

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Update on Safe Speeds Bellevue program, a coordinated city effort to ensure safe speeds on all Bellevue streets.

Andrew Singelakis, Director, 452-6468

Chris Long, Assistant Director, 452-6013

John Murphy, Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services Manager, 452-6967

Benjamin Wright, Senior Engineer, 452-2883

Transportation Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFORMATION ONLY

Staff will share an update on outreach conducted to date, the results of four evaluation streets where the speed limit was lowered in July 2025 and a draft of proposed speed limits for all streets currently posted at 30 mph or higher. Staff will also share next steps for continued outreach.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Safe Speeds Bellevue program was created to support the City Council-adopted Vision Zero initiative to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030. Through this study session, staff will present the approach to evaluating higher speed streets for possible speed limit changes, proposed speed limit changes based on staff evaluation, outreach conducted to date and results of four evaluation streets where a lower speed limit was introduced.

Safe Speeds and Vision Zero

Safe Speeds is one of the four pillars of Bellevue's Safe Systems approach adopted by Council in 2020. The Safe Speeds pillar of the Safe Systems approach recognizes the direct connection between speed and the severity of injuries when crashes occur. Streets in Bellevue that have a posted speed limit of 30 mph or more represent only 25% of the total street mileage but account for 88% of crashes where a person is killed or seriously injured. Research shows that lowering speed limits is not only effective at reducing vehicle speeds but also at decreasing the quantity and severity of crashes.

Outreach

Following the May 20, 2025 City Council meeting, staff began outreach on Safe Speeds Bellevue. A project webpage that includes a virtual comment box and on-demand webinar was the springboard to deliver various digital (social media, listserv) and print (It's Your City) communications on the effort. A focus during the summer was to engage with people in-person and through community surveys; staff attended events such as the Crossroads Farmers Market and Bellevue Family Fourth and almost 500 people responded to surveys.

Staff also provided a presentation to the Bellevue Network on Aging (BNOA) and shared information/materials with Bellevue Youth Link Board, City Hall and Mini City Hall, Bellevue community

centers and King County libraries within city limits. The project team also reached out to neighborhood associations in Bellevue to offer informational presentations, but none were requested.

Based on the community surveys, there is overwhelming sentiment—over 75% of respondents—that community members think the speed of people driving affects the safety of people driving, biking and walking. Moreover, there was concern about speeds around schools, commercial areas, where people walk and bike and where deaths and serious injuries have occurred. When presented with the safety benefit of lowering speed limits, a majority of respondents support lower speed limits. Many identified that lower speed limits are best paired with enforcement and changes to street design. Finally, over 70% of respondents stated they would follow lower speed limits but were not as confident that others would do the same. A full summary of the outreach can be found in Attachment A.

Evaluation Streets

At the May 20, 2025 City Council meeting, the Council directed staff to prepare an ordinance to reduce the speed limit on four arterial streets and evaluate impacts (subsequently approved on consent June 2, 2025). Four streets that previously had a speed limit of 35 mph were reduced to either 30 mph or 25 mph in July 2025 with work performed by city crews. Staff increased the number of speed limit signs along each corridor—consistent with national best practices—to increase the visibility of the speed limit change. To further raise awareness of the change, the community also received postcard notification of the change, dozens of yard signs were deployed along each corridor ahead of the change noting the impending lower speed limit and orange flags were affixed atop the speed limit signs. A follow-up traffic study was conducted in September, allowing at least eight weeks for drivers to adjust behavior. The study data was compared against data collected before the change to identify whether there were reductions in operating speeds. Across all corridors, there was a significant reduction in high-end speeding as shown in the table below.

Street	New Speed Limit	Reduction in High-end Speeding*
124 th Avenue Southeast – Southeast 38 th Street (Factoria)	25 mph	-42%
Northup Way from 108 th Avenue Northeast to 120 th Avenue Northeast (Northwest Bellevue)	25 mph	-30%
Village Park Drive (Lakemont)	30 mph	-19%
Northeast 40 th Street (Bridle Trails)	30 mph	-40%

**number of vehicles traveling 40 mph or more*

Proposed Speed Limits

Following the initial success of the evaluation streets, proposed speed limits (Attachments B and C) were determined for each of Bellevue's streets with a posted speed limit of 30 mph or higher by conducting a Safe Speed Study consistent with national best practices. The first step in this study was to break each 30 mph or higher speed street into logical segments for evaluating speed limits.

Data was then collected for each segment that included existing conflict points (intersections, driveways

and mid-block crossings), facilities for people walking and biking and activity level (land use, transit stops, schools, community amenities, etc.). This data was used to rate the “Activity” and “Conflicts” on each segment. Further details regarding the speed limit setting methodology is provided in Attachment D.

The draft proposal for safer speed limits results in no change on 21% of streets, a 5 mph speed limit reduction on 59% of streets, and a 10 mph speed limit reduction on 20% of streets (see Attachment C for map of speed limit reductions). The proposal includes a 25 mph speed limit for most of Downtown Bellevue due to the high activity and high or moderate number of conflicts. Staff additionally propose a small 20 mph speed zone centered around Old Bellevue and the Downtown Park that reflects the unique character of these streets.

Additionally, there are several streets that require coordination with the City of Redmond to implement the proposed speed limits. These include 148th Avenue NE and a portion of Bel-Red Rd where the city limits run down the center of the street. Bellevue staff are working with Redmond staff to reach agreement on safer speed limits for all adjoining/shared streets.

Next Steps

Beginning in February, staff will share the draft speed limit proposal with the community. A speed limit reduction is proposed for 80% of the 30 mph and higher posted speed limit streets, so staff will continue to ensure community members are aware of the proposal and will help to identify questions the community has about the lower speed limits. Staff will also seek input on possible scenarios for phased implementation of new speed limits to help identify community priorities. Staff will share the draft speed limits with the community by attending in-person events, by reaching out to established community networks including community associations, by updating print and digital communication channels with the most recent information and by leveraging the Engaging Bellevue platform.

Staff plan to return to Council late in the second quarter with the results from this next round of outreach and will also seek direction to approve the lower speed limits. Reduced speed limits will likely need to be implemented in phases over multiple years to align with the available capital budget. Staff will share a recommended implementation approach alongside input from the community. Phasing will consider feasibility, community priorities, locations along the city’s high injury network and other factors that create contiguous geographies that are legible to the community.



Setting safer speed limits that reflect the current land use and mobility options in Bellevue is only the first step in managing Safe Speeds on city streets. The evaluation streets implemented in July 2025 show that speed limit changes alone can reduce high-end speeding. However, additional tools and street design changes may be needed to further encourage people to slow down. Technology such as radar feedback signs and speed safety cameras along with physical changes to the street design including lane width adjustments, speed cushions, raised crosswalks and other features that are appropriate for the new speed limits are envisioned as longer-term next steps for Safe Speeds Bellevue.

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). 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

Continued community outreach will have minimal fiscal impact except for staff time to develop outreach mailers, websites and communication.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Safe Speeds Bellevue Community Engagement Report
- B. Draft Speed Limits (map)
- C. Draft Speed Limit Reductions (map)
- D. Speed Limit Setting Methods

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A