CITY OF KIRKLAND
PUBLIC WORKS
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
425-587-3000

MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Julie Underwood, Interim Public Works Director/Deputy City Manager
Sarah R. Olson, Public Works Deputy Director – Engineering & Planning
Stephen Padua, AICP, Transportation Manager
Jennifer Palmer, PE, Transportation Engineering Supervisor
Victoria Kovacs, AICP, Transportation Planner

Date: September 16, 2025

Subject: **Speed Limit Setting Policy Update**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council receives a further update on the draft Speed Limit Setting Policy, a deliverable of the Kirkland Transportation Safety Action Plan, and provides final feedback. These documents need to be adopted by the end of 2025 to comply with the funding grant timelines. Staff will return in November to request the Council adopt the speed limit setting policy as drafted as a part of the Kirkland Transportation Safety Action Plan.

In addition, based on the results of using the current draft speed limit setting policy, staff recommends lowering speed limits from 35 mph to 30 mph on Juanita Drive, NE 132nd Street, and Totem Lake Boulevard NE. Staff further recommend that consideration of adopting 20 mph speed limits for local streets one of the priority action items evaluated in a subsequent speed management plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- No formal action is needed; however, staff seeks Council feedback on the draft Speed Limit Setting Policy and the recommendation to lower speed limits on Juanita Drive, NE 132nd Street, and Totem Lake Boulevard NE.
- An update to the Speed Limit Setting Policy is a key deliverable of the ongoing work of the Kirkland Transportation Safety Action Plan (KTSAP).
- This is the third Council briefing related to the KTSAP, and the second briefing specifically on the speed limit setting policy. This memo is in response to Council's request to consider a simplified methodology and a default speed limit of 20 mph for local streets. Staff anticipate returning to the Council in November with a final full draft of the KTSAP and speed limit policy for possible adoption.

- Holistic implementation of speed limit changes citywide is not currently a budgeted work item. Staff recommends development of a speed management plan to define priorities for speed limit changes throughout the city as a separate work item.
- The current proposed speed limit setting policy draft allows for flexibility in implementation. Speed limits may be revised by corridor in coordination with capital projects, on an as-needed basis, or from a prioritized list. Staff recommends keeping the speed limit setting methodology as proposed.
- An alternative speed limit setting approach, such as a default speed limit based on roadway classification, would require concurrent comprehensive implementation citywide.
- A default speed limit of 20 mph on local streets will provide a safety benefit based on injury minimization; however, from available speed and crash data, the primary locations of speeding and fatal and serious injury (FSI) crashes where speeding was a contributing factor are on arterial streets. Staff recommends first evaluating speed limits on arterial streets given the available safety data, and then including local street speed limits as part of a subsequent speed management plan.
- A default speed limit of 20 mph on local streets may require increased investments in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program to maintain current levels of service, or potential changes to speeding thresholds for considering traffic calming devices on local streets.

BACKGROUND:

A draft update of the Speed Limit Setting Policy has been developed as part of the Kirkland Transportation Safety Action Plan (KTSAP). Staff has presented this topic twice to City Council, once as part of KTSAP on July 1, 2025,[1] and then again as a standalone topic on September 2, 2025.[2] This work item supports the City Council goals for Community Safety and Balanced Transportation.

At the September 2, 2025 City Council meeting, Council offered several questions and comments, including:

- Strong interest in speed reduction implementation and a speed management plan to clearly define priorities and take action.
- Does City Council need to approve speed limits as the legislative body?
- Interest in walking through a few examples where the speed limit setting process could be applied in practice.
- The Washington Transportation Safety Commission's Active Transportation Safety Council[3] encourages local agencies across the state to lower their default speed limits from 25 mph to 20 mph. What would be the considerations for that potential change?
- Why should 35 mph be used as a maximum speed limit as a policy principle instead of 30 mph?
- Interest in expanded use of automated enforcement to reduce speeding.
- Interest in interim or inexpensive methods to implement engineering changes to the road environment.

[1] July 1 Council memo: kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2025/july-1-2025/3b_study-session.pdf
[2] September 2 Council memo: kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/city-council/agenda-documents/2025/september-2-2025/9a_business.pdf
[3] wtsc.wa.gov/safe-driving/active-transportation-safety-council/

- Interest in new shared streets legislation.[4]
- Safety improvement opportunities in parking lots.
- Interest in simplifying the speed limit setting process and implementing speed limits in certain corridors before engineering improvements.

The questions and comments directly related to the speed limit setting process will be addressed in the discussion section of this memo. Further discussions on the implementation of the speed limit setting policy and the recommendation for the development of a speed management plan will occur in the future. Other questions and topics will be addressed at future meetings during KTSAP discussion.

Included for convenience, Attachment 1 contains previous Transportation Commission questions, feedback and staff responses, and Attachment 2 includes previous City Council questions, feedback, and staff responses on the speed limit setting policy.

The speed limit setting policy update is not intended to change all speed limits in Kirkland at once. Rather, it establishes a framework for how to evaluate speed limits in conjunction with planned roadway and safety improvements or on an as-needed basis, such as in response to serious injury and fatal crashes. Further discussions on the implementation of the speed limit setting policy and the recommendation for the development of a speed management plan will occur in the future.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Initial Speed Reduction Actions

As discussed in more detail on Pages 12 and 13 of the memo, staff has used the draft policy to evaluate three major arterials, Juanita Drive, NE 132nd Street, and Totem Lake Boulevard. As a result of those evaluations, staff recommends that Council considers lowering the speed limit on these three arterials from 35 to 30 MPH. Resolutions to lower each speed limit could be brought for Council action as the KTSAP and Speed Limit Setting Policy are adopted. Staff also recommends that consideration of lowering speed limits on local streets be one of the priority actions of a subsequent speed management plan.

Council Approval of Speeds Limits

During the last Council meeting on this topic, there was a question about whether City Council needs to approve specific speed limits as the legislative body or whether that authority could be delegated. RCW 46.61.415 empowers the "local authority" to set a maximum speed limit on the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation. "Local authority" is defined ambiguously in RCW 46.04.280 as a "municipal . . . body having authority to adopt local police regulations." This definition and other references in Title 46 RCW do not explicitly state that "local authorities" means the legislative body. However, most use of the phrase suggest legislative authority and the Washington Model Traffic Ordinance, established in chapter 308-330 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and adopted by reference in relevant part by the City of Kirkland in KMC 12.61.010, provides further interpretive guidance in that regard. In WAC 308-330-270, the Model Ordinance states: "After an engineering and traffic investigation by the traffic engineer, the local authority may by resolution" decrease or increase maximum speed limits, among other things. Notably, the Model Ordinance provides for the "local authority" to adopt speed limits by resolution, which is a strictly legislative action, and it distinguishes between the roles of the staff and the local authority. Therefore, despite ambiguity in the statute, the conservative approach is

[4] app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.61.197

for Council to directly set speed limits, rather than delegate its power to do so. This approach will best avoid future potential litigation challenging the enactment of a particular speed limit.

