



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Lillian Hunter & Policy Assistant Claire Goodwin  
**COPY:** City Council & City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance Addressing Speed Exhibitions  
**DATE:** March 18, 2021

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

As part of a regional effort to reduce unlawful speed exhibitions and while the City awaits the findings of the Pierce County Force Investigations Team (PCFIT) and the Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office regarding the incident involving a Tacoma Police Officer on January 23, 2021, this ordinance:

1. Addresses unlawful exhibitions of speed to include a clear definition of illegal speed exhibition activities, declares it as a violation, and applies the law across the entire City;
2. Directs the City Manager to ensure data is collected on enforcement of this ordinance in alignment with best practices currently under development as prescribed in Resolution 40685 (2020) in addition to the city of residence of all individuals receiving a citation; and
3. Requests a presentation to Study Session on the findings of the data collected, the effectiveness of the new ordinance, and any recommendations on strengthening the ordinance with a focus on racial equity six months after implementation within the Police Department.

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Mayor Victoria Woodards, Council Member Lillian Hunter, Council Member Robert Thoms, and Council Member Conor McCarthy

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Tacoma has been participating in recent meetings convened by Pierce County Executive, Bruce Dammeier, to include regional jurisdictions’ City Managers and Mayors to discuss policy options and taking a regional approach related to an increase in street racing and speed exhibitions. Tacoma’s City Manager, Elizabeth Pauli, Mayor Victoria Woodards, and Council Member Lillian Hunter have been attending the meetings alongside representatives from: Fife, Puyallup, Sumner, Lakewood, University Place, Dupont, Bonney Lake, Gig Harbor, Edgewood, Orting, and Steilacoom.

The City of Tacoma currently has laws in place and enforcement tools that the Tacoma Police Department (TPD) uses to respond to street racing and street exhibitions, but the City does not have specific code provisions related directly to unlawful exhibitions of speed. For example, the laws in place that TPD uses to address speed exhibitions include, “reckless endangerment,” “failure to disperse,” “obedience to police officers,” and “interference with free use of streets prohibited.”

Many of Tacoma’s neighboring cities have adopted ordinances specific to street racing. Recently, the City of Fife adopted an emergency ordinance to include specific language that addresses exhibitions of speed, which adds activities such as burnouts, donuts, weaving, drifting, and leaving tire marks on the pavement, to the definition of unlawful race activity.



While the City awaits results of the PCFIT investigation and Prosecutor's Office review into the January 23, 2021 events, passing an ordinance that addresses illegal exhibitions of speed makes it clear that these dangerous activities are not welcome in Tacoma. Having laws in place that address the specific activity we seek to deter will provide police officers the enforcement tools necessary to promote public safety related to unlawful speed exhibitions.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

Many residents have reached out to the City and elected officials to voice their concerns about the public safety hazard exhibitions of speed activities pose. These residents are concerned not only about the threat of injury or loss of life to people in the vicinity of these activities, but of those individuals directly involved. Through the regional meetings convened by Pierce County, the City of Tacoma has also heard from representatives in neighboring cities that this is a common problem that those jurisdictions are also seeking to deter.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: *(Mandatory)***

This ordinance will focus on public safety for all residents and will collect data in alignment with best practices currently under development as prescribed in Resolution 40685 (2020) that will allow the City to effectively identify and address any racial disparities in policing, including enforcement of this ordinance. A presentation to Study Session is requested after six months of implementation of this ordinance that will address the effectiveness of the new ordinance and recommendations to strengthen the ordinance with a focus on racial equity.

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

Decrease the number of vacant properties downtown and in the neighborhood business districts.

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

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

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

This ordinance may decrease the number of vacant properties downtown and in the neighborhood business districts by enforcing exhibition of speed activities in these areas and throughout the City leading to an increased sense of public safety. When these unlawful activities occur, small businesses located near these activities may be harmed since customers may avoid the locations due to safety concerns. This ordinance may also increase the positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life by stricter enforcement of these illegal and dangerous activities resulting in fewer instances of exhibitions of speed.



**ALTERNATIVES:**

Presumably, your recommendation is not the only potential course of action; please discuss other alternatives or actions that City Council or staff could take. Please use table below.

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Do nothing	None.	While neighboring cities pass ordinances banning exhibitions of speed events, those activities may become more frequent in Tacoma due to the perception that the City does not have laws in place specific to exhibitions of speed.
2. Include enforcement on spectators in ordinance	Stricter enforcement of those individuals participating as spectators at unlawful exhibition of speed events may result in fewer or reduced frequency of events.	This option may be perceived as cracking down harder than necessary on these activities. This option may be considered in the future depending on the efficacy of this ordinance in deterring unlawful exhibitions of speed.
3. Include no-racing zones or SOAR orders	Stricter enforcement with higher penalties in specific areas of the city may lead to fewer offenses.	Since unlawful exhibitions of speed activities seem to be citywide and not located in any particular single area, a broader approach is best suited for the City of Tacoma.

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

This ordinance requests a presentation to Study Session six months after implementation to provide findings and recommendations on the efficacy of this ordinance to reduce illegal exhibitions of speed activities in Tacoma.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

As part of a regional effort to reduce unlawful street exhibitions and while the City awaits the findings of PCFIT and Prosecutor’s Office regarding the incident involving a Tacoma Police Officer on January 23, 2021, Council sponsors recommend passing this ordinance that will do the following:

1. Address unlawful exhibitions of speed to include a clear definition of illegal speed exhibition activities, declares it as a violation, and applies the law across the entire City;
2. Direct the City Manager to ensure data is collected on enforcement of this ordinance in alignment with best practices currently under development as prescribed in Resolution 40685 (2020) in addition to the city of residence of all individuals receiving a citation; and
3. Request a presentation to Study Session on the findings of the data collected, the effectiveness of the new ordinance, and any recommendations on strengthening the ordinance with a focus on racial equity six months after implementation within the Police Department.

With passage of this ordinance, it is the hope that exhibitions of speed activities may be reduced and become fewer within the City; resulting in an increase in public safety for all residents.



**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The fiscal impact is unknown, due to variables in scope and duration, including frequency of set missions and required overtime. However, no new resources will be allocated and the department will be responsible to adhere to their overall levels of appropriation.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. NA	NA	NA	NA
2.			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

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

NA

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

NA

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

YES

Other potential impacts of not implementing the ordinance include an increase in exhibitions of speed in the city due to the perception that Tacoma does not have laws in place directly addressing this activity. This may encourage individuals wishing to organize these events to hold them in Tacoma.

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

UNKNOWN

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

NO

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Ordinance