City of Bellevue

6/2/2026

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Vision Zero Progress and Safe Speeds Bellevue Direction

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIRECTION

Staff will present road safety trends and Safe System activities supporting Council's Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injury collisions on Bellevue streets by 2030. Staff will also present on the status of Safe Speeds Bellevue. Following discussion, staff seek Council direction to prepare an amendment to Bellevue City Code 11.32 to adjust speed limits consistent with the Safe Speeds Bellevue recommendation for final action at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Consider directing staff to finalize the amendment to Bellevue City Code 11.32 to adjust speed limits in accordance with Safe Speeds Bellevue recommendation.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Background

In December 2015, the City Council adopted Resolution 9035 endorsing Vision Zero, for the city to strive to achieve zero traffic deaths and serious injuries on Bellevue streets by 2030. In December 2016, the council adopted Ordinance 6334 incorporating Vision Zero amendments into the Comprehensive Plan.

In June 2020, the council adopted Resolution 9769 endorsing a Safe System approach to move Bellevue towards Vision Zero. This holistic approach to road safety bundles strategies focused on safe people, safe streets, safe speeds and safe vehicles—as well as the supporting elements of leadership, culture, partnerships and data.

In December 2020, the City Manager approved the Vision Zero Strategic Plan that articulates a coordinated approach across city departments. To keep the city's program on track and to monitor progress, a cross-departmental team develops annual action plans that are approved by the city's Vision Zero Steering Team comprised of department directors.

Road Safety Trends

From 2016–2025, 251 people were seriously injured, and 22 people were killed in traffic collisions on Bellevue's streets, equating to approximately one fatality or serious injury every 13 days over the past decade. Total fatalities and serious injuries ranged from a low of 16 to a high of 41 during this period.

With three fatalities and 38 serious injuries, 2025 recorded the highest total number of fatal and serious injury (FSI) crashes in the past decade.

Recent 2025 FSI crash data indicates that severe collisions continue to be concentrated among key road user groups, with motor vehicle occupants accounting for the largest share of victims (18), followed by pedestrians and motorcyclists at similar levels (9 each), while bicyclists experienced fewer severe crashes (5). Compared to the 2015–2024 average, 2025 data show worsening trends across multiple factors with speeding being the leading contributing factor, rising to 12 incidents compared to a 10-year average of 3.9 incidents annually.

2025 Activities

The following are representative activities completed by the city in 2025; additional details are provided in the 2025 Vision Zero Progress Report (see Attachment A).

- Secured over $1.8 million in grant funding to advance citywide safety projects.
- Upgraded traffic safety infrastructure citywide, including 17 signal improvements, 48 new road safety countermeasures, 2 Road Safety Assessments and 2 Safe Streets Corridor Studies.
- Advanced the Safe Routes to School program, completing the strategic plan and engaging 22 schools in SchoolPool spring and fall campaigns.
- Modernized micromobility regulations, in preparation of a summer launch of a shared program.
- Launched Safe Speeds Bellevue, lowered speed limits on evaluation corridors, and conducted public outreach.

2026 Activities

The following summarizes representative activities from the 2026 Vision Zero Action Plan (see Attachment B).

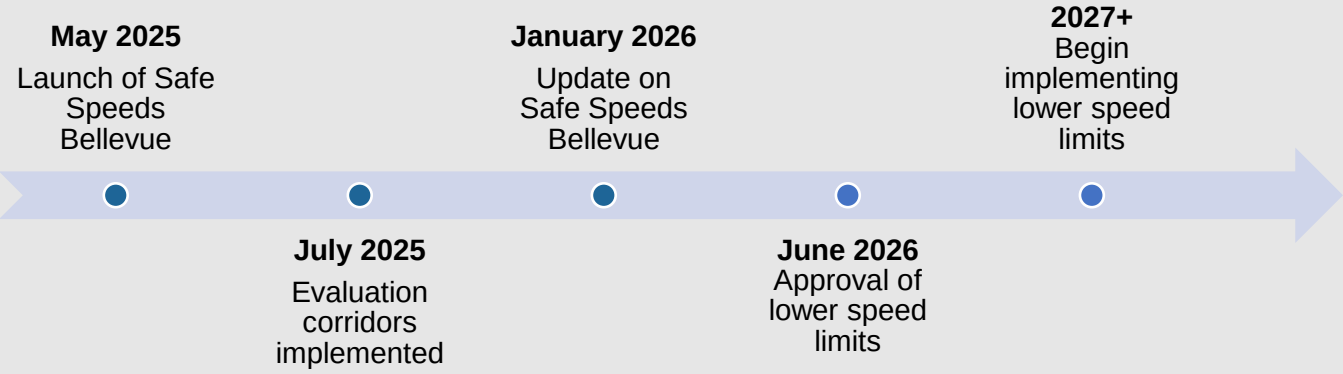
- Expand deployment of speed safety cameras at high-risk locations on the High Injury Network to address excessive speeding and reduce severe crash risk.
- Evaluate and implement speed limit reductions on local and arterial streets where appropriate, consistent with Safe System principles and observed operating speeds.
- Conduct targeted Road Safety Assessments and Safe Streets corridor studies on High Injury Network segments to identify engineering countermeasures.
- Implement signal operation enhancements using real-time detection technology at intersections to reduce conflict exposure.

