



# City of Saint Paul

## COVID-19

### Skyway Operations

#### Background:

- Skyway Purpose: *The Easements grant to the public the right of use of the skyway system for purposes of ingress egress and pedestrian transit without limitation.*
- Skyway Easement Agreements with Property Owners
  - The easement agreements vary in their specific terms and status; however, agreements defer to ordinance and the general policy statement to provide for uniform regulations.
- Hours and Exemptions (Relevant ordinance sections on reverse side)
  - Per Saint Paul Legislative Code, Sec. 140.11:
    - o General hours of operation for all parts of the skyway system are 6am to midnight.
    - o Street access to any building may be secured during the hours there is no business within the building open to the public.
    - o Ordinance allows for an “exception to general hours of operation” with City Council approval.
- Skyways continue to serve downtown residents and individuals conducting essential business.
  - o Skyways provide weather protected connections for residents to go to open businesses (e.g. Walgreens).
  - o DSI has received requests from residents that the skyways remain open.
- Easement Property Owners COVID-19 Questions, Concerns and Requests:
  - o DSI has been talking with BOMA and property owners who are requesting information and in some cases permission to close their portion of the skyway. They highlight:
    - No businesses open in their buildings and yet they incur Skyway security costs.
    - Health concerns for security employees and concerns about spread of COVID-19.
  - o Several property owners have closed their skyways without Council approval. (List accompanying.)
    - The City Hall/Courthouse skyway closure (Bridge #32) raises questions on whether other property owners’ in a similar situation have the same ability to close.
- Ramsey County Public Health
  - o Skyways may remain open and as they are utilized for residents who need access to essential business (e.g., Walgreens). Skyways allow for appropriate social distancing among travelers.
  - o Recommend enhanced cleaning for bathroom facilities co-located with skyways. The addition of portable handwashing facilities, if available, would also be recommended.
- Saint Paul Police - current general observations about skyway system.
  - o Dramatic decrease in the number of people using the skyway system.
  - o Decrease in the number of complaints (smoking, disorderly, etc.)
    - Receive average of one voice page per night for complaints, compared to several per night.
  - o Not seeing an increase in 911 or non-emergency police calls for service in the skyways.
  - o The community ambassadors are not working, but officers continue proactive police patrols/activity.

#### Conclusion

Given skyways were created for the use of the public to move through downtown, are used by residents and individuals conducting essential business, and social distancing can be achieved within them, DSI does not see a basis within current Skyway ordinance language for the closure of Skyways at this time.

## Relevant Ordinances

*Sec. 140.10. - Hours of operation.*

*(a) General hours. All parts of the skyway system shall be open to the public every day between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. These general hours of operation shall be minimum hours and nothing in this ordinance shall prohibit any portion of the skyway system from being open a greater number of hours for any reason. However, outside the general hours all skyway doors shall be secured, unless all unsecured doors are physically monitored. Nothing in this section is intended to supersede other legally binding agreements regarding greater hours of access to specific buildings and/or entrances or other building elements. These general hours of operation apply to all entrances into the skyway system including doors, stairways, elevators and escalators leading from an area that is open to the public to the skyway system. Notwithstanding the foregoing, street access to any building connected to the skyway system may be secured during the hours that there is no tenant or business within the building that is open to the public. If a building has a tenant or business that is open to the public, that building must have at least one (1) designated street access point open to the public during the hours of operation of the tenant or business.*

*Exception to general hours of operation. The owner of any property that contains a portion of the skyway system may petition the city council for an exception to the general hours of operation. The petition must be made on a form provided by the department of safety and inspections and shall be submitted to the department of safety and inspections. That petition must state the reason for the exception and the alternative proposed hours. The council shall refer the petition to the skyway governance/advisory committee for a recommendation. The skyway governance/advisory committee shall forward their recommendation to the city council within thirty (30) days. The council shall then hold a public hearing to consider the petition for alternative hours. The council shall grant or deny the petition for alternative hours by resolution. In that resolution, the council shall state the specific reasons the exception is being granted. In determining whether to grant or deny the petition, the council shall consider:(1)Whether the portion of the skyway system petitioning for alternative hours leads to another portion of skyway system that has the general hours of operation;(2)Whether security such as a metal detector or photo identification is required to gain access to the portion of the skyway system requesting the alternative hours;(3)Whether there is a contract or other legal document between the property and the city outlining alternative hours that cannot be altered by ordinance;(4)Whether retail or other business activities take place within the skyway system and the difficulty of closing off those business areas from the ingress/egress area;(5)The reasonableness of the alternative proposed hours;(6)Other logistical or financial hardship imposed on the building if it is not granted alternative hours.*