



TO: Hyun Kim, City Manager
FROM: Michael Carey, Urban Forest Program Manager, Environmental Services Department
 Ramiro A. Chavez, P.E. PgMP, Director, Environmental Services Department
COPIES: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Interlocal Agreement between the City of Tacoma and Washington State Department of Ecology to Implement South Tacoma Tree Canopy Enhancement Project – June 23, 2026
DATE: May 13, 2026

Initial DS
 CWC RACPP

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution authorizing the execution of an Interlocal Agreement with the Washington State Department of Ecology in the amount of \$1,750,000, accepting and depositing said sum into the ES Stormwater Fund 4301, to implement a three-phased program from June 2026 through December 31, 2028 in the South Tacoma Neighborhood targeted at increasing tree canopy as a strategy for long-term air quality particulate mitigation.

BACKGROUND:

In November 2024, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) entered an \$8.95 million settlement with Bridge Point Tacoma to address air quality impacts in South Tacoma resulting from the new warehouse development, Bridge Point. Increasing tree canopy in the impacted neighborhood (Settlement Boundary) has been identified as one component of a larger project led by Ecology to reduce airborne particulate matter generated from the new truck traffic near the warehouse facility.

This Interlocal Agreement (ILA) between Ecology and the City of Tacoma Urban Forestry Program (City) establishes the South Tacoma Tree Canopy Enhancement Program (Program), implementing an urban tree canopy expansion effort within the Settlement Boundary. The program will be conducted through three primary tasks:

1. Conduct a comprehensive Potential Tree Planting Inventory and Analysis to identify planting opportunities in the Settlement Boundary;
2. Implement a Green Blocks community tree planting program, offering free street trees and private property trees to residents within the settlement boundary, as informed by the Potential Tree Planting Inventory; and,
3. Capital improvements on South Union Avenue (the primary truck corridor) to remove asphalt and establish trees in a newly constructed median within South Union Avenue, remove compacted gravel and establish new street trees within the planting strips on both sides of South Union Avenue, and convert an existing parking lot into a vegetated community open space.

The City has previously conducted similar work throughout Tacoma and currently has vendors under contract who can provide services within the ILA scope of work. This ILA provides Ecology the mechanism to commit a portion of the settlement funds to cover these costs. The partnership between Ecology and the City outlined under this ILA will help Ecology meet its legal obligations of the Settlement Agreement, while leveraging the City’s expertise, resources, and community connections to better serve our community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

The impacts of this Program will be felt the greatest by the residents within the Settlement Area, along the primary truck traffic route where emissions particulates are most concentrated, and where significant tree planting will take place as a measure to mitigate for these impacts.



There have been many community engagement efforts within the South Tacoma neighborhood to codevelop a vision for the neighborhood's growth and development. During many of these engagements, the community self-identified the need for green infrastructure and tree planting as a strategy to mitigate environmental health concerns, and suggested tree planting strategies to achieve these goals. Some notable engagements include:

- [Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan](#) [2015-2018] community engagement designating tree canopy goals and planting strategies within Tacoma Mall Subarea.
- [Tacoma Mall Greening Project](#) [2018-2023] community engagement through 16 community events, a Stakeholder Working Group, and Community Advisory Committee concluded that direct, hands-on delivery methods including tree planting assistance was essential to increasing access to participants in greening programming.
- [Greening Research in Tacoma](#) [2022-current] a research collaboration investigating the impacts of greening efforts on community and environmental well-being, including interviews with South Tacoma residents who identified being in nature as a contributing factor to an increase in their mental health.
- [South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan](#) [2024-2025] over 1,300 community engagements identified projects, ideas, and actions to foster the vision for South Tacoma as a diverse and vibrant neighborhood that is safe, healthy, comfortable, and connected. Among the top neighborhood-wide actions identified by the community included "Pursuing opportunities to increase tree canopy and improve air/stormwater quality".
- [Department of Ecology Community Survey](#) [2024] results of the Ecology-managed community survey following the settlement agreement with Bridge Point indicated strong community support for increasing tree canopy in the Settlement Boundary to reduce airborne particulate matter generated from the new truck traffic near the warehouse facility.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The South Tacoma Neighborhood community was identified as overburdened and highly impacted by air pollution because it met the statewide screening criteria based on the Washington Environmental Health Disparities map ranking and the EJScreen demographic index. It also experiences elevated levels of short-term exposure to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution driven by PM_{2.5}, ozone (O₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). South Tacoma's poverty rate is 18 percent higher than Washington's 11 percent poverty rate, South Tacoma residents tend to live 6 years less than Pierce County residents, and South Tacoma's adult obesity rate is 29 percent.

Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score: Low Opportunity*

Increase the number of infrastructure projects and improvements that support existing and new business developments.

Livability: *Equity Index Score: Very Low Opportunity*

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

Increase the number of Complete Compact Communities/ 20-Minute Neighborhoods throughout the city.

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), for all Tacoma residents.



Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

[Decades of research](#) have correlated access to nature, community green space, and tree canopy to reductions in air pollution and urban heat island effects, obesity rates, and stress levels, while improving cognitive and behavioral health and mental wellbeing. Increasing access to urban tree canopy through this Project will have long-term positive health consequences on the South Tacoma neighborhood community.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Do not accept mitigation funding from Ecology.	No obligation for the City to manage the scope of work identified in the ILA.	Tree planting to mitigate air quality impacts of the Bridge Point development will not take place, with continued exposure to airborne particulate matter as a result.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

During the 2.5-year Program, Ecology and the City have developed milestones and will conduct regular progress meetings to ensure Program delivery meets the schedule and expected outcomes. Urban Forestry staff will document implementation success of the program in a final report to Ecology as part of the project deliverables, including a summary of the improvements to the neighborhood, number of trees planted, households impacted, outreach outcomes, and program milestones. If requested, staff can follow up with Council to provide the final report and/or an overview presentation of final project outcomes.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

Environmental Services recommends approval of this interlocal agreement to implement the South Tacoma Tree Canopy Enhancement three-phased program, with an effective date of June 2026, to utilize tree canopy increase as a strategy for long-term air quality particulate mitigation within the Settlement Boundary.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funds received from this interlocal agreement, deposited into the ES Stormwater Fund, will be used to implement this project prior to December 31,2028. There is no immediate fiscal impact, and the administrative support to manage this Program will be aligned with existing staff resources.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. ES Stormwater Fund 4301	521900	4338002	\$1,750,000
TOTAL			\$1,750,000

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

ES Stormwater Fund 4301



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?

NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW

No. ES will request a budget adjustment during the 2027-28 budget proposal process to budget revenue and expenses for this one-time interlocal agreement.

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

NO

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

NO

Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?

NO

ATTACHMENTS:

- Draft Interlocal Agreement between City of Tacoma and Washington State Department of Ecology