



Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance Surveys

City of Tacoma | OEPS

Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee

January 9, 2019

ITEM #



BACKGROUND



- In July 2016, Tacoma City Council passed BYOB ordinance (TMC 12.09.215)
 - Went into effect July 12, 2017
- Main elements of the law:
 - Thin plastic checkout bags may no longer be distributed at any Tacoma retail establishments
 - Retail establishments must collect a minimum pass-through charge of five cents for each recycled paper or reusable checkout bag requested by customers
 - Those with EBT/WIC/TANF benefits do not have to pay the pass-through charge on paper bags



BACKGROUND



• Ordinance requirements:

12 Section 3. That the City Manager is directed to conduct a study to
13 evaluate the impacts of TMC 12.09.215 on low-income populations and
14 communities of color, to be completed within 18 months of implementation of
15 TMC 12.09.215.

Customer Survey

16 Section 4. Commencing in 2018 and ending in 2020, the City Manager
17 shall (1) aggregate the data received from the annual reports voluntarily
18 submitted by retail establishments pursuant to TMC 12.09.215.C, annually report
19 the aggregate totals to the City Council, and report the annual and cumulative
20 percentage change in the number of recycled paper carryout bags distributed;
21 (2) conduct an annual voluntary survey of retail establishments regarding the
22 impact of TMC 12.09.215 on retail establishments, including the challenges of
23 implementation, improvements that could be made, whether carryout bag
24 practices have changed, and impacts to customer experiences; and (3) report the
25 results of the survey to the City Council.
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Retailer Survey

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RETAILER SURVEY



- Questions were designed based on ordinance requirements:
 - **Only required question:** How many paper bags did your business distribute between August 1, 2017 and July 31, 2018?
- Sent to 1800 retailers via mail, with an optional web link
- **353** total responses; **171** reported giving out paper bags
 - The **highest** number of reported bags distributed was **333,919**
 - The **average** number of reported bags distributed was **14,316**
 - The **median** number of reported bags distributed was **1,705**

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RETAILER SURVEY

"We don't mind **educating the public**, spreading awareness about unwanted plastic waste because it fits our mission."

"Paper bags lack the **strength and waterproof** my retail items require."

"I give out re-used bags not new ones, and my **customers appreciate it** more than before."

"We have always put product in paper bags and now **I have to charge customer** for the same bag they have usually gotten for free. It doesn't seem fair to customer to charge the for paper bag now."


"People are becoming more environmentally conscious and **this has been a positive experience** for us."

"Customers coming from out of town unaware of the charges upset. **We are bordering a city** in which plastic bags are used and not charged for."

"People are more mindful. I did away with disposable bags and bought nice reusable for my customers. **Great response, great marketing** A reminder every time they reuse it, they think of my business!"

"Many customers have expressed **annoyance** or disbelief that we charged for bags."

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RETAILER SURVEY

Please use this space to communicate anything further to the City of Tacoma regarding the Bring Your Own Bag ordinance:

"I understand the bag ordinance but **I should have been given the option to charge or not charge** for bag. I have a hard time charging regular customers for a paper bag they have always gotten for free prior to the ordinance."

"**It is a good practice ordinance.**"

"Thank you!!!"

"I am **very happy** plastic bags are banned. Thank you."

"Because of my location - next to the Best Western Tacoma Dome, **many of my customers are out of town visitors**. I feel pretty cheap telling these people they have to pay 5 cents for a paper bag."