Transportation Data
Objective data and engineering judgment (i.e., judgment based on professional experience and knowledge of Kirkland specific traffic data and patterns) are used to guide decision making in transportation safety and engineering. The City has analyzed both crash data and vehicle operating speed data relevant to proposed updates to the speed limit setting policy.

Crash Data
Crash data is publicly available from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The KTSAP provides an analysis of this crash data from 2019-2023 for Kirkland with added attention on fatal and serious injury (FSI) crashes in alignment with the City's Vision Zero goal. From this analysis, exceeding reasonable safe speeds was a contributing factor reported in 16% of all crashes and 23% of FSI crashes.

Kirkland's roadway network is separated into functional classification categories, which aids transportation professionals in understanding where crashes occur most frequently. According to the 2024 Transportation Strategic Plan,[5] functional classification is set using a variety of factors, including roadway design, speed, capacity, and relationship to present and future land use and development. It also serves as a practical indicator of traffic volume and number of lanes. The classifications used within the city include:

- **Freeways** that provide high-speed connections between regional destinations.
- **Principal arterials** that connect to major commercial areas and other cities.
- **Minor arterials** that serve major traffic generators that are not served by principal arterials.
- **Collector** streets that provide connections between arterials and local streets.
- **Local streets**, or neighborhood access streets that provide access to residential areas, businesses, and other local areas.

Looking at more recent crash data provided by WSDOT from 2022 to 2024, approximately 85% of FSI crashes in Kirkland occurred along arterial roadways (34 out of 40). Of those crashes, approximately 38% listed "exceeding reasonable safe speeds" as a contributing factor (13 crashes). Comparatively within the same study period, approximately 15% of FSI crashes occurred on local streets (6 out of 40), with 33% of those crashes citing "exceeding reasonable safe speeds" as a contributing factor (2 crashes). The data is summarized in **Table 1**. Given the City's Vision Zero goal to eliminate fatal and serious injury crashes by 2035, staff recommends a focused attention be given to arterial roadways since that is where the largest number of FSI crashes are occurring.

[5] kirklandwa.gov/Government/Departments/Public-Works-Department/Transportation/Plans-and-Studies-Transportation-Division/Transportation-Strategic-Plan

Table 1. WSDOT Fatal & Serious Injury (FSI) crash data from 2022-2024, categorized by functional classification.

Functional classification	FSI crashes	Percent of FSI crashes	Number of FSI crashes with 'exceeding reasonable safe speed' as a contributing factor	Percent of FSI crashes with 'exceeding reasonable safe speed' as a contributing factor
Arterial	34	85%	13	38%
Collector	0	0%	0	N/A
Local	6	15%	2	33%
Total of all FSI crashes	**40**		**15**	**38%**

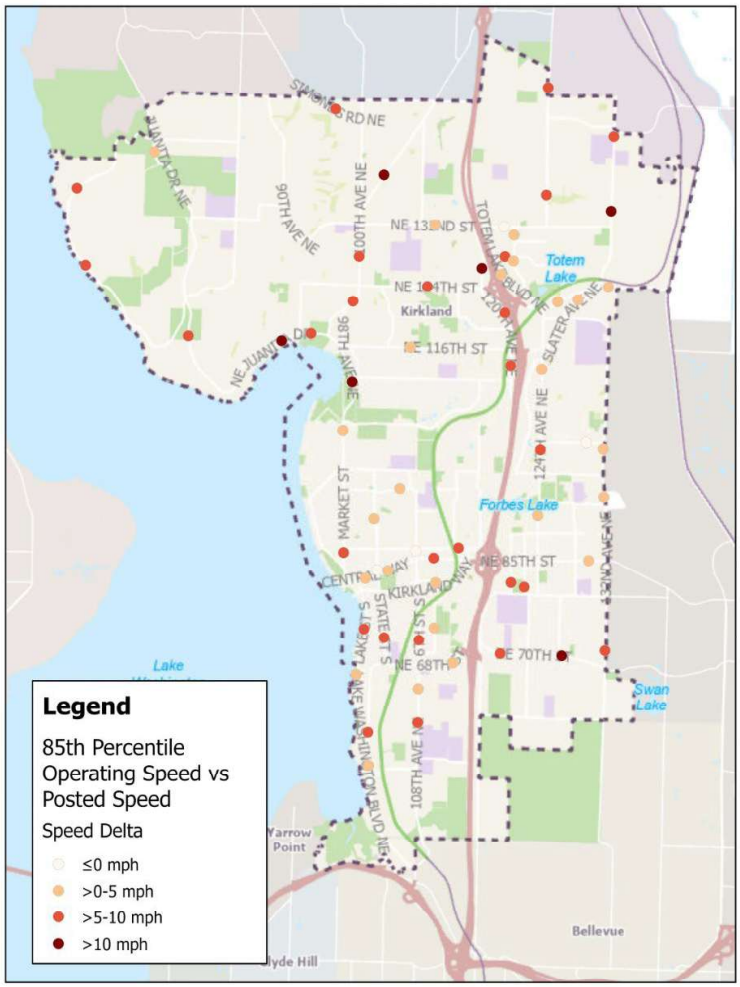
Speed Study Data

In early 2025, the City's KTSAP consultant team collected traffic speeds on 62 arterial and collector roadway segments. In total, a little over half of the collected traffic speeds exceeded the existing posted speed limit by 5 mph or more. Ten percent (10%) of study sites yielded 85th percentile speeds that exceeded the existing posted speed limit by 10 mph or more. The data has been summarized below in **Table 2** and visually mapped in **Figure 1**. This reaffirms the need to focus attention on arterial roadways since that is where the most top-line speeding is occurring.

Table 2. Summary of operating speed data from Jan/Feb 2025.

Functional classification	Number of speed study sites	Number of sites with 85th percentile speeds 5 mph or more above the posted speed limit	Percent of sites with 85th percentile speeds 5 mph or more above the posted speed limit	Number of sites with 85th percentile speeds 10 mph or more above the posted speed limit	Percent of sites with 85th percentile speeds 10 mph or more above the posted speed limit
Principal Arterial	24	10	42%	1	4%
Minor Arterial	23	16	70%	4	17%
Collector	15	8	53%	1	7%
Total	**62**	**34**	**55%**	**6**	**10%**

Figure 1. Operating speed data in excess of the posted speed limit.



