




**TO:** Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Carrie Wilhelme, Senior Transportation Planner, Public Works  
Josh Diekmann, P.E. PTOE, Interim Public Works Director/City Engineer <sup>DS</sup>  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance – Amendments to Title 11 Related to Nonarterial Streets and Neighborhood Business District Speed Limits - July 26, 2022  
**DATE:** July 1, 2022

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

An ordinance amending Chapter 11.05 of the Municipal Code, relating to Model Traffic Ordinance, by amending Section 11.05.510 to establish a default speed limit of 20 miles per hour on nonarterial (residential) streets, adding a new Section 11.05.515, entitled “Twenty-five miles per hour limit – Streets designated”, and amending Section 11.05.520 to lower the speed limit from 30 miles per hour to 25 miles per hour on arterial streets in four Neighborhood Business Districts: Old Town, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Lincoln, and McKinley Hill.

**BACKGROUND:**

This Department’s recommendation is based on the City’s commitment to Vision Zero. On February 18, 2020, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 40559 committing to Vision Zero and setting a goal to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2035. The Resolution directed staff to complete a study on the “State of Speed and Safety in Tacoma” and consider a default speed limit of 25 mph on arterials and 20 mph on residential streets. The study was initiated in September 2021 with a focus on all residential streets and arterial streets within neighborhood business districts. The recommendations from the study were finalized in April 2022. Staff provided an overview of the findings and presented the speed limit reduction recommendations at City Council Study Session on June 7, 2022.

Safe Speeds are a primary element of Vision Zero’s Safe Systems approach. Lowering speeds improves safety by reducing the frequency and severity of crashes. Lower speeds improve visibility, provide additional time for drivers to stop, and reduce the potential for fatal or severe injuries by lowering impact forces. The link between speed and injury severity in crashes is consistent, direct and especially critical for more vulnerable roadway users.

Residential streets should be safe and healthy places, creating environments that are walkable, encourage social connection, and foster a sense of community. In recognition of the role of residential streets as shared spaces with significant mixing of people walking, rolling, bicycling, and driving, RCW 46.61.415 permits local governments the authority to establish a speed limit of 20 mph on a nonarterial street without an engineering or traffic investigation.

Neighborhood business districts are meant to provide services to the surrounding community, to be a place for neighbors to gather, and be pedestrian-friendly destinations. The majority of streets in Tacoma’s neighborhood business districts are classified as arterials. RCW 46.61.400 sets a minimum speed limit of 25 mph on arterial streets; state law also requires an engineering or traffic study to change the speed limit on an arterial. Traffic studies were conducted on arterial streets located within neighborhood business districts as defined by Title 1 of the Municipal Code. The traffic studies analyzed land use and road characteristics, five-year crash data trends, and speed and volume data. The studies found that four of the neighborhood business districts had conditions in place that would support lowering the arterial speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph: 6th Avenue, Old Town, McKinley Hill, and Lincoln. Given people who are walking or biking are twice as likely to live after being hit by a car at 25 mph than at 30 mph, this small speed limit reduction doubles the odds of survival.



### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

An extensive public engagement process was conducted as part of the Vision Zero Action Plan process. Engagement events that included specific conversations around speed reduction included:

- Citywide public survey with 609 respondents
- 10 external stakeholder interviews
- Community conversation event followed by an all-abilities bike ride
- Community conversation and open house event for individuals with a disability
- “Walk and Talk” event as part of the McKinley Neighborhood Planning process
- Public drop-in Vision Zero open house
- Presentations to the Vision Zero Task Force, Tacoma School District Traffic Safety Committee, Transportation Commission, Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group, and the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee

Speeding was the top safety issue identified by survey respondents, and speed reduction was also identified as a foundational element to meeting Vision Zero goals during Task Force meetings. The proposed amendments are supported by the Vision Zero Task Force, Transportation Commission, and the Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group.

### **2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

#### **Equity and Accessibility:**

While everyone is affected by traffic collisions, collisions do not affect everyone equally. Vulnerable users of the City’s transportation infrastructure include, but are not limited to: children, older adults, individuals experiencing homelessness, people walking and biking, and individuals with a disability. Making roadways safer for vulnerable users is an important part of making the roadways safer for everyone. Lowering the residential speed limit and the speed limit in the four neighborhood business districts is just the first step towards creating a more just transportation system.

**Economy/Workforce:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

**Civic Engagement:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

**Livability:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

#### **Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

Lower speed limits on residential streets and in neighborhood business districts support safer travel conditions for everyone using the street, as well as provide a more comfortable environment for people walking and biking. It also encourages people to walk and bike, providing the greatest contribution to neighborhood livability, a balanced transportation network that supports climate friendly mobility options, accessibility, equity, and economic vitality for all.



**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Deny the proposal	Not applicable	The City unlikely to meet adopted Vision Zero goals

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

A key tenet of Vision Zero is the tracking and evaluation of progress. As part of any speed reduction effort, staff will collect pre- and post-speed data and report the findings to the Transportation Commission within one year of speed reduction implementation.

Although there is no immediate fiscal impact to adopting this code change, additional resources may be needed to implement traffic calming countermeasures. Identifying and considering these countermeasures should be included in future budget development processes.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The Public Works Department recommends City Council approve the proposed amendments to Chapter 11.05 of the Municipal Code.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1060 – Transportation Capital Fund	PWK-01033-FS-02	5310100	\$220,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$220,000</b>

**What funding is being used to support the expense?**

General Fund

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?**

YES  
The \$220,000 in General Fund dollars allocated to the ‘Speed Limit Changes – Residential/Business Districts’ project were awarded during the 2021/2022 Mid-Biennium Modification process.

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

No

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

No

**Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?**

No