"I totally understand the reasoning behind the ban on plastic – but in the convenience store business paper does not do well. But the environment is more important than plastic bags – **the whales are more important.**"

"**I think it's a good thing.**"

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ISSUES



- **TacomaFIRST311** received **29 complaints** from July 2017 – December 2017
- **12 complaints** from January 2018 – November 2018:
 - Not charging customers for bags (6 complaints)
 - Charging EBT customers for bags (3 complaints)
 - Distributing thin bags (2 complaints)
 - Offering 5 cent refund coupon for pass-through charge (1 complaint)
- Each complaint was resolved with a single educational visit with the exception of the business offering a refund coupon for the pass through charge



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CUSTOMER SURVEY

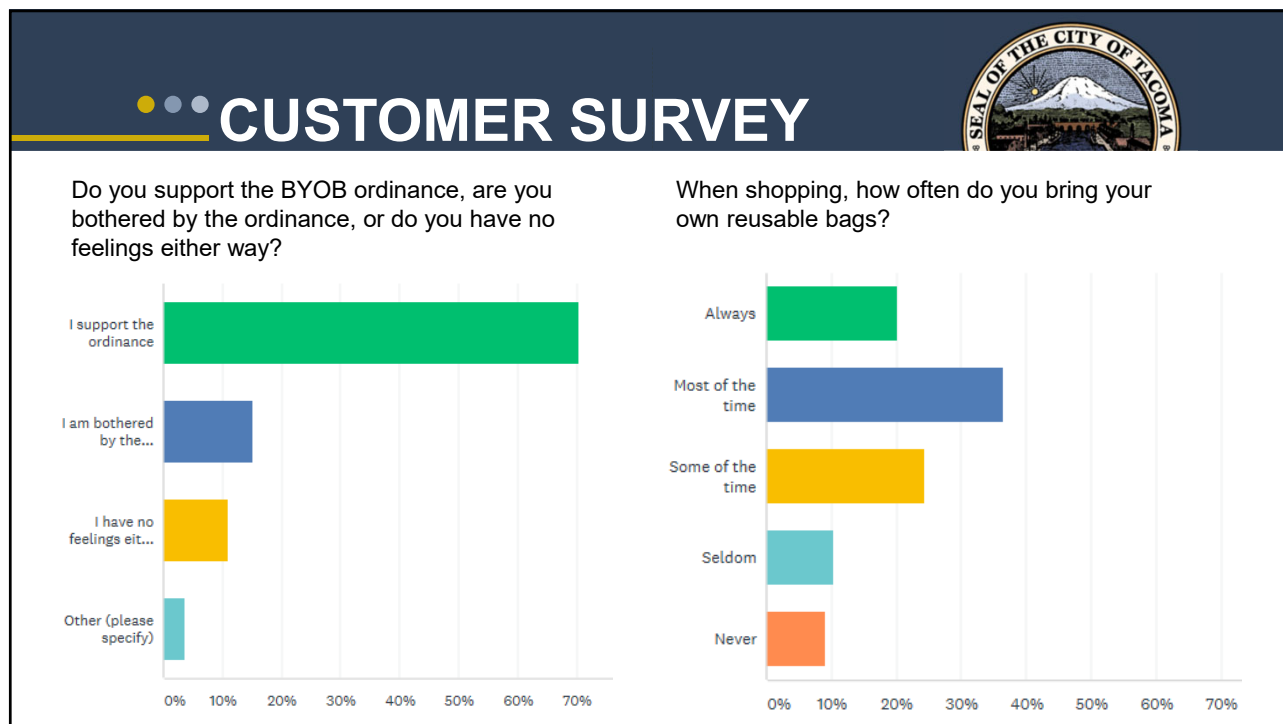


- 4 grocery store locations
 - In neighborhoods with an average income of less than \$30k annually*
 - Higher demographics for people of color*
 - Tabled for 8 hours over 4 days
- Free reusable shopping bags were given as an incentive to complete the survey
- 5 voluntary questions, with space for additional comments



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*Source: <http://www.city-data.com/>



● ● ● RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS



- 19 Washington cities have a plastic bag ban
- State-wide bill was announced in November
 - Expected to be introduced in 2019 legislative session
- OEPS has had several inquiries from nearby municipalities regarding Tacoma's ordinance
- OEPS recommends that the city continue enforcement of TMC 12.09.215
- Questions?



Office of
Environmental Policy
and
Sustainability