Safe Speeds Bellevue

The Safe Speeds Bellevue program, launched in May 2025, evaluated speed limits on streets posted at 30 miles per hour (mph) and higher. The Safe Speeds strategy of the Safe System approach recognizes the direct connection between speed and crash severity. Streets with a posted speed at 30 mph or higher represent 25% of citywide street mileage but account for 88% of fatal and serious injury crashes.

Evaluation corridor results from 2025, indicate that reducing posted speeds from 35 mph to 25-30 mph resulted in a 19-42% reduction in high-end speeding (vehicles traveling above 40 mph).

Staff will present proposed speed limit changes, results of community outreach, and next steps for implementation following council's direction.



Proposed Speed Limits

Staff identified proposed speed limits for each street by considering three factors: potential points of conflict between people walking, biking and driving (such as intersections, driveways, and crossings); quality of walking and biking facilities; and nearby activity generators such as businesses, parks, transit stops, and housing density. Each street was rated as having high, moderate, or low levels of conflict and activity, which informed the recommended speed limit (see Attachment C).

The draft proposal results in no change on 16% of streets, a 5 mph reduction on 64%, and a 10 mph reduction on 20% (see Attachment D). Most of Downtown Bellevue is proposed at 25 mph due to higher levels of activity, and a 20 mph zone is proposed in Old Bellevue and around Downtown Park to reflect its more pedestrian-oriented character.

Several streets require coordination with the City of Redmond, including 148th Avenue NE and portions of Bel-Red Road (see Attachment D). Staff are working with Redmond on these shared streets and anticipate returning to council in 2027 with an ordinance following completion of Redmond's citywide speed study.

Outreach

Initial outreach in 2025 showed strong community awareness of relationship between vehicle speeds and safety, with over 75% of survey respondents indicating that speed affects safety for people driving, biking, and walking.

Following the January 27 council meeting, staff continued outreach through community events such as Earthfest and the 2 Line Crosslake Connection opening, as well as a YouthLink Council meeting with about 50 youth participants. A broader survey promoted through city communications (e.g. social media, Neighborhood News, transportation newsletters, *It's Your City)* received approximately 800 responses. The themes from the survey and how the city is planning to address them are below and in Attachment E.

- *Enforcement:* Community members want assurance that speed limits are enforced. Staff are coordinating with the Police Department, and the city will deploy 14 speed safety cameras at seven locations in 2026.
- *Congestion*: Concerns were raised about potential congestion impacts. Staff will communicate that congestion is primarily driven by signals, turning traffic, and crashes rather than posted speed limits.

- *Street design*: There is interest in better aligning street design with speed limits. Staff is identifying projects such as speed cushions and radar feedback signs, and pursuing grant funding for implementation.
- *Unsafe driving*: Concerns about speeding, racing, and distracted driving remain high. The Police Department's Safer Roads Initiative, launched in 2026, will support enforcement and response efforts citywide.

Implementation
Following council approval, staff will proceed with design and installation in phases beginning in 2027. Work will start in the urban core, followed by High Injury Network corridors and then remaining streets. Implementation will continue over several years as all speed limits are updated.

Ongoing outreach will inform the public of changes, and staff will continue coordination with the Police Department to support enforcement and awareness.

Speed limit changes are an important first step in the Safe Speeds program. Evaluation corridors implemented in 2025 show that lower speed limits reduce high-end speeding, but additional tools—such as radar feedback signs, speed safety cameras, and roadway design changes like speed cushions and raised crosswalks—will be needed over time to further support safer speeds.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact
Strategic target areas that support Bellevue's City Council Vision identifies a "safe and efficient transportation system" as a strategic priority and commits to eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes using the Safe System Approach (Objective 3.2). This work is further supported by Comprehensive Plan policies TR-58 (eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030) and TR-59 (annually update Vision Zero Action Plans). Evaluating speed limits is a critical element of the Safe Speeds strategy within the Safe System framework and is supported by TR-56 (assess arterial speed limits and address concerns related to safety through appropriate speed limits, countermeasures and other techniques).

Fiscal Impact
Funds from the Vision Zero Safe Speeds Program (CIP Plan No. PW-R-219) are available to continue design efforts in 2026. Staff are currently developing the 2027-2032 CIP Plan - Transportation Mobility and Safety portfolio, which will include the Neighborhood Mobility Program with proposed funding to support speed limit sign changes and implementation of safety improvements along arterial and High Injury Network corridors to increase speed limit compliance. Together, these funding sources reinforce Bellevue's commitment to systemic, data-informed safety investments focused on eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to finalize the Bellevue City Code 11.32 amendments to adjust speed limits in accordance with the Safe Speeds Bellevue recommendations.
2. Provide alternative direction staff.

ATTACHMENTS

A. 2025 Vision Zero Progress Report
B. 2026 Vision Zero Action Plan
C. Speed limit setting methods
D. Map of proposed speed limits
E. Safe Speeds Bellevue Community Engagement Report
F. CIP Project Description (PW-R-219)
G. Proposed amendments to Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code

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N/A