

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Section 11.32.015 of the Bellevue City Code to establish a speed limit of 20 miles per hour (mph) on most local streets in a portion of the Eastgate neighborhood surrounding Tyee Middle School.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In support of Vision Zero and community interest in reducing vehicle speeds, this Ordinance will amend Section 11.32.015 of the Bellevue City Code (BCC) to establish 20 mph speed limits on a portion of streets in the Eastgate neighborhood surrounding Tyee Middle School.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6656.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Residents in the Eastgate neighborhood in the area surrounding Tyee Middle School have long cared about traffic safety in the neighborhood. This is evidenced by multiple community concerns regarding high vehicle speeds and pedestrian safety communicated to Transportation Department staff over the years. In support of Vision Zero and community interest in reducing vehicle speeds, the Transportation Department is proposing installing a neighborhood slow zone in a portion of the Eastgate neighborhood in Q2 of 2022.

If this Ordinance is approved, Transportation staff will lower the regulatory speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph on public, local streets in this portion of Eastgate (Attachment A). This will be the third neighborhood in the City to receive a 20 mph speed limit, following similar efforts in Surrey Downs (2020) and along the East Bellevue Demonstration Greenway (2021). The area of Eastgate to receive the lower speed limit is in-between SE 36th Street and SE Newport Way near Tyee Middle School. SE Allen Road, a collector arterial, will remain signed at 25 mph. A segment of 146th Avenue SE between SE Allen Road and SE 36th Street will remain signed at 25 mph as it is a transit route and carries higher vehicle volumes than many of the other streets in the neighborhood. Private roads are not affected by this speed limit change. Speed limit signs reflecting 20 mph will be installed at entrances to the slow zone, in addition to streets adjacent to 146th Avenue SE.

The streets around Tyee Middle School were evaluated against several other candidate locations and is a favorable location to implement a lower speed limit as many residents have expressed a desire for safer speeds in the neighborhood. Additionally, the speed limit reduction is an extension of a recently completed levy-funded transportation safety project that constructed a sidewalk, mini roundabout and signage upgrades near Tyee Middle School. The speed limit reduction is the next phase of the project aimed at reducing vehicle speeds.

The City's Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services (NTSS) group is charged with reviewing speeding and other traffic safety concerns on residential streets in Bellevue. Lowering vehicle speeds helps to make streets safer and more comfortable for people walking and biking in the neighborhood. Lower speeds support the City's Vision Zero effort to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities on City streets by 2030.

The call for lowering speed limits on residential streets in Bellevue has been amplified in recent years by Bellevue residents. Lowering speed limits on residential streets has proven to be a popular intervention by Bellevue residents. A public evaluation survey of the East Bellevue Demonstration Greenway showed most survey respondents supported lowering the speed limit to 20 mph, and it was the most popular intervention of the entire demonstration greenway project.

Pursuant to RCW 46.61.415, the City has authority to establish a 20 mph speed limit on a nonarterial highway pursuant to adopted procedures that dictate where this may occur. Based on the adopted procedures, Transportation recommends a 20 mph speed limit on the streets identified in the proposed Ordinance.

While lowering the speed limit alone will not automatically encourage all motorists to drive the speed limit, a lower speed limit represents a shift in our traffic safety culture in Bellevue. A lower speed limit communicates to people driving that lower speeds are vital to support safe streets and that it takes collective action and personal responsibility to meet our goal of eliminating serious injuries and fatalities on City streets by 2030. Finally, focused education and encouragement to drive the reduced speed limit is a goal of this project.

Lowering speed limits on local streets to 20 mph continues to expand in many urban and suburban cities nationwide such as the cities of Portland, Seattle, and Minneapolis and suburbs such as Renton, WA, Cambridge, MA and St. Louis Park, MN. Finally, national best practices—such as guidance from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), of which Bellevue is an affiliate member—recommends a default 20 mph speed limit on streets that have one lane in each direction, volumes less than 6,000 vehicles per day, yield or stop control at multiple intersections and have few or no transit stops. The streets surrounding Tyee Middle School—and many other Bellevue neighborhoods—exemplify these characteristics.

The Transportation Department plans to continue learning how effective changing speed limit signs and neighborhood education can be in reducing vehicle speeds. Traffic studies collected before and after the speed limit reduction will help to determine effectiveness, along with community feedback. The lessons learned from this project may be applied to future efforts to reduce speed limits.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Approving this Ordinance to lower the speed limit is consistent with the following policy in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan:

- TR-153: Employ traffic calming measures to slow vehicular travel speed along residential streets and to reduce the volume of cut-through traffic.

In 2015, Council adopted Resolution No. 9035 recognizing Vision Zero and that death and serious injury on City streets is unacceptable and preventable. Building on the framework provided in the Resolution, in 2016 Council passed Ordinance No. 6334 adopting three Vision Zero amendments into the City's Comprehensive Plan, including:

- TR-61.2: Develop a programmatic approach to Vision Zero that integrates components of Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, Equity and Evaluation.

Since being incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, there has been substantial involvement from the Transportation Commission and Council, including the June 2020 approval of Resolution No. 9769 which adopted a Safe Systems approach to move Bellevue towards Vision Zero. A Vision Zero Strategic Plan was approved in 2020 by the City Manager, further directing staff to create annual Vision Zero Action Plans (VZAP). The 2022 VZAP includes an action to "Continue expanding neighborhood slow zone program while advancing Citywide efforts to implement a local street speed limit reduction policy reducing speed limits on local streets to 20 mph." Further, within this action is a task to "Implement an additional neighborhood slow zone in early 2022."

Fiscal Impact

Adopting this Ordinance will require some minor speed limit sign changes and additional speed limit signs in the selected area of the Eastgate neighborhood to reflect the new speed limit. The estimated cost of this work is \$45,000. Sufficient budget exists in the 2021-2027 Capital Investment Program in the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program (CIP Plan No. PW-M-7) to fund this work.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Section 11.32.015 of the Bellevue City Code to establish a speed limit of 20 miles per hour (mph) on most local streets in a portion of the Eastgate neighborhood surrounding Tyee Middle School.
2. Do not adopt the Ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Vicinity map
- B. CIP Project Description (PW-M-7)
Proposed Ordinance No. 6656

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A