

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code to reduce the speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway SE from Factoria Boulevard SE to the south city limits from 40 mph to 35 mph; and establishing an effective date.

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Transportation Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**ACTION**

Staff recommend reducing the speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway SE from Factoria Boulevard SE to the south city limits from 40 mph to 35 mph. This recommendation is an outcome of a staff evaluation that was part of a Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant the City was awarded in 2022 which committed to evaluating a lower speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway SE. In January, staff informed the community that the City is proposing to lower the speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway SE and that the City Council would be reviewing this proposal in February.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6835

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

On September 13, 2022, the City was selected for an award of \$1.24 million in State funding through WSDOT's HSIP grant program that supports the City in implementing safety improvements along Coal Creek Parkway SE between Factoria Boulevard SE and the south city limits. Staff applied for grant funding for safety improvements due to a history of fatal and serious injury crashes along Coal Creek Parkway SE. The HSIP grant award for this project commits to several safety improvements including evaluating a lower posted speed limit, installing several speed radar feedback signs, and upgrading curve warning signs along the corridor (see Attachment A). More information on the Coal Creek Parkway Corridor Safety Improvements (CSI) Project can be found on the project webpage.

The recommendation to award this construction contract to Always Active Services is also on the consent agenda for the February 25th council meeting. If awarded, construction is expected to begin this summer.

Why evaluate a lower speed limit?

The Coal Creek Parkway corridor is part of Bellevue’s High Injury Network (HIN)—a grouping of streets on which most of the fatal and serious injury crashes in Bellevue occur. The City committed to evaluating a lower speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway because of the corridor’s severe injury crash history and the City’s commitment to Vision Zero.

Vision Zero

Following Council’s adoption of the Safe System approach in 2020, staff developed and the City Manager approved the Vision Zero Strategic Plan that lays out how the City will apply a "Safe System" approach to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. The Safe Speeds pillar of the Safe System approach recognizes the direct connection between speed and the severity of injuries when crashes occur.

In support of the Safe Speeds pillar, staff completed a Speed Management Plan (SMP) in January 2024 that contains a list of recommendations to address speed management on arterial roadways with a posted speed limit of 30 mph or greater. The SMP suggests engineering solutions that may be appropriate for a given arterial corridor based on land use, speed limit and impact to emergency response vehicles.

Staff will implement the SMP recommendations as part of a citywide Arterial Speed Management program that will be introduced to Council in spring 2025. The Coal Creek Parkway speed limit evaluation is advancing separately due to staff’s commitment to evaluating the speed limit along Coal Creek Parkway SE as part of the City’s application and award of HSIP funds from WSDOT in 2022—preceding Arterial Speed Management program efforts.

Recommending a Lower Speed Limit

Staff recommend reducing the posted speed limit along Coal Creek Parkway SE between Factoria Boulevard SE and the south city limits from 40 mph to 35 mph due to several factors including the corridor’s crash history, observed high-end speeding and surrounding context.

Crash History

This segment of Coal Creek Parkway SE is on Bellevue’s HIN. Between 2016 and 2023¹, there has been one fatal and nine serious

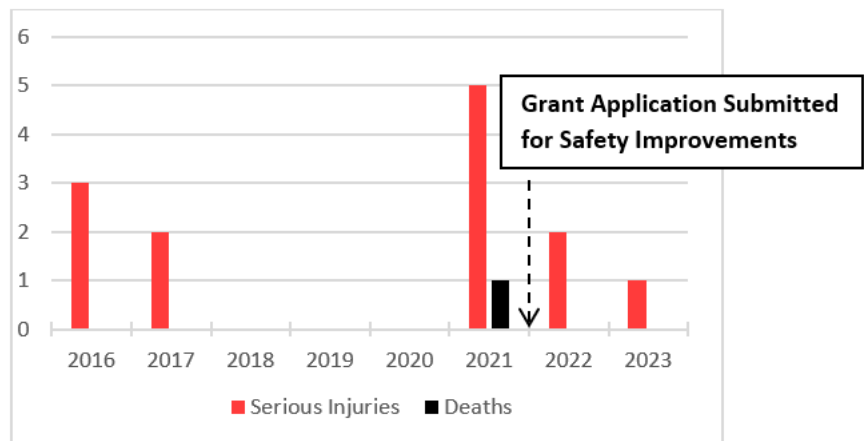


Figure 1. Serious Injuries and Deaths on Coal Creek Parkway between 2016 and 2023

¹ Crash reporting typically falls behind the present date.

injury crashes, killing one person and seriously injuring 13 others (see Figure 1). Also, during this same time period, there have been 295 total crashes that have been reported on this segment of the Coal Creek Parkway corridor. The City of Bellevue's Council-adopted Vision Zero Strategic Plan acknowledges that even small reductions in speed can greatly reduce the likelihood of someone being killed or seriously injured when crashes occur.