Local Streets Default Speed Limits

City Council requested information on lowering the local default speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph as a policy principle. Considerations for this potential policy direction include the anticipated safety benefit, implementation logistics, emergency response, and impacts to the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP). These considerations are described below to aid Council in its discussion and decision-making process.

Anticipated Safety Benefit

If crashes occur between vehicles and vulnerable road users (e.g., people walking, rolling, and bicycling), the severity is reduced the slower the vehicle is traveling. Therefore, a reduction in vehicle speeds would result in a reduction of severity when crashes occur. Reducing risk of FSI crashes is a safety benefit.

According to studies conducted by the cities of Seattle[6] and Bellevue,[7] lowering the speed limit has shown to provide a safety benefit. The City of Seattle saw a reduction in injury crashes comparing before and after studies of changing speed limit signs from 30 mph to 25 mph. However, it is important to understand that these studies were undertaken in urban centers and villages, and the corridors shown in the summary report were arterial streets that carry much higher volumes of traffic (ADT 13,000 – 22,500), not local streets as is under consideration in Kirkland.

Changing a speed limit sign from 25 to 20 mph may produce a small benefit to reduce speeding, particularly for top-line speeding in excess of 10 mph over the posted limit. Bellevue saw a reduction in top-line speeds (defined as 30 mph+) in all of its neighborhood pilot study areas that reduced local street speed limits from 25 to 20 mph; however, Bellevue did not note any crash reductions.

[6] seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/VisionZero/SpeedLimit_CaseStudies_Report.pdf
[7] bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/transportation/safety-and-maintenance/traffic-safety/speed-limits-speed-management/local-street-speed-limit-reduction

For context, Kirkland's NTCP addresses speeding concerns in neighborhoods and conducts speed studies in response to service requests. The data collected from 2022 to 2025 shows that of the 222 speed studies recorded on streets with 25-mph speed limits, approximately 4% of studies found vehicles traveling 35 mph or higher. It would be reasonable to assume reductions in top-line speeding in Kirkland may be relatively modest compared to the Bellevue studies.

In Kirkland between 2022 and 2024, six FSI crashes occurred on local streets, two of which listed "exceeding reasonable safe speeds" as a contributing factor (33%).

Therefore, the reduction in local street maximum speed limits would likely gain a small safety benefit in the reduction of top-line speeding.

Implementation Logistics
In order to implement changes to support a local road default speed limit reduction to 20 mph, approximately 452 signs would need to be replaced. This is beyond the capacity of the City's internal sign shop utility craftspeople to perform and would require hiring an external contractor to complete. Should Council direct staff to implement this policy change, staff would return with a service package request. Ideally, for shared community understanding of a default speed limit, such a change would be implemented comprehensively in a short time span.

Furthermore, implementation of new 20 mph speed limit signs without other engineering improvements would be unlikely to reduce 50th and 85th percentile vehicle operating speeds significantly. Other traffic calming elements such as speed humps may be required to achieve lower operating speeds, as covered below.

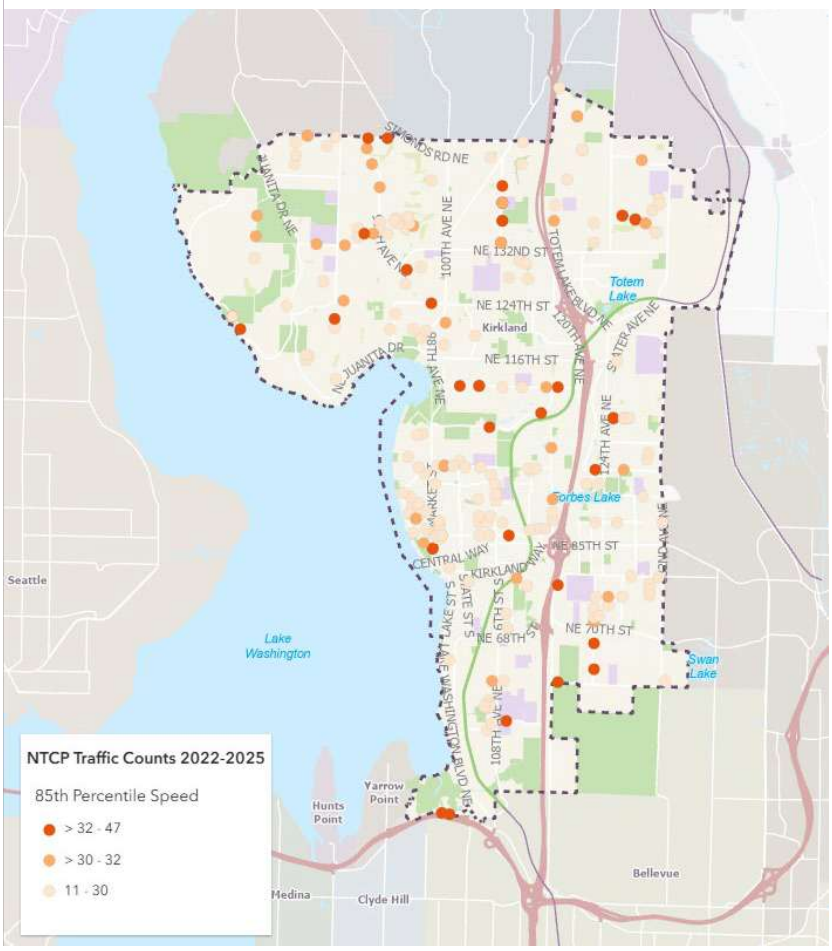
Emergency Response
The Kirkland Police Department (KPD) supports efforts to enhance roadway safety and would not oppose a reduction in the default local street speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph. Research consistently shows that lower vehicle speeds reduce both the likelihood of collisions and the severity of injuries when crashes occur. Concerns about potential impacts on emergency response times are mitigated by existing laws and department policies which permit officers to exceed posted speed limits when responding to emergency calls. However, KPD recommends focusing on strong public education efforts and clear entry-point signage to ensure citations are legally enforceable. At the same time, the KPD cautions against creating either the perception or the promise of increased traffic enforcement without additional resources to do so.

The Kirkland Fire Department (KFD) recognizes the well-documented relationship between reduced vehicle speeds and the decreased severity of both injuries and property damage. However, the KFD has concerns regarding the potential impact of lower speed limits on emergency response times. Because speed limits directly affect travel times—and station locations are determined based on travel time analyses—the KFD is closely monitoring these factors, as travel times directly influence emergency outcomes. This analysis will shift as the final Prop 1 investments are completed and crews are redistributed. At a minimum, the KFD requests additional time to evaluate the effects of the newly completed changes on response times before assessing how reduced speed limits might further influence travel times and, consequently, emergency outcomes.

Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP)

The implementation of a 20-mph default local streets speed limit would likely have a significant impact on the NTCP.[8] The current program allows residents to request traffic calming on their local street in response to speeding concerns. These requests are evaluated by conducting speed studies to measure typical vehicle speeds and volumes. If certain objective data metrics are met, the City may conduct enforcement or implement phased engineering improvements within the limits of the program budget to encourage slower speeds through the neighborhood. This program is documented in Public Works Roadway Policy R-20.[9] Per the policy, there must be vehicle volumes of at least 300 vehicles per day and there must be speeding in excess of 5 mph over the posted speed limit by at least 15% of vehicles to consider lower cost phase 1 or phase 2 traffic calming measures such as signage and striping. For more intrusive phase 3 traffic calming devices such as speed humps, there must be speeding in excess of 7 mph over the posted speed limit by at least 15% of vehicles. Phase 3 measures also require neighborhood engagement prior to implementation.

Figure 2. NTCP data assuming a 25-mph speed limit.



From NTCP data gathered from 2022 to 2025, of the 222 speed studies conducted on local streets with a posted speed limit of 25 mph, approximately 16% of studies found that vehicle operating speeds were between 5 and 7 mph over the posted speed limit (35 studies qualify for phase 2 traffic calming), and approximately 17% of studies found that vehicle operating speeds were more than 7 mph over the speed limit (38 studies qualify for phase 3 intrusive traffic calming such as speed cushions).

Comparatively, if a 20-mph default speed limit were to be implemented on local streets citywide, approximately 16% of the past studies would find vehicle speeds 5 – 7 mph in excess of a 20-mph speed limit (35 studies would qualify for phase 2 traffic calming), and 66% of past studies would be more than 7 mph over a 20-mph speed limit (146 studies would qualify for phase 3 intrusive traffic calming such as speed cushions).

[8] kirklandwa.gov/neighborhoodtrafficcontrolprogram

[9] https://www.kirklandwa.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/development-services/pdfs/pre-approved-plans/policy-r-20-ntcp-traffic-planning-and-acceptance.pdf

Thus, in order to offer the same level of service to the neighborhoods, the budget and staffing capacity of the NTCP may need to be increased. Alternatively, the NTCP data thresholds to consider traffic calming devices could be revised.

To visualize this data, **Figure 2** shows points in red that currently meet the threshold for phase 3 intrusive traffic calming measures with a 25-mph speed limit.

Figure 3. NTCP data assuming a 20-mph speed limit.

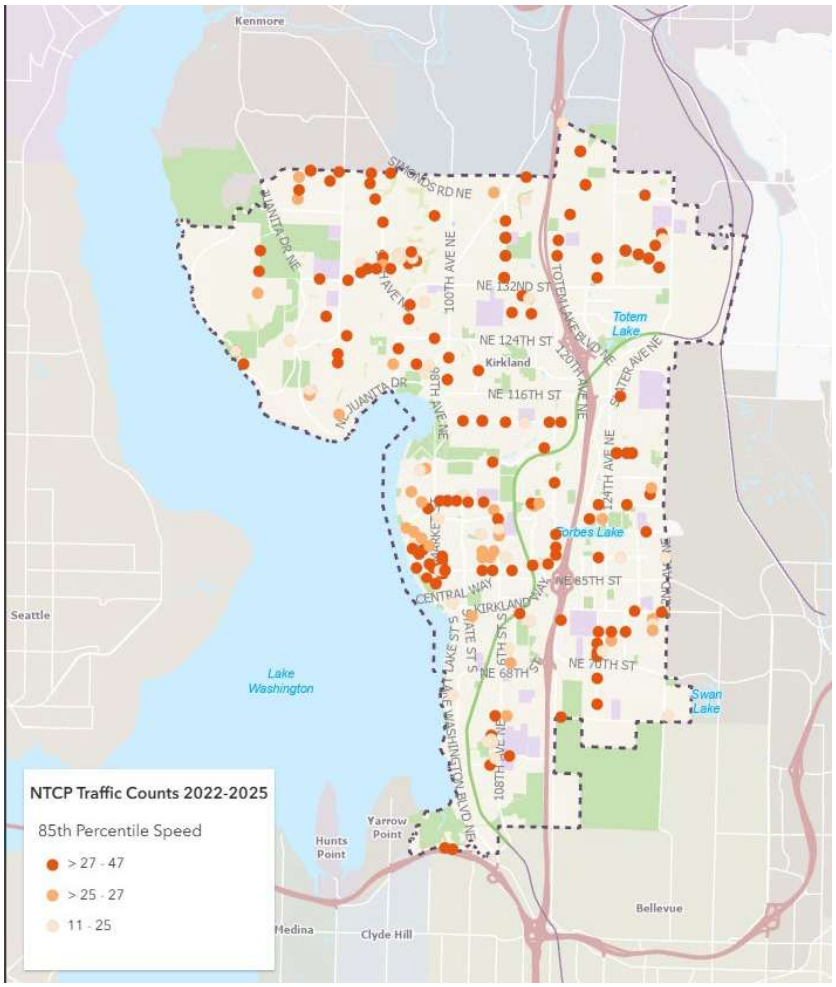


Figure 3 offers the same data set now visualized to represent that the change in threshold would change given a 20-mph speed limit.

Staff Recommendation on Local Streets Default Speed Limits

Given the evidence that lower speeds are safer, staff supports a reduction of local default speed limit to 20 mph. However, given the City's constrained resources, staff recommends the focus to first be evaluating speed limits for arterials and collectors where most FSI crashes and top-line speeding are occurring. A 20-mph default local street speed limit could be adopted as a policy in principle now with delayed implementation until a speed management plan is adopted. Alternatively the draft speed limit setting policy could remain as is and updated in the future once local street speed limit signage revisions are a budgeted work item.

Speed Limit Setting Methodology and Example Applications
The methodology shown in the current draft of the speed limit setting policy presented to Council on September 2, 2025, is based on the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 966: *Posted Speed Limit Setting Procedure and Tool: User Guide*. The benefit of the adapted NCHRP approach is that each corridor can be individually evaluated and flexibly implemented, thereby offering a balance of transportation safety benefit and a sense of equanimity for drivers. This was chosen as a data-driven and context-sensitive approach to setting speed limits within Kirkland.

Of the nationally recognized speed limit setting methodologies that staff considered, the two most prominently featured were the NCHRP Report 966 and the North American Cities and Transit Agencies (NACTO) *City Limits* publication. A summary of benefits and drawbacks of these methodologies is shown below in **Table 3**. Ultimately, both nationally recognized practices provide a framework for agencies to develop safety-focused speed limits.

