



COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM
BRIEFING ITEM

Item No.	<u>11 a</u>
Date of Meeting	<u>May 26, 2026</u>

DATE: May 14, 2026
TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director
FROM: Eric Schinfeld, Sr. Manager, Federal and International Government Relations
SUBJECT: SEA Childcare Center Feasibility Study Initial Briefing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 11, 2025, the Port of Seattle Commission passed Order No. 2025-04, to direct the Executive Director to conduct a feasibility study for increasing childcare access that is accessible, affordable, and/or flexible for SEA workers and to establish the Childcare Navigator program for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) workers.

On May 26, Port staff and consultants will provide an update on the progress of the first item – the SEA Childcare Center Feasibility Study. Since July 2025, the Port has been working with Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC), a consultancy based on Denver, Colorado that specializes in helping employers evaluate and implement childcare solutions. In particular, EPIC has expertise working with airports on this issue, having completed a similar feasibility study for Denver International Airport.

The May 26 briefing will provide an overview of the initial findings from the feasibility study – based on a substantial amount of work, ranging from site visits to other airports that have childcare facilities to interviews and surveys of potential childcare demand from SEA workers. The goal of the briefing will be to not only inform Commissioners about progress, but also to get feedback on any outstanding questions before the work is completed by September 2026.

BACKGROUND

One of the key drivers of the Port of Seattle’s success in operating Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) and meeting growing travel demand is the ability of the airport and its tenants to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that lack of affordable, accessible childcare is a growing barrier to those efforts. The location of the airport away from sufficient childcare facilities, the 24/7 nature of airport shift work, and the overall dearth of affordable, accessible childcare are all contributing factors to this challenge, and lead to increased risk that airport operations will be negatively impacted by lack of sufficient workforce.

To that end, Port of Seattle conducted a preliminary study in 2024 to further examine the how childcare access impacts the successful recruitment and retention of the airport workforce at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA); furthermore, it commissioned an analysis of various options that could potentially increase affordable, accessible, and flexible childcare for SEA workers as a way to support and strengthen SEA operations.

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The completed study contained recommendations for further investigation; in particular, two options identified in the report seem particularly promising:

- 1) The development of a Port Child Care Center, or set of centers, proximate to SEA that are created explicitly to serve the needs of airport workers; and
- 2) The provision of technical assistance that offers comprehensive, in-language support to help SEA workers navigate subsidy applications and find available childcare solutions that support continued employment at SEA.

In February 2025, the Port Commission directed the Executive Director to 1) conduct a feasibility study for a childcare facility that would increase accessible, affordable, flexible childcare services for SEA workers and to 2) establish a “childcare navigator” program at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport for airport workers.

In particular, the Commission directed the Childcare Center Feasibility Study to include the following data:

- Additional data collection and engagement with employers and employees at SEA to understand the impact of childcare on the successful recruitment and retention of airport workers;
- Operational models for how affordable, accessible, flexible childcare could be delivered to SEA employees, including potential partnerships with local jurisdictions and/or agreements with for-profit or non-profit childcare providers;
- Best practices from other airports offer childcare services to airport workers, including the creation of a list of local and national providers who can offer such services at SEA;
- Financial modeling that examines the costs of building a childcare facility on-site or off-site and/or bringing an existing building space up to licensing standards and code requirements;
- Funding opportunities available through federal, state, and local resources to both build and/or operate such a facility;
- Information about the physical requirements for childcare facilities in Washington state that would inform decisions about future siting at or near SEA; and
- Any additional data or analysis that provides necessary insights into the feasibility of siting and operating a childcare facility on-site at or near SEA, subject to Washington state requirements and federal restrictions on use of airport funds.

Port staff have worked with EPIC to fulfill this direction, and are at a point where initial findings are ready to be presented to the Commission for feedback and next steps.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS PRESENTATION -

- (1) Presentation slides

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PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

- **February 11, 2025** – The Commission approved Order No. 2025-04, to direct the Executive Director to conduct a feasibility study for increasing childcare access that is accessible, affordable, and/or flexible for SEA workers and to establish the Childcare Navigator program for Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) workers.
- **July 9, 2024** – SEA Childcare Services Evaluation Project briefing