High-end Speeding

In October of 2023, City staff measured vehicle speeds at four locations along this segment of Coal Creek Parkway SE and observed significant high-end speeding at all locations. Although the posted speed limit is 40 mph, there are some locations where 30% of people are driving at 50 mph or higher. Based on the excessive speeding, Coal Creek Parkway SE is one of Bellevue's highest-ranked corridors to be evaluated for speed management countermeasures. Reducing the posted speed limit has the potential to reduce the high-end speeds observed on this corridor.

Surrounding Context

The Coal Creek Parkway corridor is one of a few corridors in Bellevue with a posted speed limit of 40 mph. The posted speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway is already 35 mph to the north and south of this segment of the corridor, therefore the proposed speed limit change will create a more consistent speed limit.

Outreach

In mid-January of this year, Transportation staff sent a postcard to over 6,600 addresses near Coal Creek Parkway that informed community members of the City's proposed plans to reduce the posted speed limit from 40 mph to 35 mph. The postcard referenced the project webpage and was provided in English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Korean and Japanese. Staff also included information on the proposed change in the January Transportation newsletter, which was sent to the Transportation News and Vision Zero email listservs to over 4,800 subscribers.

As of February 4, only eight residents have provided feedback to staff regarding the proposed speed limit change. These emails and voicemails reflect a mix of support and concern about the effectiveness of lowering the speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway.

If Council approves the speed limit change, staff will do additional outreach in advance of implementation, including social media posts, a news release, and additional outreach to local neighborhood associations. Another postcard will also be sent out prior to the start of construction of the safety improvements that would include information on the new speed limit.

Enforcement

Transportation and Police Department staff regularly receive requests from the community for speed enforcement along this corridor. The HSIP grant-funded Coal Creek Parkway CSI Project will help reinforce the recommended speed limit by installing speed radar feedback signs in four locations along the corridor. Two of these locations will include radar signs for all four travel lanes, mounted over the roadway on mast arms to improve visibility. Transportation has found speed radar feedback signs to be successful in reducing vehicle speeds and the need for police enforcement.

Transportation staff will coordinate with the Police Department to provide enforcement along the corridor if the recommended speed limit is approved by the Council. Transportation and Police Department staff regularly coordinate on regulatory changes such as turn restrictions, parking restrictions and speed limit changes. Typically, when regulatory changes occur, Transportation staff will begin the transition with extensive outreach, so community members are not surprised by the change. After people who drive have an opportunity to settle into new driving behaviors, staff can consider using police enforcement to encourage adherence to these new regulations.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The City Council Vision, which guides Bellevue’s policy and budget, supports this work by identifying a “safe and efficient transportation system” as one of six strategic target areas. This target area reinforces the City’s commitment to “eliminate fatal and serious injury collisions through the application of the Safe System Approach” (Objective 3.2, Bellevue City Council Vision).

In 2020, the Bellevue City Council adopted the Safe System Approach to achieve Bellevue’s Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injury crashes on city streets by 2030. Safe Speeds is one pillar of the Safe System Approach, since speeding increases both the likelihood and severity of crashes. Evaluating and setting appropriate speed limits is recognized as an important aspect of speed management on Bellevue streets and aligns with the City’s Safe System Approach to Vision Zero.

Furthermore, this work is supported by several Comprehensive Plan policies, particularly those that direct the City to “strive to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030” (TR-58) and to “assess arterial speed limits and address concerns related to safety through appropriate speed limits, countermeasures and other techniques” (TR-56).

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact to the City. Changing the speed limit has no fiscal impact on the cost of the Coal Creek Parkway CSI project.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code to reduce the speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway SE from Factoria Boulevard SE to the south city limits from 40 mph to 35 mph; and establishing an effective date.
2. Do not adopt the ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Proposed Speed Limit Change Mailer
- C. Proposed redline of Bellevue City Code Chapter 11.32
Proposed Ordinance No. 6835

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

City of Bellevue Speed Management Plan