

The City of Seattle
Ordinance _____
Council Bill _____

..title

An ordinance relating to the Traffic Code; revising the definition of "junk motor vehicle";
and amending Section 11.14.268 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

..body

Recitals:

It can be difficult to enforce portions of the Traffic Code as found in Title 11, Subtitle 1.

This legislation clarifies the definition of a junk motor vehicle and expands the definitions
of what is "extensively damaged," "apparently inoperable," and "without a current
certificate of registration or a current and proper vehicle license" to enhance
enforcement of the Traffic Code.

This legislation is focused on vehicles not currently being lived in that are stored on city
streets.

The Council's intent is that vehicles that have an active Vehicle Resident Assistance
Permit not be towed solely for their vehicle meeting the junk vehicle standards.

In some places in Seattle, there are a limited number of people storing a large number
of vehicles in a variety of conditions in the right-of-way, which is not intended to
be a place for people to store a large number of vehicles, and definitely not a
large number of vehicles that meet the junk vehicle standards. Therefore,

Be it ordained by The City of Seattle as follows:

Section 1. Section 11.14.268 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 120098, is amended as follows:

11.14.268 Junk motor vehicle((,))

A. "Junk motor vehicle" means any motor vehicle meeting at least three of the following requirements:

1. Left on private property without the permission of the person having right to the possession of the property;

2. Left on a street, alley way open to the public, or on municipal or other public property for ~~((twenty-four (,))~~24((,))) hours or longer;

3. Extensively damaged, such damage including but not limited to any of the following:~~((A broken window or windshield, missing wheels, tires, motor, or transmission;))~~

a. Missing steering wheel, transmission, or motor;

b. Missing or broken windshield; or

c. Two or more missing or broken in any combination: side or back windows, wheels, tires, lights, body panels, or seats.

4. Apparently inoperable, meaning any motor vehicle that is unable to move under its own power on a flat surface or has other general conditions that would render the vehicle unroadworthy;

5. Having a fair market value of ~~((Five Hundred Dollars (,))~~\$500((,))) or less;

6. Without a current certificate of registration, with an obscured or not easily visible vehicle identification number, current license tabs depicting the current

registration expiration month and year, ~~((or))~~ a current and proper vehicle license, or a license plate.

B. ~~((Vehicles in Violation of this Section.))~~ Junk motor vehicles are subject to impoundment as provided for in Chapter 11.30 ~~((SMC))~~ in addition to any other penalty provided for by law.

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

Summary and Fiscal Note

1. Legislation Summary

Department: Legislative

Title: An ordinance relating to the Traffic Code; revising the definition of "junk motor vehicle"; and amending Section 11.14.268 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

Background: This ordinance would update the Traffic Code's definition of Junk Vehicles by:

- Providing more clarity on what is meant by a vehicle that is extensively damaged
- Providing more detail on what is meant by a vehicle that is apparently inoperable
- Providing more detail on what it means for a current to have a current vehicle license/registration
- Adding two new criteria that can cause a vehicle to be considered a junk vehicle:
 - The Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is obscured or not easily visible
 - The vehicle has no license plate

Summary Attachments: None

2. Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

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

☐ Yes

☒ No

a. CIP Project Name:

- b. Master Project ID:
 - c. Project Location:
 - d. Start Date:
 - e. End Date:
 - f. Total Project Cost Through 2030:
-

3. Summary of Financial Implications

Does this legislation have financial impacts to the City?

☒ Yes

☐ No

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.

Creating clarity around what constitutes a junk vehicle could lead to an increase in impoundments of junk vehicles. This could increase costs related to impoundments, including towing and vehicle disposal costs.

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? N/A

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

There may be other impacts related to junk vehicles in the right of way, such as public safety, cleanliness and pedestrian access. Providing clarity on the junk vehicle definition, which can facilitate removal of junk vehicles, may reduce financial costs associated with those other impacts.

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

This legislation would support the work of the Seattle Police Department's Parking Enforcement Officers to help determine if a vehicle is considered a junk vehicle.

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?

No

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.

Strengthening the definition of "junk vehicle" with clearer criteria, such as explicitly defining "extensively damaged" or "apparently inoperable", could have mixed equity implications for vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities in Seattle. Possible impacts include:

Improved neighborhood conditions – With clearer criteria, Seattle Policy Parking Enforcement may be able to work more quickly to remove blighted vehicles which could enhance visual appeal, reduce safety hazards, and may control pests, all benefits that disproportionately improve quality of life in underserved neighborhoods.

Health and environmental justice gains – Overburdened communities often face higher exposure to environmental hazards. Clearer enforcement supports cleanup efforts that align with Seattle's environmental justice goals, potentially reducing pollution and promoting community well-being.

Possible increased penalties and financial burdens – More precise definitions could lead to an increase in:

- **Citations** - A vehicle deemed a “junk motor vehicle” and parked on public streets, alleys, or municipal property constitutes a Class I civil infraction under SMC Chapter 11.72.500(b), which carries a non-suspendable fine of \$250;
- **Immediate Impounds** - Under SMC 11.30.040(A)(8), police officers may impound a junk motor vehicle parked on public streets, alleys, or public property immediately and without prior notice; and
- **Impounds After Notice** - SMC 11.30.060(B) covers impoundment procedures when a vehicle, including a junk vehicle, is abandoned on private property, requiring notice before impoundment.

Low-income vehicle owners may struggle to contest enforcement, retrieve impounded vehicles, or cover impoundment and/or towing expenses, creating an undue burden.

Risk of uneven enforcement – Enforcement practices might unintentionally target historically marginalized neighborhoods. Balanced enforcement by Seattle Police Department would need to be a priority to ensure equitable treatment.

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.

N/A

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.

N/A

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?

N/A

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

N/A