



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Jeffrey A. Jenkins, Interim Public Works Director
COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee
Michael P. Slevin III, P.E., Environmental Services Director/Executive Liaison
PRESENTER: Carrie Wilhelme, Senior Transportation Planner, Public Works
SUBJECT: Vision Zero Action Plan and Speed Reduction Study Update
DATE: May 11, 2022



PRESENTATION TYPE:

Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

Public Works staff will present an update on the Vision Zero Action Plan and Speed Reduction Study. The presentation will include research, methodology, and recommendations related to a citywide speed reduction on residential streets to 20 miles per hour (MPH) and in select neighborhood business districts.

BACKGROUND:

In February 2020, the Tacoma City Council adopted Resolution No. 40559 committing to Vision Zero and the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2035. Contained within Resolution No. 40559 was direction to complete a study on the "State of Speed and Safety in Tacoma" and include consideration of a default speed limit of 25 MPH on arterials and 20 MPH on residential streets.

A key component of the Safe Systems approach under Vision Zero is Safe Speeds. Higher vehicle speeds significantly increase the likelihood of death. Higher speeds reduce the driver's field of vision and increase a driver's reaction time and braking distance. According to WSDOT data, over one-third of all fatalities and serious injuries are a result of speeding.

RCW 46.61.415 permits local governments the authority to establish a speed limit of 20 MPH on a nonarterial highway that is within a residential or business district without an engineering or traffic investigation. (Note: Governor Inslee recently signed legislation changing the RCW to permit speed reduction to 20 MPH on any nonarterial street, not just streets located within residential or business districts, without an engineering or traffic investigation. This change will be effective on June 9, 2022.) RCW 46.61.600 sets a minimum limit of 25 MPH on arterial streets, even if in a residential or neighborhood business district.

In locations where pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers are regularly mixing, a maximum speed limit of 20 MPH is ideal. The link between speed and injury severity in crashes is consistent, direct and especially critical for more vulnerable roadway users. Neighborhood streets should be safe and healthy places, creating environments that are walkable, encourage social connection, and foster a sense of community. Additionally, neighborhood business districts are meant to provide services to the surrounding community, to be a place for neighbors to gather, and be walkable. The majority of streets located in Tacoma's neighborhood business districts are classified as arterials, and therefore, can only be reduced to 25 MPH under current state law.



ISSUE:

While the City cannot fully control all of the factors which contribute to collisions, such as distraction, impairment, and aggressive driving, and indeed cannot eliminate risk, the City can help change some factors which contribute to roadway safety and can help take a leadership role to encourage the changes which will result in progress to the goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2035. This presentation will inform the Committee and seek Committee input regarding Vision Zero and speed reduction in Tacoma.

The discussion will include the methodology for speed reduction in residential and business districts. Staff will also provide an overview of next steps related to speed reduction on arterial corridors outside of neighborhood business districts.

ALTERNATIVES:

This is an informational briefing only. There are no alternatives presented.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an informational briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an informational briefing only. There is no recommendation.