
Seattle Bike Parking Code Update

Importance

- Seattle City Council set a performance target in the Bicycle Master Plan to quadruple bicycle ridership between 2014 and 2030. If met, approximately 12.5% of commuters would bike to work.
- Increasing bicycle ridership is important for tackling climate change, addressing the affordability of transportation, providing alternative transportation options that avoid congestion, improving worker productivity, and improving public health.
- People can only ride their bicycles if their bicycle will be safe when they park it at their destination.

Background

- The Seattle Parking Code currently has three separate sets of standards for how much bicycle parking a new development must provide, based on the location of the development in the city. SDCI's proposed update will consolidate these standards into one set. In addition, the proposal makes some adjustments to be consistent with Portland and San Francisco.
- SDOT has drafted a "Seattle Bike Parking Guidelines" document that will be officially published once City Council adopts the update to the Seattle Parking Code.

Needed Changes

1. **Exempt bike parking and showers from Floor Area Ratio (FAR) maximums across the city.**
Currently, bicycle parking and showers are exempt from the city's FAR maximums in downtown, and bicycle parking is exempt from FAR for microhousing development. These exemptions help encourage bike parking facilities to be on the ground floor instead of in difficult find locations within dark parking garages. We strongly believe that this exemption should apply to the rest of the city for all land uses so developers aren't penalized for providing high-quality bike parking at ground level, near the main pedestrian entrances.
2. **Provide clearer authority for SDOT to set rules, guidelines, and criteria for bike parking.**
The current code provides some authority for SDOT to establish rules and criteria for bike parking. However, the way it's written doesn't necessarily authorize SDOT to establish rules and criteria for all the provisions within the bike parking code. In addition, with the forthcoming Bike Parking Guidelines, it's important that the code specifically authorize SDOT and SDCI to establish and use those guidelines.
3. **Align required bike parking ratios for development with the 12.5% bike commute share target.**
Unless each building has the capacity to accommodate the city's bike commute share target, we will not be able to achieve the target. While SDCI's proposal has improved the bike parking ratios for several land uses, additional increases need to be made, especially restaurants, entertainment venues, child care centers, religious facilities, K-12 schools, multi-family structures, and rail transit centers.
4. **Require convenient locations for bike parking.**
Making bicycling convenient is essential for encouraging more people to bike. We recommend encouraging bike parking be located on the ground floor rather than in parking garages through: the FAR exemption and specific design direction; requiring short-term bike parking to be within 50 feet of the

entrance (for each land use); and eliminating the allowance for long-term bike parking to be 100 or 600 feet away from a development project.

5. **Accommodate a fuller range of people's abilities and bicycles types**

Quadrupling bicycle ridership by 2030 will mean that people of a greater range of abilities and strength will be riding bikes. This necessitates ensuring more bike parking where people do not have to lift their bikes onto vertical racks. In addition, electric and cargo bikes are the fastest growing segments of the bike sales markets and have different spatial requirements than typical commuter bikes. We recommend providing specific legislative language authorizing SDOT to set guidelines and criteria for new development to provide long-term bike parking for a fuller range of people's abilities and bicycle types.

6. **Set a minimum square-footage per bicycle requirement**

Frequently developers inadequately size bike rooms and cages to provide the required amount of long-term bike parking. Permit reviewers have difficulty in knowing whether a bike room will be of sufficient size. While SDOT's forthcoming Bike Parking Guidelines will provide more direction on spacing of bike racks and layout, having a minimum square-footage per bicycle requirement would provide an easy quick check for SDOT permit reviewers to determine whether a bike room will be big enough. We recommend establishing a minimum requirement of 12 square-feet per bike.

7. **Allow and require bike valet**

Large special events and entertainment activities are ideal activities for people to bike to. These activities also can cause significant traffic congestion concerns for which bicycling can help alleviate. San Francisco's and Oakland's bike parking codes both mandate large public events to provide bike valet, and Portland strongly encourages it through its special event permitting process. Likewise, we believe entertainment venues should be allowed to meet their short-term bike parking requirements through valet services and large special events should be required to provide bike valet as well.

8. **Plan for bikeshare**

We strongly recommend enabling SDOT to establish and adapt new rules and guidelines for developers to design and provide space for free-floating, private bikeshare. There could be up to 20,000 bikeshare bikes on our streets in the next year. We do not yet have all the solutions for how these bikes should be accommodated, but we do know that we need to proactively design our sidewalk furnishing zones and building frontages in ways that provide convenient access to the bikes and keep our pedestrian and access ways clear. As these thousands of new bikes show up on our streets and sidewalks, the city will need to quickly adjust rules and regulations to adapt to the changing environment.

9. **Improve enforcement**

To improve enforcement and ensure new land uses are compliant, we recommend requiring approval not just during the construction of the building, but also for the certificate of occupancy of a new business, especially when the land use changes.