Any new methodology for setting speed limits must comply with Section 2B.21 of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD),[10] which now requires context such as roadway characteristics, surrounding land use, pedestrian and bicyclist activity, crash history, and more, to set new speed limits. Both the NCHRP 966 and NACTO methodologies comply with the MUTCD requirements for setting speed limits.

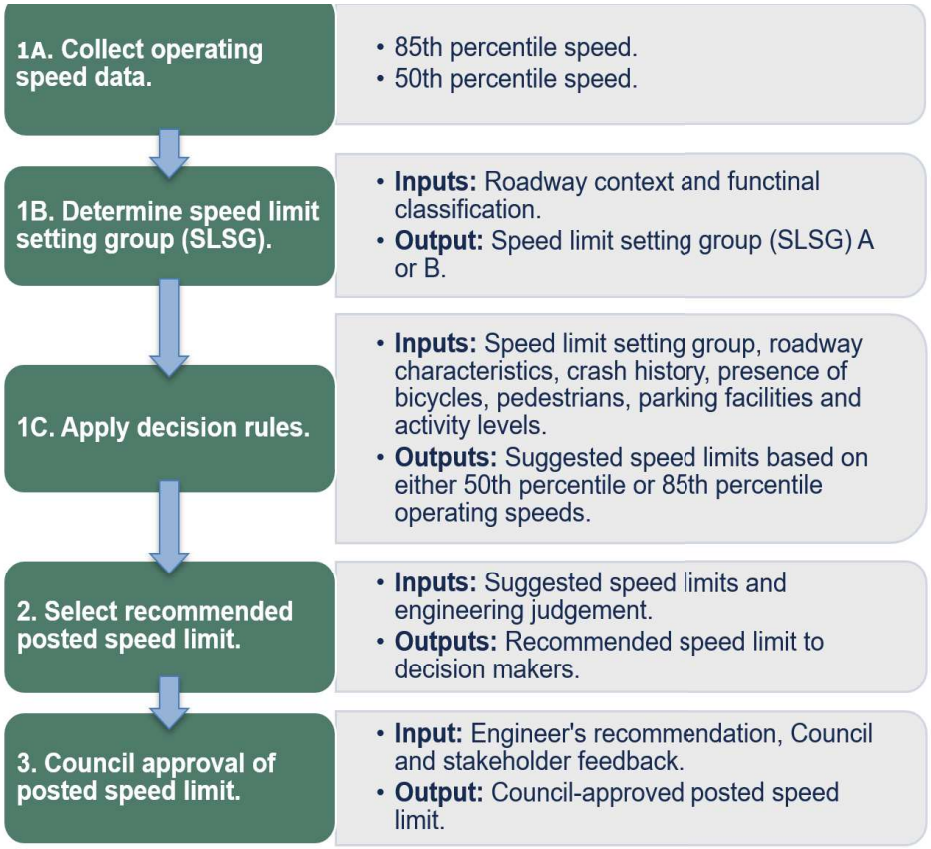
[10] mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_11th_Edition.htm

Table 3. Summary of benefits and drawbacks of different speed limit setting methodologies.

NCHRP 966		NACTO City Limits	
Benefits	**Drawbacks**	**Benefits**	**Drawbacks**
Offers safety-focused approach to setting speed limits	Data-intensive policy is oriented to technical experts and may be less easily understood by the public	Offers safety-focused approach to setting speed limits	Resource-intensive to implement citywide
Individual speed limits are justifiable through objective data	May require supporting engineering design changes to achieve new posted speeds	Uniform and predictable application	May require supporting engineering design changes to achieve new posted speeds
Each corridor or segment is evaluated individually instead of a blanket approach, in theory making each new posted speed limit appear more reasonable to drivers	Evaluation process requires robust data for each roadway segment	Easy to implement policy	Because new speed limits are set using a more “blanket” approach, new speed limits on select roadway applications may not appear reasonable to drivers
Flexibility to prioritize multiple corridors to evaluate at once, or on a case-by-case basis	Requires a speed management plan to set implementation priorities	Sets consistent driver expectations	Requires more significant outreach, education, and increased enforcement

The basic steps to evaluate the speed limits per the City's draft policy adapted from the NCHRP method are shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. Overview of draft speed limit setting process.



The procedure requires data such as current vehicle operating speed data, roadway characteristics such as presence and use of on-street parking, bicyclist level of traffic stress, pedestrian activity, crash history, and more. That data will be used to determine the speed limit setting group (SLSG) and apply decision rules, which results in a suggested speed limit. Then, engineering judgment is applied, and a recommendation can be made for Council to approve.

Three example evaluations were run using the draft speed limit setting policy. Staff will walk through the example evaluations at study session as well. Each example corridor includes select data used in the process, including the functional classification, speed limit setting group, existing vehicle operating speeds (50th percentile and 85th percentile), and the engineer's recommended new speed limit. The outcomes of those evaluations are shown in **Table 4**.

As a result of these evaluations, staff recommends that Council consider these new speed limit revisions on Juanita Drive, NE 132nd Street, and Totem Lake Boulevard, based on the draft speed limit setting policy methodology. Each of the speed limit setting example corridors shown in **Table 4** have been recently reconstructed either in whole or in part by recent capital projects and would be good candidates to reduce the speed limits.

Table 4. Speed limit setting examples.

Speed Limit Setting Examples						
Roadway	**Extents**	**Existing Speed Limit**	**Functional Classification**	**SLSG**	**Existing Vehicle Operating Speeds**	**Engineer's recommended new speed limit**
Juanita Drive NE	Northern city Limits at NE 143rd St to just west of NE 116th Pl (approx. 3.3 miles)	35	Minor arterial	B	Three data points available: 50th: 32.7, 36.7, and 33.7 mph 85th: 37.0, 40.7, and 38.1 mph	30 mph
NE 132nd St	100th Ave NE to I-405 off-ramp/ 116th Ave NE (approx. 0.8 miles)	35	Principal arterial	B	50th: 30.2 mph 85th: 35.0 mph	30 mph
Totem Lake Blvd	NE 124th St to NE 132nd St (approx. 0.9 miles)	35	Principal arterial	A	50th: 33.6 mph 85th: 39.3 mph	30 mph

Staff Recommendation on Speed Limit Setting Methodology

Staff recommends keeping the speed limit setting methodology as proposed. It provides a data-driven, phased approach to reduce speed limits in a way that can be flexibly implemented over time and aligns with the City's strategies to achieve the Vision Zero goals.

NEXT STEPS:

Following direction from Council, staff will return for a full review of the KTSAP and Speed Limit Setting Policy Update in November with an option to incorporate feedback or adopt and, if needed, will return in December for final adoption. If directed by Council, staff will also draft resolutions to lower speed limits on Juanita Drive NE, NE 132nd and Totem Lake Blvd from 35 mph to 30 mph.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Speed Limit Setting Policy – Previous Transportation Commission Q&A
Attachment 2 – Speed Limit Setting Policy – Previous City Council Q&A

Attachment 1: Questions and Feedback from Transportation Commission on Speed Limit Setting Policy

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
	March 2024 Meeting	
1	Has the new version of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) enabled the City to change its speed limit setting procedure?	Yes, the 11th edition of the Federal MUTCD now enables local jurisdictions to take a more context-sensitive approach to speed limit setting beyond the traditional "85th percentile" speed.
2	If a corridor is envisioned to have higher bicycle and pedestrian usage, such as a corridor project identified in the TSP, could that be taken into consideration for speed limit setting?	The speed limit policy would define speeds based on existing roadway conditions. However, the policy is a tool that can be used again in the future in coordination with a project that would change roadway conditions or as land uses change over time.
3	Would the City face a liability risk if the posted speed limit is changed without other design changes to the roadway?	Speed limit changes would be implemented in tandem with design changes as part of capital projects for a complete-streets approach. The City's liability risk depends on whether it exercises ordinary care to keep streets in a reasonably safe condition for persons using them in a proper manner and exercising due care for their own safety. The policy's process of setting speed limits is consistent with ordinary care.
4	How will speed limit changes be implemented, could this be a phased approach for citywide implementation?	A speed management plan identifying implementation priorities, schedule, and funding would be needed for evaluation and rollout of speed limit changes citywide. For now, evaluation of existing speed limits and any corresponding changes would be implemented on a project-by-project basis.
5	Qualitative near-miss data should be integrated into speed limit setting, not just fatal crashes	The near-miss data was used to study intersections to identify potential design improvements. Near-miss intersections were identified through a combination of crash rates, historical community member complaints of near-misses, and pedestrian activity. Speed limit setting will be corridor rather than intersection based.
6	How do we ensure use of the speed limit policy?	The speed limit setting policy will be the standard procedure for changing existing speed limits and for establishing speed limits for newly built roadways.
7	Could the City establish a lower default speed (e.g. 25mph) and then require evaluation for higher roadway speeds?	Kirkland has taken a context-sensitive and data-driven approach to speed limit setting. While other cities have tried the "blanket" approach to speed limit setting, the City of Kirkland has committed to a more robust evaluation process.

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
8	Will the KTSAP identify streets that should lower their posted speed limits?	A few roadway segments will be used to "test" the new policy, but ultimately a speed management plan is needed to assess all city roadways, identify street segments where speeds should change, and identify complimentary road design changes to encourage slower vehicle speeds.
9	The Commission has talked a lot about how lowering speeds is important for safety on streets. This is also something supported by City Council. We are all invested in safety.	A new speed limit setting policy supports the City's Vision Zero goal and our approach to protect more vulnerable road users.
10	Will the speed limit policy include design guidance for roadway design changes to achieve slower speeds?	The KTSAP will include a toolbox of safety countermeasures to address identified patterns in crash history. These include speed management countermeasures such as traffic calming and signal timing synchronization.
11	How does the Transportation Commission fit into the development of a new speed limit setting policy?	The Transportation Commission has been consulted for advisory guidance throughout development of the policy and resulted in key changes to customize the policy to Kirkland's needs.
	December 2024 Meeting	
12	Will the speed limit setting tool be available before the speed limit setting policy?	The speed limit setting tool and policy are integrated. The policy describes the process, the tool is simply a data input mechanism to realize the analysis dictated by the policy.
13	If the speed limit setting tool recommends a different speed limit outcome than engineering judgment, does that create a liability for the City?	No, the tool is never used in isolation; recommendations from the tool must go through engineering judgment before being recommended to Council. The City has a duty to exercise ordinary care, and this process is consistent with that duty.
14	Has there been consideration of neighborhood-wide or local street implementation of speed limit changes?	A speed management plan identifying implementation priorities, schedule, and funding would be needed for evaluation and rollout of speed limit changes citywide.
15	Is a blanket 20mph local street speed limit being considered?	No, Kirkland has taken a context-sensitive and data-driven approach to speed limit setting.

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
16	What feedback has KPD shared on speed limit changes?	KPD is on the City's internal taskforce to develop the speed limit setting policy. Most of KPD's questions have been around logistics of implementation and impacts to response times.
17	Why not change all speed limits across the city at the same time?	Each roadway will have specific characteristics, crash history, and context. It would be a tremendous workplan effort for engineering to analyze all city roadways, and for the sign shop to implement all those sign changes at once. There would also need to be a funding source identified. The City will try to be opportunistic and implement any speed limit changes with other capital improvements or safety projects. Completion of the KTSAP also makes the City eligible for other grant funds through the SS4A program for capital funds or planning funds for a speed management plan to better define which corridors should change speed limits and when.
18	Does a higher crash history for a roadway result in a more dramatic speed limit change?	Crash history does influence the new suggested speed limit. However, since the maximum speed limit in Kirkland is 35mph, speed limit changes will only be a 5mph or 10mph interval at most.
19	Will the speed limit policy update result in recommendations to change the speed limit on certain corridors?	There will be a few street segments piloted to "test" the policy, but it will be a longer term work plan to evaluate speed limits for all street segments citywide through a speed management plan. Speed limits are intended to be evaluated on a project-by-project basis.
20	Will there be consideration of school zones or recommendations for camera implementation?	The City has a separate program for evaluating signage in school zones, and automated traffic safety cameras. For the speed limit setting policy, school zones are special zones that are 20mph and would not be evaluated using the tool.
	March 2025 Meeting	
21	What are actual speeds from the speed data collected vs the existing posted speed limits?	Citywide speed data was collected during this project to be used in future speed limit setting evaluations; however, it was not within the scope of the project to evaluate operating speeds citywide. A speed management plan would be needed to evaluate where speed limits may need to change citywide based on observed speeds.

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
22	Is "bicycle activity" in the speed limit setting policy based upon existing conditions, or based upon an aspirational vision?	The contextual factors in the speed limit policy quantify the 'side friction' factors that can affect vehicle speeds. It identifies what exists today to inform what projects or changes need to be done to achieve target speeds. A future speed management plan could identify a monitoring period to capture changes in street use over time or after capital projects are built to re-run the speed limit setting tool.
23	Is the new speed limit setting policy legally defensible as opposed to the traditional 85th percentile method?	Yes, the policy is an objective process based upon a robust data collection of operating speeds and research backed contextual factors. The City has a duty to exercise ordinary care to keep streets in a reasonably safe condition for persons using them in a proper manner and exercising due care for their own safety. The policy's process of setting speed limits is consistent with ordinary care.
24	For bicycle activity in the speed limit setting process, the commission recommends a standardized, replicable process to measure bicycle activity such as bicycle level of traffic stress. Bicycle activity should be assumed on all streets as a baseline. As bicycle volume is not as easily measured, quality of facility would be important to note as it affects bicycle comfort and activity.	Bicycle level of traffic stress as defined by WSDOT has been integrated into the speed limit setting tool to represent bicycle activity.
25	Does the speed limit setting tool have a category for public input?	Engineering judgment and staff knowledge of common areas of concern is a means to incorporate this into the speed limit setting policy.
26	Schools should be given special consideration in the speed limit setting policy.	School speed zones are 20mph per the policy; however, the procedure for how to identify school speed zones is a separate work item for our engineering group.
27	How has the NCHRP 966 methodology been customized to Kirkland's speed limit setting tool?	Roadway context terms updated to match Kirkland zoning terms. The policy developed two speed limit setting groups with decision matrices that specifically correlate to Kirkland land uses, multimodal activity, parking activity level, and roadway geometrics, and more. The two speed limit setting groups are urban/suburban rather than rural. Additionally, bicycle activity modified to bicycle level of traffic stress per Commission feedback.
28	How are roadway segments defined for applying speed limits?	Segments are no less than 1 mile and within the same speed limit setting group. Roadways were segmented based on context and roadway geometrics

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
		characteristics. The speed limit policy also includes broader considerations of speed limit adjustments such as adjacent segments, adjacent jurisdictions, and frequency of signage.
	May 2025 Meeting	
29	How is bicycle level of stress evaluated for roadways with bikeway facilities on only one side of the roadway?	Bicycle level of stress is evaluated following WSDOT methodology. The higher level of stress would be assumed for facilities on only one side of the roadway.
30	What is typically included for engineering judgment in the speed limit setting process?	Engineering judgement factors have been added to the policy. These may include continuity of speed limits for adjacent roadway segments along the same corridor, coordination with neighboring jurisdictions, historical community input, and crash risk or injury minimization.
	July 2025 Meeting	
31	RCW recently changed due to SB 5595. How does this impact the speed limit setting policy?	The default speed limit on city and town streets remains 25 mph per RCW 46.61.400. RCW 46.61.415[1] was recently revised effective July 27, 2025, per SB 5595, to include provisions for shared streets, which have a different maximum speed limit than local streets. No changes made as a part of SB 5595 should affect the speed limit setting policy as drafted.
32	Would the City be required to pair reductions in speed limits with safety countermeasures or traffic calming improvements?	There is no policy requirement to pair the use of the speed limit setting policy with countermeasures or traffic calming. Roadway projects that change the road environment to encourage slower, safer speeds, should be evaluated for a revised speed limit under this policy.
33	There's a concern that a reduction in speed limits would be a driver for more speeding tickets, which is not the goal of the policy. The goal of the policy is to set safer speed limits.	Speed limits, if lowered, would be based on a data-driven study under this policy framework. The intent of applying the policy is to have new speed limits based on the data and engineering judgement.

[1] RCW 46.61.415: https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.61.415

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
34	Staff mentioned previously that speed limit setting analysis would be done with upcoming projects. When would the use of this policy be triggered?	As written, there are no specific triggers on when the policy and speed limit evaluation methodology must be used. Clarifying language has been added to the policy that roadway projects that change the road environment to encourage slower, safer speeds should be evaluated for a revised speed limit during the design process.
35	If residents use the policy to determine what their own speed limits would be, would that trigger the use of the policy?	No, resident requests do not determine speed limit changes. The speed limit setting policy is a framework for speed limit changes to be evaluated by City Transportation Division staff.
36	Can we put language in the policy that says when there is a major capital improvement project, you will apply the speed limit policy and revisit it to see if changes should be made. But, if we're doing major road improvements, is that a missed opportunity if you don't run the policy? Can you build the budget into capital projects to change the signs? How will this be used in practice? Can there be a threshold amount above with capital projects must also evaluate the speed limit for the project?	Clarifying language has been added to the policy document that roadway projects that substantially change the roadway environment and may affect speed and driving behavior should be evaluated for speed limits during the design process. Project types that are NOT candidates for speed limit evaluations include regular maintenance activities, isolated paving work, utility work, and storm water work. Special projects will be evaluated by City Transportation Division staff on a case-by-case basis.
37	If there are current construction projects, and we ran the tool, would we add traffic calming elements to the project?	We have very little ability to change capital projects in construction. Scope elements of projects are determined during the design process. Speed limits are evaluated based on roadway context. A speed limit evaluation does not necessitate traffic calming.
38	For applications on new roadways or significantly different road designs, since lower speeds are safer, we should start with the lower speed in the range. May want to consider starting with lower speeds and with justification to go with the higher posted speed, if appropriate.	The section titled "SETTING SPEED LIMITS ON NEW ROADWAYS" under step 2 has been updated in the policy document to reflect the lower end of a target speed range should be utilized.

Ref No.	Commissioner Comment or Question	Staff Response
39	As we implement this, will it be agile? Will it be a rapid impact for safety? Get the sense it will be long-term and drawn out. Would there be a set of quick-wins or short set of recommendations to Council that may not be an active project but are clear example cases as an implementation of the policy.	It is anticipated that changes to speed limits would be evaluated and implemented on a project-by-project basis. For holistic review of speed limits citywide, there would need to be a speed management policy and prioritized workplan for implementation of sign changes and other roadway design changes. The policy itself is not recommending projects to address speed limits.
40	Policy procedure is not made to be implemented on local streets, greenways, and school zones. Want to make sure we're not unintentionally restricting ourselves in the future to lower speed limits citywide on locals.	Local streets citywide are 25mph by default, and Greenways and School Speed Zones are 20mph. The speed limit setting policy will be shared with Council at their September meeting for their input.
41	Do we have examples of where we've changed speeds and what we did for engineering, education, and enforcement that might help inform the policy?	The multimodal path project on 131st Way by Juanita Elementary is a recent example of a speed limit change. There was a project update mailer that was mailed to every household within a certain radius of the project. Other typical outreach elements include This Week in Kirkland updates, social media, and Council interactions. In terms of enforcement, there's an interdepartmental task force that PD is involved in with Public Works Transportation staff to work through items such as speed limits and signing. In those meetings, Transportation staff noted that patrol officers are doing education each time they do a traffic stop.
42	Wherever there's a trigger that talks about a new roadway, we cover all the potential changes that could be in the cross section. Maybe the term "new" isn't appropriate, maybe we should just mention changes that could include a new roadway.	The policy does not have a threshold or "trigger" to use the evaluation framework outlined in the policy. The policy can be used on any arterial or collector roadway at any time. Clarifying language was added to the policy roadway projects that substantially change the roadway environment and may affect speed and driving behavior should be evaluated for speed limits during the design process. Project types that are NOT candidates for speed limit evaluations include regular maintenance activities, isolated paving work, utility work, and storm water work. Special projects will be evaluated by City Transportation Division staff on a case-by-case basis.

