

**RESOLUTION NO. 20220616-052**

**WHEREAS**, Vision Zero is a holistic strategy to end traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all; and

**WHEREAS**, the City first adopted Vision Zero as part of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan in 2015, then reaffirmed its commitment to Vision Zero with the adoption of the Vision Zero Action Plan in 2016 and the passage of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan in 2019; and

**WHEREAS**, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan prioritizes safety; and

**WHEREAS**, the Austin community has supported working towards the Vision Zero policy goal by approving the passage of mobility bonds in 2016, 2018, and 2020, which have increased investments in safer infrastructure for people walking, biking, rolling, driving, and using transit services; and

**WHEREAS**, Austin's Vision Zero efforts lead with traffic engineering improvements, and the major intersection safety projects funded through the three mobility bonds have demonstrated positive early results, including about a 30% reduction in all reported crashes and about a 35% reduction in crashes resulting in injury or death; and

**WHEREAS**, despite these improvements, total traffic fatalities in Austin reached a record high in 2021 and are on a pace to exceed 2021 totals as of late May 2022, part of a national and statewide trend in rapidly rising fatalities on roadways; and

**WHEREAS**, there are significant emotional and economic impacts to individuals, families, and the City from the 12,000+ crashes requiring reports each year, including loss of life, loss of quality of life, loss of ability to access jobs and services, increased traffic congestion and delays, and the high cost of public safety resources needed to respond to crashes; and

**WHEREAS**, most traffic fatalities occur on higher speed and wider roadways with large vehicular volumes—like freeways, frontage roads, and major arterials—and it is difficult to quickly implement engineering solutions on these types of roadways; and

**WHEREAS**, recent analysis on Austin Municipal Court traffic citations shows a 90% reduction of speeding-related citations issued from 2016 through 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, recent focus group discussions organized by the Austin Transportation Department with relatively younger licensed drivers reported a common belief that there is a lack of traffic enforcement in Austin, and therefore drivers believe there are few consequences for speeding; and

**WHEREAS**, the Vision Zero “Safe System” approach needs all parts of the transportation system to work together, including ensuring safety for all roadway users; and

**WHEREAS**, one strategy utilized in places which have seen significant reductions in fatalities and serious injuries is targeted enforcement of traffic laws with a primary focus on speeding violations, as risk of severe injury or death rises exponentially with higher vehicle speeds, particularly for people walking and biking; and

**WHEREAS**, narrowly focusing traffic enforcement on behaviors which impact the immediate safety of roadway users has been shown to have a positive outcome on reducing both severe crashes and reducing racial disparities in traffic stops, and other cities and states are considering or have taken action towards this approach; and

**WHEREAS**, analysis on severe crash victims shows that the Black community is overrepresented by a factor of two as compared to their share of the Austin population; and

**WHEREAS**, the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force recommended “end(ing) investigative / discretionary stops” with context of reducing focus on low level traffic and “quality of life” offenses within neighborhoods; and

**WHEREAS**, other US cities, including Berkley, CA, Minneapolis, MN, and Philadelphia, PA, are implementing or considering tasking unarmed civil service staff with handling traffic enforcement and issuing citations, with a goal of limiting traffic-related fatalities and injuries, racial disparities in stops, and undue searches, arrests, and uses of force; and

**WHEREAS**, increasing traffic enforcement on high-speed roadways in a manner that is narrowly focused on offenses impacting the immediate safety of roadway users is a near-term strategy which can be deployed quickly and have immediate impact while the necessary engineering changes continue to progress over time and result in the creation of a safer transportation network that does not overly rely on enforcement strategies; and

**WHEREAS**, City staff has begun discussions with Travis County Constables about developing a partnership on enforcement to fill in some of the



current traffic enforcement gap with peace officers who can enforce state traffic laws within the City's full purpose jurisdiction; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

The City Manager is directed to explore near-term strategies to increase narrowly-focused traffic safety enforcement on speeding, impairment, and other driver behaviors that directly reduce safety for all roadway users and that have led to rapidly rising numbers of fatal traffic crashes in our community.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The near-term strategies that the City Manager considers should be designed to change driver behaviors and increase safety for all people and should not be focused on assessing fines and penalties.

The focused traffic safety enforcement strategies should be primarily targeted to freeways, frontage roads, and major arterials (mostly Austin Strategic Mobility Plan Level 4 and Level 5 roadways) on which most severe car crashes occur, with specific locations prioritized based on crash and data analyses conducted through the City's Vision Zero efforts. Other important areas of focus to be considered include speeding in school zones and emergency response to serious crashes.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

As part of the fiscal year 2022-2023 proposed budget, the City Manager should consider maintaining or increasing funding for the Austin Police Department's (APD) "No Refusal Initiative." City Council also desires an analysis

of the impact of the “No Refusal Initiative” on impaired driving on Austin roadways.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager should consider strategies which utilize City resources as well as outside resources. The outside resources considered could include negotiating an interlocal agreement with Travis County, which employs peace officers with jurisdiction to enforce state traffic laws in the City. Considerations for using outside resources through an interlocal agreement could include: comparing the type and level of training provided to outside officers in contrast to the training provided to new APD officers; and determining whether and how the City will receive adequate performance reporting data from outside agencies to demonstrate good value and continued alignment with stated goals in exchange for its expenditure.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager should research and report back on civil service-staffed and technological alternatives to traffic monitoring and enforcement being implemented around the U.S. and Canada (at least) and provide a legal and cost analysis examining whether and how similar strategies and staff could be deployed to achieve the goals of this resolution.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager should provide City Council an interim update on or before July 15, 2022, so that discussions regarding the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget can reflect the City Manager’s recommended strategies.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager should report back to Council by December 1, 2022, with a plan that includes a timeline to increase City resources dedicated to proactive, consistent, narrowly-focused traffic enforcement that fills in remaining traffic safety enforcement gaps over the next two years and is in full effect by fiscal year 2024-2025. This may include researching the use of effective strategies used in other states and cities and identifying any needed state legislative changes to enable those strategies in Austin.

**ADOPTED:** June 16, 2022 **ATTEST:** Stephanie Huel for  
Myrna Rios  
City Clerk