

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code to reduce the speed limit on four corridors that are currently 35 mph to 30 mph and 25 mph; and establishing an effective date.

Andrew Singelakis, Director, 452-6468
Chris Long, Assistant Director, 452-6013
Jeremy Chin, Traffic Engineering Manager, 452-4179
Benjamin Wright, Senior Engineer, 452-2883
Transportation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**ACTION**

On May 20, 2025 after discussion in Study Session, Council directed staff to finalize an ordinance amending the Speed chapter of the Bellevue City Code (11.32) to reduce the speed limit on four 35 miles per hour (mph) arterials to 30 mph or 25 mph. Approval of this ordinance will initiate lower speed limits—targeted for summer of 2025—and allow staff to evaluate efficacy of the speed limit change.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6845

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Council is being asked to modify the following speed limits:

- 124th Avenue Southeast - Southeast 38th Street in Factoria: 35 mph to 25 mph
- Northup Way from 108th Avenue Northeast to 120th Avenue Northeast in Northwest Bellevue: 35 mph to 25 mph
- Village Park Drive in Lakemont: 35 mph to 30 mph
- Northeast 40th Street in Bridle Trails: 35 mph to 30 mph

At the May 20 City Council meeting, staff introduced the Safe Speeds Bellevue program. This program was created to support the City Council-adopted Vision Zero initiative, which aims to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030. The first major initiative for Safe Speeds Bellevue uses a Target Speed approach to review speed limits on all streets with a current speed limit of 30 mph or more and recommends reducing the speed limit where the target speed is lower than the current speed limit.

Previous speed limit reductions in Seattle and Bellevue have shown that lowering speed limits is an effective way to achieve safe speeds. When Seattle lowered most arterial street speed limits to 25 mph (from 30 mph) in 2020 and increased speed limit sign density, they achieved an 18% reduction in annual injury crashes, a 2.5 mph reduction in median speeds and a 54% reduction in people driving 40

mph or faster. Similarly, when Bellevue reduced local street speed limits to 20 mph in the Eastgate neighborhood, there was a 24% reduction in people driving 30 mph or faster.

To further evaluate the effectiveness of reducing speed limits to the Target Speed, staff recommend lowering the speed limit on four Bellevue streets to match the Target Speed and increasing the density of speed limit signs. If this ordinance is approved, these speed limit changes would be implemented in the summer of this year.

The four evaluation streets have been selected in different parts of Bellevue to represent a variety of contexts including proximity to schools and popular bike routes and where staff have received community requests to lower speeds for safety. These streets are all currently posted at 35 mph.

Evaluation

Approximately two months after the new speed limit signs are installed, staff will conduct speed studies on each evaluation corridor to measure how vehicle speeds have changed relative to prior speed data collected. Staff will examine how both average speeds and high-end speeds have changed as a result of implementing the recommended target speed as the new speed limit. These findings will be reported to the Council in a study session near the end of 2025.

Outreach

Following the May 20 meeting, staff launched a project website informing the community of the proposed lower speed limits. If the Council approves the speed limit change, staff will do additional outreach in advance of implementation, including postcards to nearby residents and businesses, social media posts, a news release, and additional outreach to local neighborhood associations. The speed limit signs will include orange flags that create more awareness when traffic control changes are made. Staff also propose to collect public feedback on the lower speed limits in early 2026.

Enforcement

Transportation staff have coordinated with the Police Department ahead of the proposed reductions in speed limit. 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 requesting 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

Commencing community outreach will have minimal fiscal impact except for staff time to develop outreach mailers, websites and communication. If the Council approves the speed limit reduction on the four evaluation streets, design and implementation will be paid for out of the Vision Zero Safe Speeds Program (CIP Plan No. PW-R-219) in the 2025-2030 General Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code to reduce the speed limit on four corridors that are currently 35 mph to 30 mph and 25 mph; and establishing an effective date.
2. Do not adopt the ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Map of Four Evaluation Corridors
- B. CIP Project Description (PW-R-219)
- C. Proposed amendments to Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code
Proposed Ordinance No. 6845

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A