

Pedestrian Advisory Council Recommendation:

Speed Management Program – Draft Framework

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) is to advise the City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement efforts regarding the creation, maintenance and operation of pedestrian facilities;

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

WHEREAS, Austin Transportation Department staff's speed management presentation from July 1 PAC 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 greater than 20% increase in traffic fatalities between 2018 and 2019 as of July 25 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 larger changes in velocity in a crash, and these velocity changes are closely linked to injury severity.” Small increases in speed can lead to drastically different outcomes;

WHEREAS, peer cities have reduced their default speed limit to 20 or 25 mph and have seen a significant decrease in fatality rates;

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 PAC 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 PAC 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 PAC 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 PAC recommends a speed limit of 25 mph for all City of Austin Level 1 & 2 streets (as defined in the ASMP), with the opportunity to post a speed limit of 20 mph for quiet streets and 5-10 mph for share streets and other context sensitive solutions where appropriate;

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

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC 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 PAC 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 PAC 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:

Vote:

Attest: