



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Eric Huseby, Assistant Division Manager, Public Works
Jeffrey A. Jenkins, Director, Public Works 
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance – Amending Chapter 11.60 of the Municipal Code – December 2, 2025
DATE: November 5, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance amending Chapter 11.60 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, with an effective date of January 1, 2026, relating to Automated Traffic Camera Systems, by amending various sections and adding a new section 11.60.090, entitled “Public Records Exemption”, to align with State legislative changes and authorities established under RCW 46.63.220, which will position the City to benefit from expanded authorities contained within RCW 46.63.220 by allowing this effective safety tool to be expanded throughout the City.

BACKGROUND:

This Department’s Recommendation is Based On: 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.

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.

On March 26, 2024, the Governor signed into law House Bill 2384, which replaced the previous legislation (RCW 46.63.170). RCW 46.63.220 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.
- 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 speed 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.

While the City can consider expansion to all school zones and traffic signals under the current Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC), 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, the 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.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

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. Over the course of six meetings in early 2025, their discussions 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.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The proposed changes to TMC Chapter 11.60 establish tight alignment with RCW 46.63.220, which includes several provisions aimed at reducing racial and other inequities, disparities, or discrimination in under-represented



communities. Expanded cameras installed under this legislation are required to conduct an analysis that includes equity considerations, such as the camera’s placement on livability, accessibility, economics, education, and environmental health. Additionally, the new legislation provides for penalty reductions for public assistance recipients, which helps to mitigate the financial burden on low-income individuals.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity
Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Automated enforcement programs significantly enhance the safety and overall quality of life in areas where cameras are installed. These systems deter dangerous driving behaviors, such as speeding and running red lights, leading to fewer accidents and safer roads. As drivers become more cautious, pedestrian and cyclist safety improves, making public spaces more accessible and enjoyable for all users of the right-of-way. By reducing accidents and improving traffic flow, automated enforcement contributes to a more efficient and livable community, where residents feel safer and more confident in their daily activities. A safer community directly translates to a higher quality of life for everyone.

Additionally, excess revenues beyond those needed to off-set the cost to administer, install, operate and maintain the expanded Automated Traffic Safety Camera Program must be used to support traffic safety activities related to the construction and projects and maintenance and operations purposes such as projects designed to implement the complete streets approach, changes in physical infrastructure to reduce speeds through road design, and changes to improve safety for active transportation users.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).
The proposed legislation will allow the City to expand the current Automated Enforcement program. Expansion of the existing program would broaden the potential application of this tool throughout the City and allow communities that currently suffer from high rates of collisions to benefit from the demonstrated effectiveness of this enforcement tool.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Not pursue proposed code changes.	None.	Limit opportunities for automated enforcement camera system to be expanded impacting future opportunities to enhance public safety in areas where cameras may be installed. Potential noncompliance with RCW 46.63.220.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

The Automated Traffic Safety Camera Program is a strong contributor to the City’s Vision Zero goal, which aims to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in the City of Tacoma by 2035. Over time, an expanded automated enforcement system would be expected to contribute to lower traveling speeds, higher compliance to traffic laws, and an overall decrease in traffic violations at areas where cameras are installed. Annual performance data on the program is prepared and broadcast according to State law. Performance elements of this program will continue to be shared with Council as part of the annual report on the Vision Zero initiative or any other ad hoc request from Council for program updates.



STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends adopting the proposed ordinance to allow the City to consider expansion of the existing Automated Traffic Safety Camera Program consistent with State law with an effective date of January 1, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Based on estimated citations revenues collected, staff estimates the expansion of the existing program could result in increased revenues of approximately \$540,000 annually, due to increase in fine amounts.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. 1650 Traffic Engineering, Education and Enforcement Fund	621000	Various	Based on estimated citations revenues collected, approximately \$540,000
TOTAL			Approx. \$540,000

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

Program expansion will be supported by revenues generated by new cameras.

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

NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW

An expanded automated enforcement program was not contemplated as part of the adopted 2025/26 budget.

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

YES

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; however, the estimated collection rate for citations is 54 percent, resulting in collected revenues of approximately \$540,000 annually.

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

YES

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

YES, PLEASE EXPLAIN BELOW

An expanded program would require additional resources to effectively administer, maintain, and enforce. It is unknown at this time what the impacts would be, as the need for resources would be dependent on the size of the expanded program. It is anticipated that revenues generated from new camera locations will offset any additional FTE's needed.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A—proposed Tacoma Municipal Code amendments