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SUBJECT: Parking Code Update
DATE: February 25, 2026

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

Planning and Development Services staff will review upcoming updates to the City of Tacoma’s off-street parking regulations required to comply with recent Washington State legislation. Between 2024 and 2025, the Legislature adopted multiple laws that significantly limit local authority to require minimum off-street parking, especially for housing, small commercial uses, and development near transit.

The City is initiating a parking code update to ensure compliance with State mandates while aligning with Tacoma’s adopted goals for housing affordability, multimodal transportation, climate action, and compact growth.

This briefing summarizes key State requirements, outlines potential approaches for updating Tacoma’s parking code, and presents the proposed project schedule and milestones leading to a target adoption in October 2026. Two potential approaches under consideration are:

- **Option A:** Update parking standards to meet State mandates
- **Option B:** Broader citywide parking reform and removal of minimum parking requirements

This briefing is intended to provide early visibility into the scope and policy considerations of the update and to inform future City Council deliberations. This is an information briefing only. No action is requested at this time.

BACKGROUND:

The Washington State Legislature has adopted a series of new parking mandates intended to reduce development costs, support increased housing production, and decrease excessive reliance on automobiles. The Legislature found that fixed, predetermined parking requirements unnecessarily drive up the cost of development, particularly housing, discourage walking and transit use, and contribute to negative public health and climate impacts. These reforms emphasize that parking needs should be determined by actual market demand rather than one size fits all regulatory minimums.

Together, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 5184](#) (2025), [House Bill \(HB\) 1183](#) (2025), [HB 1491](#) (2025) and [SB 6015](#) (2024) significantly limit how cities, including Tacoma, may regulate off-street parking (see Attachment A for a summary of State parking regulations). Tacoma will need to update its parking standards to comply with State law while aligning with local goals for compact growth, affordability, walkability, and multimodal transportation.



ISSUE:

The City must update off-street parking regulations to comply with State law by January 2027. Beyond compliance, Tacoma has an opportunity to consider a broader, citywide approach to parking reform to better support housing, transportation, climate, and equity goals. The following is a description of the proposed schedule and engagement to complete the update in compliance with State law.

Tentative Schedule

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities
Project Launch & Initial Code Options	Dec 2025 – Mar 2026	Introduce project to Planning Commission Launch project webpage and FAQs IPS Committee briefing Planning Commission direction on code option
Early Engagement & Code Development	Feb – Apr 2026	Internal and external engagement, early public outreach and informational meeting
Public Review Draft & Planning Commission Recommendation	Apr – Jul 2026	Release draft code and 30-day comment period (mid-April) Unified engagement Planning Commission public hearing Planning Commission recommendation
City Council Review & Adoption	Aug – Oct 2026	Review Planning Commission recommendations City Council public hearing Adoption
Post Adoption	Fall 2026	Notify affected parties Internal staff training

Outreach & Engagement

Staff will conduct a coordinated outreach and engagement process to ensure the parking code update is informed by technical expertise, interagency coordination, and community input. Engagement activities will be scaled to the scope of the update and will occur throughout the process.

Internal Engagement

Staff will coordinate with City departments and key boards and commissions to gather technical input, ensure policy alignment, and address operational considerations. This includes engagement with:

- Transportation Commission
- Climate & Sustainability Commission
- Commission on Disabilities
- Parking Technical Advisory Group
- Permit Advisory Group

External Government Coordination

Staff will engage with external agencies and partners to gather their input. This includes engagement with:

- Puyallup Tribe of Indians
- Pierce Transit
- Parks Tacoma



- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
- Tacoma Public Schools

Public Outreach

Public engagement will utilize a unified engagement approach and will include a mix of virtual and in-person strategies. Outreach activities are anticipated to include:

- Virtual informational meeting
- Project webpage and social media outreach
- Engagement with Business Districts
- Engagement with Neighborhood Councils
- Online survey
- Translated materials
- Cultural ambassador support

Other Stakeholder Outreach

Staff will reach out to organizations and stakeholder groups with interest in mobility (e.g., transit, bike/pedestrian advocacy organizations), economic development organizations and agencies, businesses, environmental groups, and other community groups.

This engagement approach is intended to ensure broad participation, equitable access to information, and meaningful opportunities for feedback prior to code adoption.

ALTERNATIVES:

Two preliminary approaches are under consideration for the parking code update:

- **Option A:** Parking code update to comply with State mandates
- **Option B:** Broader citywide parking reform and removal of minimum parking requirements

No action is requested from the Committee at this time, this briefing is informational only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment A – State Parking Requirements Summary

Attachment A: Summary of State Parking Requirements

Purpose of Attachment

This attachment provides a high-level summary of recently adopted Washington State legislation affecting local off-street parking regulations. The information is intended to support the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee memo by outlining the key statutory requirements that the City of Tacoma must address through the parking code update. This summary is informational and not a comprehensive legal analysis.

Overview of State Parking Regulations

Between 2024 and 2025, the Washington State Legislature adopted multiple laws that significantly limit local authority to require minimum off-street parking. Collectively, these laws aim to reduce development costs for housing, increase housing supply, support transit-oriented development, and reduce automobile dependence.

The primary bills affecting Tacoma's off-street parking regulations include:

- [Senate Bill \(SB\) 5184 \(2025\)](#)
- [House Bill \(HB\) 1183 \(2025\)](#)
- [HB 1491 \(2025\)](#)
- [SB 6015 \(2024\)](#)

The sections below summarize the provisions of each bill that affect parking requirements and highlight their implications for Tacoma's existing parking code.

SB 5184 ([RCW 35.21.994](#)) – Limits on Minimum Parking Requirements

SB 5184 restricts when cities may require parking and limits how much parking cities may require in certain cases. Key provisions include:

1. Caps on Minimum Parking Requirements

- Multifamily housing: Maximum of 0.5 spaces per unit.
- Single-family homes: Maximum of 1 space per home.
- Commercial uses: Maximum of 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

2. No Minimum Parking Allowed for Certain Uses

Cities must eliminate minimum parking requirements entirely for:

- Residences under 1,200 square feet.
- Commercial spaces under 3,000 square feet.
- Affordable housing (as defined in RCW 36.70A.030)
- Senior housing
- Licensed childcare facilities (as defined in RCW 43.216.010)
- Ground-floor nonresidential spaces in mixed-use buildings
- Buildings changing the use from nonresidential to residential, or a change of use for a commercial use.

These limits do not affect ADA parking requirements. Cities may still require additional parking for religious organizations or for carpools and may continue to regulate temporary or time-restricted parking and address drop-off, loading, and accessibility through design review.

Cities may exceed the State limitations only if they submit an empirical safety study demonstrating that the required limits would create significantly less safe conditions for drivers, pedestrians, or bicyclists, and the Department of Commerce certifies the findings.

Key Implication:

SB 5184 removes or caps minimum parking requirements for many residential and commercial projects, requiring Tacoma to revise use-based parking standards.

HB 1183 – Additional Restrictions for Certain Housing Projects and Developments Near Transit

HB 1183 adds further restrictions on when cities may require parking, with a focus on housing created within existing buildings, innovative construction types, and projects near transit.

1. [RCW 35.21.990](#) – Off-Street Parking Requirements for New Housing in Existing Buildings

For existing buildings (as defined in RCW 35.21.990) that add new housing units:

- Cities may not require any new off-street parking for the added units.
- Cities may require the retention of existing parking that was tied to previous residential uses or is necessary to support remaining nonresidential uses.
- Cities cannot deny permits solely due to parking nonconformities unless they provide written findings that the nonconformity causes a significant detriment to the surrounding area.

Key Implication:

Parking cannot be used as a barrier to adding new housing units within existing buildings.

2. [RCW 36.70A.817](#) – No Minimum Parking Allowed for Certain Residential Projects

Cities may NOT require any off-street parking for the following project types:

- Affordable housing
- New construction or the retrofit of existing buildings meeting passive house requirements
- Modular construction
- Mass timber construction

Cities may exceed the State limitations only if they submit an empirical safety study demonstrating that the required limits would create significantly less safe conditions for drivers, pedestrians, or bicyclists, and the Department of Commerce certifies the findings.

Key Implication:

Several priority housing types must be allowed with zero mandated parking unless a State-certified safety study is completed.

3. Transit-Related Minimum Parking Caps

For residential development within ¼ mile of high-frequency transit (service ≥ 4 times per hour, ≥ 12 hours/day):

(A) Senior housing and housing for people with disabilities:

- Cities may NOT impose minimum residential parking requirements for residents.
- Staff/visitor parking may be required.
- Higher amounts may be required only when street parking shortages or physical constraints are documented.
- Developers may be required to record a covenant limiting the unit to seniors or people with disabilities.

(B) Market-rate multifamily housing:

- Parking requirements may be no greater than:

- 1 space per bedroom, or
- 0.75 space per unit
- Higher amounts may be required only with documented evidence of street parking limitations or physical barriers.

Key Implication:

Most residential projects near frequent transit will be subject to strict State caps on required parking.

HB 1491 ([RCW 36.70A.842](#)) – Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Parking

HB 1491 focuses on TODs and limits off-street parking requirements in these areas.

No Off-Street Parking Requirements for TODs

Cities may not require off-street parking for residential or mixed-use development within transit station areas, except:

- ADA accessible parking for people with disabilities
- Short-term parking for delivery vehicles

If a development provides more residential parking than required, the city may:

- Require a share of provided parking to be allocated to affordable housing units and a share allocated to market rate units
- Include all or part of the cost of unbundled parking charges in affordable housing rents

If a project within a station area doesn't provide parking in compliance with this section, the lack of parking cannot trigger a determination of significance under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Cities may exceed these limitations if an empirical safety study shows that parking restrictions would create significantly less safe conditions for drivers, pedestrians, or bicyclists and the Department of Commerce certifies the findings.

Key Implication:

HB 1491 ensures that transit-oriented developments are not hindered by parking requirements, supporting denser, transit-oriented projects.

SB 6015 ([RCW 36.70A.622](#)) – Residential Parking Design Standards

SB 6015 establishes statewide standards for residential parking design. Per the State law cities must allow the following:

- Garages and carports may not be required to satisfy parking requirements.
- Parking spaces that count towards minimum parking requirements may be enclosed or unenclosed.
- Tandem parking must count at one space per 20 linear feet, with allowances for turning radii.
- Cities cannot prohibit use of legally nonconforming gravel parking areas (up to six spaces) to meet required parking.
- Cities may not require residential parking spaces larger than 8 feet by 20 feet, except ADA stalls.
- Cities may not require off-street parking if doing so would make compliance with tree-retention standards infeasible (applies to cities >6,000 population).
- Grass block pavers must count toward required parking.

Existing parking spaces do not need to be modified to meet these new standards except for ADA compliance. During resurfacing, cities cannot require resizing if it would be costlier or require major reconfiguration.

Key Implication:

SB 6015 standardizes residential parking design and ensures flexibility while maintaining safety and accessibility.