




TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager

FROM: Ramiro A. Chavez, P.E. PgMP, Public Works Director/City Engineer 

COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee;
 Josh Diekmann, P.E. PTOE, PW Transportation Division Manager/City Traffic Engineer
 Debra Casparian, Deputy City Attorney

PRESENTER: Eric Huseby, Assistant Division Manager, Public Works
 Carrie Wilhelme, Principal Transportation Planner, Public Works

SUBJECT: Automated Enforcement Expansion Update

DATE: April 23, 2025

PRESENTATION TYPE:
 Request for Ordinance

SUMMARY:

Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2384, signed by the Governor in March 2024 and made effective June 6, 2024, amended State law that authorizes the use and requirements for Automated Traffic Safety Cameras. The City’s existing legislative authority under Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 11.60 needs to be amended to align with the new provisions outlined in ESHB 2384 (mainly codified in RCW 46.63.220.)

To navigate the changes and develop a program that reflects Tacoma’s priorities, Public Works convened an Automated Enforcement Task Force. This presentation outlines the Task Force’s discussions and recommendations for expansion. In addition, staff is requesting the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee to forward the recommended updates to TMC Chapter 11.60 as summarized below and explicitly set out in Exhibit “A” to City Council for consideration.

Proposed Updates:

- Amend TMC Chapter 11.60 to replace all references to RCW 46.63.170 (old) with RCW 46.63.220 (new) and provide compatibility with future changes to state code by including “as it exists or hereinafter amended” verbiage.
- Update language throughout TMC Chapter 11.60 for clarity and consistency with RCW references.
- Amend TMC Section 11.60.060 to align fines for infractions for the Automated Traffic Safety Cameras with the maximum articulated in RCW 46.63.220.
- Add a new Section 11.60.090, entitled “Public Records Exemption”, to align with the provisions under RCW 46.63.220(11).

BACKGROUND:

The City’s use of automated traffic safety cameras dates back to 2008. The City’s current program is comprised of 14 cameras, including nine red light cameras, four school zone speed cameras (enforcing two school zones), and one speed camera.

The Automated Traffic Safety Camera Program is a key tool in meeting the City’s Vision Zero goal of eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes by 2035. While the most effective long-term strategy for reducing traffic fatalities and severe injuries is typically to redesign roadways for lower speeds and safer conditions, automated enforcement can both supplement other available tools and serve as an interim solution to improve traffic safety. Studies show that the implementation of this technology can have a



positive impact on slowing average traveling speeds and reducing crashes, as well as influencing better driving behaviors at controlled intersections and other areas where cameras may be installed.

On March 26, 2024, the Governor signed into law, House Bill 2384 which replaced the previous legislation (RCW 46.63.170) with RCW 46.63.220 which establishes new requirements and considerations for automated enforcement programs throughout the State.

Key provisions of the new legislation include:

- Local legislative authority must prepare an analysis of proposed camera locations which must include equity considerations including the impact of the camera placement on livability, accessibility, economics, education, and environmental health. The analysis must also show evidence of the demonstrated need for traffic cameras based on data at the proposed site.
- Revised annual report requirements detailing the number of traffic crashes that occurred at each location as well as the number of infractions issued for each camera. Beginning January 1, 2026, the annual report must include a financial analysis of revenues received and how the revenues are used.
- Restrictions on how a county or city may use revenues generated by an Automated Traffic Safety Camera Program. Revenues generated from cameras installed AFTER January 1, 2024, may only be used by a city or county for traffic safety activities related to construction and preservation projects and related to maintenance and operations, as well as for the costs to administer, install, operate, and maintain traffic cameras, including costs associated with the processing of infractions.
- Beginning four years after an automated traffic safety camera is initially placed and in use, 25 percent of the non-interest money received must be deposited into the Cooper Jones active transportation safety account (RCW 46.68.480).
- Authority for expansion of safety camera installations to detect speeds within hospital zones, public park zones, school speed, and walk zones. Legislation also allows a local legislative authority to install one camera per 10,000 residents in areas that experience higher crash risks due to excessive vehicle speeds.
- Increased maximum penalty for traffic camera violations to \$145 and provides that this amount will be adjusted for inflation by the office of financial management every five years, beginning on January 1, 2029.
- Ability for registered vehicle owners who receive notices of infractions and are recipients of public assistance to request reduced penalties. Such requests must be granted to reduce the penalty amounts of 50 percent of what would otherwise be assessed for a first automated traffic safety camera violation.

ISSUE:

The City is working to advance the expansion of automated enforcement to align with recent legislative changes and proven traffic safety practices. To help guide this effort, Public Works established an Automated Enforcement Task Force tasked with developing recommendations for a data-informed, equity-centered decision-making framework, along with identifying strategies for meaningful community outreach. The goal is to expand the program in a way that supports public safety while upholding equity principles.

The Task Force includes seven community members, a representative from the Tacoma Police Department, and staff from the Office of Strategy–Equity Programs. Their discussions have focused on site selection



criteria and strategies to inform and educate communities most impacted by serious traffic crashes and high driver speeds about the role of automated enforcement in improving safety, including timely and transparent communication about automated enforcement camera installation locations. As implementation moves forward, the City remains committed to prioritizing safety, equity, and public trust throughout the expansion of the program.

While the City can consider expansion to all school zones and traffic signals under the current Tacoma Municipal Code, using speed enforcement outside of these areas requires an update to the code to include the additional locations added to state law in 2024. State law now allows automated enforcement in public park speed zones and hospital speed zones; additionally, law allows jurisdictions to use automated speed enforcement at locations where there are higher crash risks due to excessive vehicle speeds. For this final category, jurisdictions may use up to one camera for every 10,000 population. This provides the City the ability to expand speed camera coverage by up to 22 additional cameras which represents an opportunity to significantly enhance public safety.

TMC Chapter 11.60, which governs the City’s authority to establish, maintain, and enforce an Automated Traffic Camera System, does not address all types of automated enforcement the City can consider in RCW 46.63.220.

In order to allow consideration of each type of automated enforcement within the City’s automated enforcement program, TMC Chapter 11.60 must be amended to better align with the new requirements and expectations contained within RCW 46.63.220. The recommended proposed edits to TMC Chapter 11.60 establish strong alignment with RCW 46.63.220.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council could choose not to amend the TMC as proposed. This would prevent the City from utilizing all of the authorities provided in RCW 46.63.220, which would limit the efficacy of future automated enforcement operations in the City of Tacoma.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Based on 2024 citation levels, which totaled over 50,000 citations, adjustment of penalties to align with State maximum citation amount of \$145 would positively impact program revenues by approximately \$1 million annually.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Public Works Department recommends amending Chapter 11.60 of the Municipal Code as outlined above and detailed in Exhibit “A”. The proposed updates provide clarity and strong alignment with State law that governs Automated Traffic Camera System programs.