



**City of Seattle**  
**Disposable Bag Green Fee & Foam Food Container Ban**  
**Overview & Transition Plan**  
**April 2, 2008**

### **Disposable Bag Green Fee**

Seattleites use 360 million throwaway paper and plastic shopping bags every year.

- That equals 8,500 tons of greenhouse gases.
- Almost 240 million bags end up in the garbage, almost 4 percent of all residential garbage, by volume.
- Compared to plastic, paper bags have four times the environmental impact — from logging, manufacture, distribution and disposal.

To encourage shoppers to switch to reusable bags and cut down on waste, Mayor Greg Nickels and City Council President Richard Conlin are proposing a 20-cent green fee on disposable shopping bags, both paper and plastic.

- Subject to City Council action expected in June, the fee would begin Jan. 1, 2009. It would be charged at grocery, drug and convenience stores — the source of almost 75 percent of all bags. This will save 4,000 tons of greenhouse gas per year, that's the same as taking 665 cars off the road.
- The fee would not apply to bags used inside stores to contain bulk items; bags for prepared food, such as deli or bakery goods; newspapers; and dry-cleaner bags
- Merchants will retain 5 cents per bag for taxes and administrative costs. Businesses that gross less than \$1 million will keep the entire 20-cent fee.
- City revenue — 15 cents per bag — will be used for waste prevention, recycling, city cleanup and environmental education programs.

### **Foam Food Container Ban**

Mayor Nickels and Council President Conlin also propose a ban on the use of expanded polystyrene (EPS, sometimes called “Styrofoam”) containers and cups in all restaurants.

- Subject to City Council action expected in June, the ban would begin on Jan. 1, 2009.
- It would apply to all food service businesses and include some of the foam packaging used in grocery stores, such as meat and vegetable trays.
- Food service businesses are encouraged to switch now to compostable and recyclable alternatives, which are already available from local distributors.
- The proposal requires all food service businesses to switch from one-time-use, disposable plastic and plastic-coated paper food and beverage containers and utensils to fully compostable and recyclable substitutes by July 1, 2010.

## **Transition Plan**

During the rollout and first year of these programs, the City will:

- Set aside up to \$1 million to support distribution of free or low-cost reusable bags.
- Establish business advisory committees representing retail and restaurant sectors.
- Help food service businesses work together for lower prices on new compostable products.
- Make significant investments in public education to promote reusable bag use and tell customers about composting programs at home and at restaurants.
- Set aside funding for joint promotions with stores and restaurants.
- Provide complete program information on the Web.
- Reach shoppers and diners using regular direct mail.
- Establish programs to make sure low-income families and the elderly have the reusable bags they need.

For more information see <http://www.seattle.gov/util/bagsandfoam>