



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Rumbaugh  
**COPY:** Mayor and City Council, City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance - prohibiting attendance at unlawful exhibitions of speed - April 12, 2022  
**DATE:** April 7, 2022

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

An Ordinance amending Chapter 11.05 of the Municipal Code, relating to Model Traffic Ordinance, by adding a new Section relating to prohibiting attendance at unlawful exhibitions of speed.  
[Council Member Rumbaugh]

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Deputy Mayor Ushka, Council Members Hines, McCarthy and Rumbaugh

**BACKGROUND:**

**The Council Member’s Recommendation is Based On:**

In March of 2021, the Tacoma City Council passed Ordinance 28748: An ordinance amending Chapter 11.05 of the Municipal Code, relating to Model Traffic Ordinance, by adding a new Section 11.05.132, "Unlawful exhibition of speed prohibited" relating to illegal speed exhibition activities within the City limits. "Unlawful exhibition of speed" means the operation of a motor vehicle to present a display of speed, maneuverability, or power. "Speed exhibition" includes, but is not limited to, squealing the tires of a motor vehicle while it is stationary or in motion, rapid acceleration, rapid swerving or weaving, drifting, producing smoke from tire slippage, or leaving visible tire acceleration marks on the surface of the highway or ground. Any person who operates a motor vehicle in or during an unlawful exhibition of speed is guilty of a misdemeanor, which is punishable by up to 90 days in jail, up to a \$1,000 fine, or by both such imprisonment and fine.

This ordinance did not include a prohibition of spectator attendance. Prohibiting spectator attendance is frequently seen in other municipal laws seeking to address street racing and exhibitions of speed. Preventing spectator attendance removes the motivation of performing for audiences and can help take away the entertainment and attention aspect of exhibition of speed events, as such events often go viral when filmed and posted to social media or YouTube. Event attendees may also help coordinate events, playing roles such as "flaggers," timekeepers, lookouts with computers mounted in their cars, cell phones, police scanners, and Web sites that announce race locations and calculate the odds of getting caught by the police. Additionally, crowd-management and safety limits actions first responders can take when responding to exhibition of speed events.

This ordinance proposes amending the Municipal Code to add language prohibiting spectator attendance at exhibitions of speed.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

Constituents from across the City, including every City Council district, have contacted their Council Members requesting action be taken to address the impacts of street racing and exhibitions of speed in their neighborhoods. Council Members have worked with internal City departments to determine barriers to enforcing the current ordinance prohibiting exhibitions of speed.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: (Mandatory)**

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worked with internal City departments to determine barriers to enforcing the current ordinance prohibiting exhibitions of speed.

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

Increase the number of diverse livable wage jobs.  
 Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

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

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.  
 Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

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

According to a 2004 study from the U.S. Department of Justice, although casualties from street racing have not been tracked by government nor the insurance industry, an examination of news reports and police data from 10 major U.S. cities and extrapolation based on national population figures indicates that at least 50 people die each year as a result of street racing. The harms related to street racing include vehicle crashes, noise, vandalism, loss of commercial revenue, and excessive deterioration of public streets.<sup>1</sup> Exhibitions of speed have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the impacts on local communities. One study of deaths caused by street racing in Los Angeles County showed that over half the time deaths caused by street racing did not impact drivers participating in the activity. The rest were either passengers in the speeding vehicles, spectators or people simply walking on a sidewalk or driving home.<sup>2</sup> This data demonstrates how exhibitions of speed can negatively impact the City of Tacoma.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
1. Take no action		Does not address barriers to preventing negative impacts of exhibitions of speed.
2. Utilize existing tools to target exhibitions of speed, including regional collaboration and special emphasis missions	Current practices have shown some success in preventing and responding to street racing.	Current practices have a large cost that is not sustainable long term. Additional barriers have been identified that are not addressed with current policies.
3. Adopt geographically-focused ordinances similar to other local municipalities	Focuses resources on targeted geographic areas with known issues of exhibition of speeds.	Data shows exhibitions of speed happen across the City, a geographic approach would not address the systemic problem.
4. Public Works investments narrowing streets and synchronizing traffic lights to make roads less ideal for racing	Long-term tool to address broad traffic concerns and improve access and infrastructure. Aligned with other City priorities including Vision Zero goals.	Long-term, not immediate, tool. Infrastructure projects are very expensive, funding for these projects is not identified.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/street-racing>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-street-racing/>



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

Updates on the enforcement of this ordinance should be provided to Council in alignment with directives in Ordinance 28748, including enforcement data inclusive of demographic information specific to race and age. Negotiation and project development to implement this directive is currently underway. Council should receive an update no less than quarterly on the City's progress in implementing this directive during public meetings.

Although there is no immediate fiscal impact to adopting this code change, additional resources may be needed to implement the enforcement provisions. Identifying and considering these resources should be included in the 2023-2024 biennium budget development process.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Sponsor Council Members recommend adopting this ordinance and providing an additional tool to enforce prohibition of exhibitions of speed in the City of Tacoma.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

No fiscal impact to adopting the code/language change.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Ordinance