

Bicycle Advisory Council Recommendation: Speed Management Program - Draft Framework

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) is to advise the City of Austin and other jurisdictions on all matters relating to the use of the bicycle, bicycle infrastructure, and individuals of all ages and abilities who utilize bicycles;

WHEREAS, Austin, Texas has a public health crisis, where someone - friend, loved one, co-worker - dies in traffic about every 4.6 days;

WHEREAS, Austin Transportation Department staff's Speed Management Program presentation to the BAC on July 16, 2019, included an estimate that 1,348 years of life have been lost due to traffic fatalities that have occurred so far in Austin in 2019;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has experienced a 17% increase in traffic fatalities between 2018 and 2019 as of August 7 of each year, according to [data provided by the Austin Police Department](#);

WHEREAS, the 2017 National Traffic Safety Board (NTSB) [study of speed related injuries and deaths](#) found that “from 2005 through 2014, crashes in which a law enforcement officer indicated a vehicle’s speed was a factor resulted in 112,580 fatalities, representing 31% of all traffic fatalities”;

WHEREAS, the NTSB found that “the relationship between speed and injury severity is consistent and direct. Higher vehicle speeds lead to greater changes in velocity in a crash, and these velocity changes are closely linked to injury severity.” Small increases in speed can lead to drastically worse outcomes;

WHEREAS, 9 out of 10 pedestrians who are hit by a vehicle traveling 20 mph survive, but at 30 mph the survival rate drops to 50 percent, and at 40 mph the survival rate drops to only 10 percent, according to the [Vision Zero Network](#);

WHEREAS, peer cities such as Boston, Portland, and Seattle have reduced their default speed limit to 20 or 25 mph in order to reduce traffic fatalities in pursuit of Vision Zero goals;

WHEREAS, the Austin Transportation Department has received over 600 eligible applications for neighborhood speed management, but funding for these requests is insufficient;

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan prioritizes safety first, stating in Goal #1: “Prioritize the protection of human life over all else in the planning, design, and operation of Austin’s transportation network.” The ASMP gives specific direction to develop speed management guidelines;

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin includes policy directly related to Austin’s Vision Zero goal, including Policy 45: “The City commits itself to eliminating transportation related deaths and serious injuries through a holistic Vision Zero approach”;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the BAC recommends that City Council move forward, as quickly as possible, with fully funding a robust speed management program, as requested by the Austin Transportation Department. The BAC strongly recommends funding in the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget for a speed management

program director and an operating budget to implement engineering solutions, speed studies, and community outreach/education;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends that the speed management program should follow the recommendations outlined by Transportation Director Spillar in his memo to City Council dated 6/24/19;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC supports prioritizing the protection of human life over all else when setting speed limits;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends that City Council take significant steps forward this year to achieve Austin's Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2025, by taking the initiative to lower city-wide speed limits based on data and available metrics, especially in light of recent increases in traffic fatalities;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends a speed limit of no greater than 20 mph for all City of Austin Level 1 & 2 streets (as defined in the ASMP), with the opportunity to post a lower speed limit where appropriate;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends a speed limit of no greater than 35 mph for all City of Austin Level 3 & 4 streets (as defined in the ASMP), with the opportunity to post a lower speed limit where appropriate;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends using all available tools, including low cost treatments, that can be used to retrofit streets to reflect target design speeds, including all Austin streets and roads, including transportation corridors;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the BAC recommends that any future bonds or capital funding include dedicated funds for design improvements to existing streets to achieve safer target speeds.

Date of Approval: August 20, 2019

Record of the vote: 8– 0 with Alcorn, LeBlanc, Lentz, Merlino, and Ortega absent, Fraser, Heathcott, Moris, Rogers, Wald voting as full members for the purposes of the meeting.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Flowers', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kathryn Flowers, BAC Chair