



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Council Member Chris Beale
COPIES: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: **Resolution – regarding vehicle speeds, social distancing and safe movement on Tacoma’s streets during the COVID-19 emergency – May 8, 2020**
DATE: 5/7/2020

SUMMARY & PURPOSE:

A resolution directing the City Manager to work with city staff and community partners to create and promote appropriate public service announcements that are aimed to improve public awareness of the impacts of speeding on Tacoma’s roads; and encouraging residents in Tacoma to voluntarily comply with a limit of 20 miles per hour on residential streets for the safety of themselves, their neighbors and our entire community.
[Chris Beale, City Council Member]

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Victoria Woodards
Council Member Chris Beale
Council Member John Hines
Council Member Kristina Walker

BACKGROUND:

This Council Member’s Recommendation is Based On:

The State of Washington declared a state of emergency on February 29, 2020 and the City of Tacoma proclaimed a State of Emergency related to COVID-19 on March 12, 2020. The novel corona virus transmission is widespread in our region, and as of May 6 there were 518 COVID-19 cases and 17 tragic deaths in the City of Tacoma.

Social distancing is a technique of physically distancing between people meant to prevent the spread of COVID-19 recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and health professionals. Thousands of residents of Tacoma are complying with the Governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Safe” order, spending more time in their residence and neighborhoods and increasing the need for outdoor recreation. COVID-19 has limited the public’s ability to safely walk and recreate in our City parks and multi-use trails, many of which have been closed, and whose capacity for use is limited due to the need to social distance. Residents of Tacoma are using streets as shared public spaces and providing more room would make it easier to achieve adequate space to use those public spaces consistent with social distancing protocol. Due to past inequalities driven by systematic racism, discrimination, disinvestment and redlining, Tacoma’s residential neighborhoods have an inequitable distribution of safe walking pathways, sidewalks and parks, trails and open spaces.

Vehicle speeds are directly correlated to the severity of injuries and death by pedestrians and bicyclists, wherein only 1 of 10 pedestrians struck by a vehicle traveling 40 MPH survive without mortal injury, and 9 of 10 pedestrians involved in a collision with a vehicle traveling 20 MPH survive. Previous decisions regarding roadway design emphasized roadway capacity and vehicle speed over people centered streets, leaving many neighborhoods disconnected and uncomfortable places to walk. The City Council on February 18, 2020, passed a resolution concerning the City’s Vision Zero efforts, which prioritized the study of speed in the City and the endorsement of a future measure to lower speeds on the roads of Tacoma.



There is a compelling public safety and health need to create more space for safe walking on our streets, promote walking, and biking and people-powered transportation to address the need for recreation and physical activity and transportation, and improve the awareness of the motoring public of the impacts of speed in the City in an effort to reduce conflicts between motorists and pedestrian.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Council Members have heard from residents in Tacoma concerns about increased speeding during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that has on increased walking, and biking and people-powered transportation.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

Due to past inequalities driven by systematic racism, discrimination, disinvestment and redlining, Tacoma’s residential neighborhoods have an inequitable distribution of safe walking pathways/sidewalks and parks/trails and open spaces.

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.

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

Decrease the percentage of individuals who are spending more than 45% of income on housing and transportation costs.

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

How does your policy, program, or service help or harm the health of the natural environment?² (e.g. reduction in carbon emissions, open space conditions, sustainability, clean air, water and soil, and noise and light pollution).

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
1. Take no action	No impact on staff workload, no increased costs.	Does not reduce speed limits and increase pedestrian and multimodal safety.
2. Change speed limits	Creates an enforceable standard for reduced speeds.	More lengthy process, requires funding to put up speed limit signs and other infrastructure.
3. Increase enforcement	Holds drivers accountable to posted speed limits and encourages slower speeds to avoid infractions.	Would divert existing police resources or increase costs, hiring new patrol officers could be a lengthy process, would bypass in progress review of police staffing.



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

4. Shut down roadways to vehicle access	Increases pedestrian and multimodal safety and encourages alternative transportation choices.	Increased cost and shifting of resources away from other services.
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EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP:

Inform Council of promotional announcements as they are created.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECOMMENDATION:

Pass the proposed resolution.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact.