget and administratively carried forward to 2026. Proposed use of these resources to support implementation is addressed through separate legislation. The Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program is not anticipated to collect significant permit fee revenue.

b. Number of Positions – Not fully estimated. See above.

2026	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.	2030 est.
5	5 est	5 est	5 est	5 est

c. Total Full-Time Employee (FTE) Change – Not fully estimated. See above.

2026	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.	2030 est.
5	5 est	5 est	5 est	5 est

3a. Appropriations

No appropriations are proposed in this legislation. See above.

3b. Revenues/Reimbursements

No revenues or reimbursements are proposed in this legislation. See above.

3c. Positions

No positions are proposed in this legislation. See above.

3d. Other Financial Impacts

a. Does this legislation create any other financial impacts for The City of Seattle, such as direct or indirect costs, one-time or ongoing, that aren't mentioned above? If yes, please explain these impacts.

See above.

b. If the legislation has costs that can be covered within the current budget, explain how. Does the department have extra resources in its budget to handle these costs? Or does the department need to shift resources away from other work to handle these costs?

Separate budget legislation will be necessary to implement the Vehicle Resident

Assistance Permit program. Some implementation tasks may be able to be incorporated into existing departments' budgets. The 2026 Adopted Budget included an on-going \$3.5 million in HSD for vehicle resident services which may be allocated to support implementation through separate legislation.

c. What financial costs or other impacts might happen if this legislation is not implemented?

The Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program is intended to support the City's efforts related to public safety, cleanliness and access when motor homes and travel trailers park for longer than allowed in the right-of-way.

d. How might this legislation affect other City departments besides the one that proposed it?

This legislation will require SDOT and HSD to coordinate on administration of the Vehicle Resident Assistance Permit program. HSD would be responsible for providing access to shelter to permittees. SPD would be responsible for parking enforcement. The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) would be responsible for managing towing and vehicle impound contracts related to enforcement of this legislation.

4. Other Impacts

a. Does this legislation require a public hearing?

☐ Yes

☒ No

b. Does this legislation require a notice to be published in The Daily Journal of Commerce and/or The Seattle Times?

☐ Yes

☒ No

c. Does this legislation affect a piece of property?

This legislation addresses vehicle parking in the public right-of-way.

d. Race and Social Justice Initiative impacts:

1. How does this legislation affect vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities? How did you come to this conclusion?

Please consider both impacts within City government (like employees and internal programs) and in the broader community.

This legislation is intended to support a structured pathway to shelter for vulnerable persons living in motor homes and travel trailers and to reduce the impact of such vehicles on communities throughout the city.

2. Please attach any Racial Equity Toolkits or other racial equity analyses used to develop or assess this legislation.

N/A.

3. What is the Language Access Plan for communicating with the public about this legislation?

N/A.

e. Climate change impacts:

1. Emissions: Will this legislation significantly increase or decrease carbon emissions? Attach any studies or materials that inform your answer.

This legislation does not meaningfully impact carbon emissions.

2. Resiliency: Will this legislation make Seattle more or less able to adapt to climate change? If it reduces resiliency, explain what can be done to lessen the impact.

This legislation does not meaningfully impact climate resiliency.

f. If this legislation creates a new program or expands an existing one, what are the long-term, measurable goals? How will this legislation help achieve those goals? What methods will be used to track progress?

This legislation authorizes a permitting program for persons living in mobile homes or travel trailers while engaging with the City's shelter outreach programs. Program tracking will be measured by the number of permits issued and number of persons entering into shelter programs.

g. Does this legislation create a non-utility CIP that involves shared funding with a non-City partner or organization?

No.