Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum

To: Transportation Committee
From: Christa Valles, Central Staff
Subject: Free-floating car share legislation
Date: September 24, 2012

Background: "free floating" car share vs. traditional car share
On September 25th, the Executive will brief Transportation Committee members on proposed legislation that would enable SDOT to issue permits to for-profit or non-profit entities interested in providing "free floating" car share cars in Seattle. The free-floating car share program, as contemplated, differs from the City's existing flex car program in that all or a majority of the cars could be left by participating members in any metered (without the driver paying) or non-metered parking spaces, including Residential Parking Zones (RPZ). While free floating car share companies would pay a fee based on meter use (assuming this can accurately be determined), time limits on parking spaces would not apply to free-floating car share cars. This is in contrast to Seattle's flex car program, which requires members to pay for metered parking and leave cars in designated spots, the vast majority of which are located in private off-street parking.

car2go
SDOT has been discussing the possibility of issuing permits to a free-floating car share company called car2go. Car2go is proposing to deploy 250 cars in downtown and north Seattle, with the possibility of expanding this number if demand for the service grows or the proposed service area expands. Car2go would reimburse the city for meter usage (the specific details of how this would be determined are not yet finalized).

Car2go began initial operations in Europe; its expansion in North America is relatively recent, with five of the eight cities noted below starting service in only the last few months.

City	Service Start Date
Austin	May 2010
San Diego	November 2011
Vancouver, Canada	June 2011
Washington, DC	March 2012
Portland, Oregon	March 2012
Toronto, Canada	June 2012
Miami, FL	July 2012
Calgary, Canada	July 2012

Proposed legislation & potential policy guidance
The draft enabling legislation establishing a free-floating car share program in Seattle is silent on a variety of policy issues that SDOT intends to address in its permit with car2go. While SDOT has agreed to submit the proposed permit conditions to Council for review prior to Council passing the enabling legislation, Councilmembers may want to amend the proposed legislation to establish policy guidance, or include such guidance in a resolution. Such issues include:

- Designating the car2go program a pilot program (as Austin, San Diego, and Portland did).

- Requiring a report back on car2go parking patterns that would include how often cars are in use vs. parked, and when, where, and how long they tend to be left in metered, non-metered, and RPZ spaces.

- Requiring SDOT to obtain Council approval prior to allowing car2go to add more cars beyond the initial 250 requested (or some other threshold number). This would allow Council to understand the impact of car2go cars on parking space availability in high demand areas, i.e., how cars are being used, how long they tend to be parked in any 24 hour period, and the impacts on parking space turn-over in high demand areas, prior to more cars being added to city streets.

- Requiring car2go to expand the initial geographic area in which it is proposing to operate. Car2go initially proposed a zone that would include most of the north-end but omit neighborhoods south of I-90, including W. Seattle. Recent discussions with car2go suggest car2go may be amenable to expanding its initial zone south of I-90, but it has not yet been confirmed.

- Ensuring a verifiable data collection system is in place to confirm car2go's actual meter usage and there is a mechanism to reimburse the City retroactively for actual use.

  The proposed parking meter reimbursement rate ($1,000 per car per year) seems low. Assuming 300 parking revenue days per year, this equals $3.30 per car per day. While it's difficult to know with any certainty at this point where car2go cars will end up being parked during the day and early evening where meter fees are required, it seems likely that a majority of them will be located in dense areas, such as the Commercial Core ($4 per hour), Capitol Hill ($2.50 per hour), and the University District (2.50 per hour). Car2go has also said that its cars tend to be found in downtown and urbanized areas of town during the day and gravitate out to more residential areas at night.

  Since the proposed permit rate is only a "best guess" at this point in time, it will be critical to ensure that car2go's technology can reliably report actual meter usage and that there is a requirement to reimburse the city for any meter revenue not accounted

for in the $1,000 permit fee. Car2go has said that this technology is available as it tracks each cars location through GPS and it knows when a car is in-use vs. parked.

- Explicitly acknowledging the value associated with an exemption from the City's parking time limits. Seattle's time limit restrictions on parking are intended to encourage turn-over and regulate demand. It may be that a free-floating car-share service in Seattle is itself the benefit provided in exchange for the proposed time limit exemptions, but it seems important to note that an exemption from parking time limits is not an insignificant one.

- Placing time limits for parked cars in RPZ zones. The current proposal includes $200 per car per year for a city-wide RPZ permit. Members could park and leave car2go cars in RPZ neighborhoods as they would be exempt from time restrictions placed on non-RPZ permitted cars. Are Councilmembers interested in placing some time restrictions on car2go cars in RPZ neighborhoods? For example, Washington D.C. requires car2go to move cars that have been sitting for more than 24 hours in RPZ areas.

I've raised these issues in part to gauge Councilmember interest in oversight of this program, its interest in a report back on usage and impacts on parking space availability and turn-over, and any future decisions to expand the program. Depending on Council interest, staff could draft a resolution laying out policy guidance and/or amend the proposed legislation as appropriate.