

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Ordinance relating to speed limits; amending Section 11.32.015 of the Bellevue City Code (BCC) to establish a speed limit of 20 miles per hour (mph) on streets comprising the East Bellevue Demonstration Greenway (Greenway) along the 165th/166th Avenues corridor between SE 14th Street and Northup Way.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In support of the City's goal of building connected bicycle facilities, the East Bellevue Demonstration Greenway (Greenway) is intended to make it easier for people to bicycle around the neighborhood and reach nearby destinations. Lowering the speed limit, along with other project features, will help to create a nearly two-mile corridor that encourages lower vehicle speeds.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6590.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The demonstration Greenway project builds on past project pilots and planning documents that support making the 165th/166th Avenues corridor more comfortable for people walking and biking.

In 2020, the City launched the *Bellevue Healthy Streets* pilot, in which several streets, including the 165th/166th Avenues corridor, were closed to non-local motor vehicle traffic to allow better physical distancing practices during the COVID-19 crisis. In the *Bellevue Healthy Streets* Evaluation Report, one option identified as a next step was to draw on lessons learned during the Healthy Streets pilot to implement pilot neighborhood greenways using low-cost materials, including pavement markings, signage, and quick-build traffic calming measures like paint and post traffic circles.

The 165th/166th Avenues corridor also was identified as a bicycling route in the City's 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and listed as a Neighborhood Bikeway, another name for a Greenway, project idea in the City's 2016 Bicycle Rapid Implementation Program (BRIP).

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 Vision Zero goal of eliminating serious injuries and fatalities on City streets by 2030.

There is an increasing body of evidence, both at the national and local levels, signifying that lower vehicle speeds and lower speed limits support the likelihood of crash survival and reduces the chance of serious injury. For instance, research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicates that for each five mph increase on maximum speed limit, a commensurate 3 percent increase in fatalities was found on non-freeway roads. In Seattle, a recent project lowered the speed limit on a corridor from 30 mph to 25 mph. Absent any additional enforcement or engineering enhancements, vehicle speeds and number of crashes decreased. 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 along the Greenway corridor, and many other Bellevue neighborhoods, exemplify these characteristics.

If this Ordinance is approved, the speed limit of 165th and 166th Avenues NE and 165th and 166th Avenues SE from Northup Way to SE 14th Street will be reduced from 25 mph to 20 mph in fall 2021. While school zones in Bellevue are signed for 20 mph during certain school hours, this project will be the second in the City to feature a 20 mph speed limit for all times of day; a project in the Surrey Downs neighborhood lowered speed limits from 25 mph to 20 mph in fall 2020.

In addition to lowering the speed limit, the Greenway project will receive treatments intended to make it safer and more comfortable to bicycle and roll on the corridor. Improvements will include:

- Bicycle pavement markings such as sharrow symbols and green paint for higher visibility near busy road crossings;
- Rapid-build traffic circles and associated pavement artwork at several locations;
- Relocating stop signs at key intersections to minimize the number of stops for people biking and rolling; and,
- Wayfinding signs directing people to nearby destinations.

The demonstration period will last approximately six months, until early 2022. Depending on project results and feedback from residents, more permanent treatments, including speed bumps, concrete traffic circles and traffic diverters, may be added later as a separate project. That work is not currently programmed or funded.

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-105: Implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan and prioritize projects that:
 - Address safety issues;
 - Provide access to activity centers;
 - Provide access to the transit and school bus systems;
 - Complete and connect planned pedestrian or bicycle facilities;
 - Develop primary north-south and east-west bicycle routes through the City;

- Improve multimodal level of service along travel corridors; and,
- Serve residents who have special accessibility needs.

The 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan articulates a shared vision for walking and bicycling in Bellevue. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative (PBII) includes action-oriented efforts that advance project designs and programs identified in the 2009 Plan to make Bellevue a great place to walk and bike.

Council began the initiative and adopted Program Principles in February 2015 and the Transportation Commission approved a detailed scope of work. It identifies seven primary tasks and staff from various departments who will promote solutions in engineering, education, encouragement, evaluation and enforcement. As part of this work, a BRIP detailed bicycle project ideas along corridors. This included four neighborhood bikeway project ideas, including an East Bellevue Bikeway.

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 directed staff to move Bellevue towards Vision Zero using a safe systems approach. The Vision Zero Strategic Plan outlines several Safe Speed strategies including but not limited to:

- Design or redesign roads and intersections to manage speeds as appropriate for the intended use;
- Assess and evaluate speed limits Citywide and create a speed management program to address speeding concerns based on applicable data; and,
- Create and promote neighborhood-based programs that aim to lower traffic speeds.

The speed limit reduction and supporting project elements along the Greenway also support neighborhood protection policies in the Transportation Element including:

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

Fiscal Impact

If this Ordinance is approved, sign and speed limit pavement marking legend changes will be required along the corridor to reflect the new speed limit. This work will be completed by existing on-call contracting and/or in-house services at an estimated cost of \$5,000. There is sufficient budget in the Neighborhood Safety and Connectivity Levy (CIP Plan No. PW-R-199) and 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 (BCC) to establish a speed limit of 20 miles per hour (mph) on streets comprising the East Bellevue Demonstration Greenway (Greenway) along the 165th/166th Avenues corridor between SE 14th Street and Northup Way.
2. Do not adopt the Ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Vicinity map
- B. CIP Project Description (PW-R-199)
- C. CIP Project Description (PW-M-7)
Proposed Ordinance No. 6590

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A