

Sponsors: Commissioner Hasegawa
Commissioner Calkins

ORDER NO. 2026-04

AN ORDER OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION

...to direct the Executive Director to explore a program to facilitate secure area access for union business representatives that represent workers at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

PROPOSED

April 28, 2026

INTRODUCTION

In May 2025, the Port Commission adopted Order No. 2025-07, directing the Executive Director to conduct the necessary legal, operational, and security analysis regarding Port-issued SIDA access badges for union representatives, and to return to the Commission with recommendations. On December 12, 2025, the Executive Director provided a report responding to that Order, which outlined regulatory constraints, stakeholder feedback, and operational considerations.

The Executive Director's report recommended maintaining current practices of escorted access and employer-sponsored badges, while acknowledging the interest of labor unions in effectively representing their members. The report noted that the Port had requested input from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) on whether such access would be granted and the TSA provided a written response stating that such access was not an operational need under federal regulations and as such would decline a proposal for Port-sponsored SIDA badges for union representatives.

Following the report, the Commission convened with labor stakeholders and Port staff to discuss the needs expressed by labor and the needs of the Port to maintain security and operational continuity. These discussions identified several potential mechanisms, including a sterile access program comparable to the existing SEA Visitor Pass Program.

This Order directs the Executive Director to explore a program that facilitates temporary and limited access for a defined group of union business representatives to meet with the employees they represent while ensuring compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

TEXT OF THE ORDER

The Port Commission hereby directs the Executive Director to explore a program to facilitate access to the sterile area for union business representatives that represent workers at SEA. In carrying out this directive, the Executive Director shall:

1. Explore Alternative Access Mechanisms:

Evaluate the feasibility of multiple approaches to facilitate sterile area access for union business representatives, including but not limited to:

- a. A sterile access program comparable to the SEA Visitor Pass Program, with parameters tailored for union business representatives;
- b. Expansion or enhancement of the existing employer-sponsored badge program; and
- c. Other mechanisms identified through stakeholder engagement or TSA dialogue.

2. Establish Program Parameters:

Any program developed shall incorporate the following parameters:

- d. Eligibility limited to a defined group of union business representatives that currently represent workers employed in the sterile area, with the limited number of eligible representatives determined in consultation with labor stakeholders;
- e. Access purposes limited to administering collective bargaining agreements, meeting with employees they represent, and observing working conditions of employees they represent within areas accessible to the public: Any program will explicitly prohibit organizing activities, which remain subject to existing Airport Rules and Regulations governing First Amendment activities;
- f. Appropriate security screening and background check requirements consistent with TSA regulations;
- g. Training requirements for participating union representatives on airport security protocols and operational procedures; and
- h. Clear terms of use and enforcement mechanisms, including provisions for revocation and termination of the program
- i. This program shall be piloted for 180 days from implementation date, pending Executive Director review and consultation with participating union representatives and other relevant stakeholders. Based on that review, the Executive Director shall make a recommendation to the Commission regarding the extension of the pilot program or program adoption.

3. Report to the Commission:

Provide a written report and briefing to the Port Commission no later than June 1, 2026, including stakeholder feedback, recommended program design, implementation timeline, and any required policy changes for Commission review and consideration.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE ORDER

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport helps nearly 53 million passengers get safely to and from their destinations every year. That level of service is made possible by over 22,000 workers employed by more than 100 employers. Many of these workers are represented by labor unions whose functions include administering collective bargaining agreements, supporting represented employees, addressing grievances, enforcing workplace rights, and ensuring compliance with labor agreements.

The Commission has heard from union representatives that current access mechanisms – primarily escorted visits and employer-sponsored badges – present challenges to access to their members. These representatives have said these escorted visits require workers to step away from their duties, may raise concerns about management observation, and can be logistically difficult to arrange. While two employers currently sponsor badges for union representatives, this practice is not uniformly available across all unions representing SEA workers.

Union representatives have expressed an interest for a defined group of union business representatives to have periodic access to the secure side of the airport. Such access would enable these representatives to maintain institutional knowledge, build relationships with employees that they represent, observe working conditions of employees that they represent, and provide timely support to employees that they represent. This is distinct from organizing activities, which the Commission acknowledges are appropriately limited to public areas on the public side of the airport in designated areas under existing Airport Rules and Regulations.

The Port has a strong history of supporting workers and partnering with organized labor. The Commission's investments in SEA workforce programs – including the Childcare Navigator program, transit benefits, and healthcare study – reflect this commitment. Exploring mechanisms to facilitate effective union representation is consistent with these values and supports the Commission's goal of ensuring that SEA remains a place where workers can thrive.

This Order directs the Executive Director to build on the work completed under Order No. 2025-07 by exploring concrete program options, engaging stakeholders, and returning to the Commission with recommendations. The Commission recognizes that any program must comply with TSA regulations and operational requirements and looks forward to reviewing possible alternatives that serve the interests of workers, unions, employers, and the traveling public.