Speed Limit Setting Policy as part of the Kirkland Transportation Safety Action Plan (KTSAP)

Questions and Feedback Received from the July 1, 2025, Council Meeting on the KTSAP and Speed Limit Setting Policy

Number	Comment or Question	Staff Response
1	Does the KTSAP consider e-bikes and how can we educate and encourage safe use across the City?	The KTSAP is a data-driven planning document that identifies high-risk locations and potential safety improvements based on crash data analysis. As e-bikes, e-scooters, and other personal electric mobility devices are not a classified unit/vehicle type in police reports, there is not data available to quantify e-bike crashes. However, given the City's Vision Zero focus, City staff develop regular crash report narratives for all fatal and serious injury crashes, and all crashes involving pedestrians and pedalcycles. In the latest report, 2019-2023, there was one report of an e-bike, three reports of an e-scooter, and two reports of an e-unicycle as units involved in a crash described in police report narratives. For each of these six crashes, the opposing unit was a motor vehicle, and the e-device user had a possible or minor injury. From the limited review of the latest crash report narratives, e-bike crashes do not surface as a clear trend in the crash data during the study period, thus there are no specific recommendations made in the KTSAP document regarding specific countermeasures or programs for the use of e-bikes. As a separate work item, Public Works Transportation will work with the Police Department to explore options for public education around e-bikes. New regulations for e-bikes and personal electric vehicle (PEV) use would also be a separate work item beyond the scope of the KTSAP as it requires consideration of state regulations, enforcement officer capacity, and unique consideration of the CKC.

Number	Comment or Question	Staff Response
2	Setting speed limits is only one of many methods for improving safety on our streets. Engineering design is important to keep the most vulnerable road users safe.	The City follows the Safe System Approach[1] which is a holistic approach to transportation safety, including safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads, and post-crash care. The KTSAP provides recommendations for safety countermeasures to be implemented on the ground, a policy framework to evaluate safe and reasonable speed limits, recommendations for partnered public outreach, and more. The speed limit setting policy would define speeds based on existing roadway conditions. The intent of the policy is to have safe and reasonable speed limits based on data, roadway context, and engineering judgement. A speed management plan identifying implementation priorities, schedule, and funding would be needed for evaluation and rollout of speed limit changes citywide. For now, evaluation of existing speed limits and any corresponding changes would be implemented in coordination with capital projects, or on an ad-hoc basis. Roadway projects that change the road environment to encourage slower, safer speeds, should be evaluated for a revised speed limit under this policy.
3	Can we share community-driven self-reporting tool with community members or use it for ongoing reporting?	The online reporting tool that the City used for the public outreach portion of the KTSAP was only funded for a limited time period and hosted by the consultant team. There is no on-going near-miss or close call mapping tool currently hosted or funded by the City. Community members can communicate transportation safety concerns via Our Kirkland through the online web portal[2] or by calling our Public Works counter at (425) 587-3800.

[1] https://www.transportation.gov/safe-system-approach
[2] https://www.kirklandwa.gov/Government/Departments/Finance-and-Administration/Our-Kirkland

Number	Comment or Question	Staff Response
4	Can staff explain the effectiveness of automated enforcement cameras and if there are other options to use with automated enforcement?	The use of automatic enforcement at school zones in Kirkland has effectively increased compliance with the 20mph school speed limit as shown by the results of quarterly performance reports posted on the City website. The expanded use of automated enforcement beyond school zones is proposed as a safety countermeasure within the KTSAP. This could be explored further as a future separate work plan item if desired by Council and directed by the City Manager. Per RCW 46.63.250[3], automated traffic safety cameras may be used to detect speed violations within the following locations: hospital speed zones, public park speed zones, school speed zones, school walk zones, roadway work zones, or in areas that experience higher crash risks due to excessive vehicle speeds. Speed safety cameras are one of the FHWA's Proven Safety Countermeasures[4], backed by research to reduce vehicle speeds and crash risk. Recent studies from Chicago, IL, suggest a reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes of about 15% for conspicuous automated speed cameras in urban arterial settings outside of school zones[5]. Red light running cameras are another common automated enforcement safety countermeasure in many Washington jurisdictions. For example, they are in use in Seattle, Bellevue, Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, Edmonds, Everett, Lynnwood, Renton, Spokane, and Tacoma. They are allowed per RCW 46.63.220[6] and 46.63.230[7]. Studies typically show a positive or

[3] https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.63.250
[4] https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/speed-safety-cameras
[5] https://cmfclearinghouse.fhwa.dot.gov/study_detail.php?stid=682
[6] https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.63.220
[7] https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.63.230

Number	Comment or Question	Staff Response
		mixed safety finding. For example, a 2019 study suggested that red light cameras can provide an overall reduction in right angle crashes and all crash types generally, while at the same time increase rear end crashes.[8]
5	What would it look like to have traffic enforcement within Public Works?	This question falls outside of the scope of the KTSAP but could be explored as a separate potential work item if desired by Council and directed by the City Manager.
6	Overall, crashes have decreased but fatal and serious injurious have increased. 6% of vulnerable road users (people walking and rolling) are involved in all crashes, but represent 46% of fatal and serious injuries. Engineering design is important to keep vulnerable users safe.	Following the adopted Vision Zero goal, the City's safety focus is on preventing fatal and serious injury crashes. The KTSAP provides robust safety analysis particular to vulnerable road users given this disproportionate share of fatal and serious injury crashes. Additionally, safety countermeasures are identified for each of the study road segments and intersections to address identified crash patterns to help prevent future crashes, and specifically addresses improvements for vulnerable road users.
7	There should be a focus to better understand personal electric (PEV) vehicle technology, policies, and education.	As a separate work item, Public Works Transportation will work with the Police Department will explore options for public education around e-bikes. New regulations and policies for e-bikes and personal electric vehicle (PEV) use would also be a separate work item beyond the scope of the KTSAP as it requires consideration of state regulations, enforcement capacity, and unique consideration of the CKC.
8	Are roundabouts safer than signalized intersections? Should the city prioritize roundabouts over new traffic signals? What	Roundabouts are proposed as a safety countermeasure within the KTSAP at various intersection locations.

[8] https://cmfclearinghouse.fhwa.dot.gov/study_detail.php?stid=646

Number	Comment or Question	Staff Response
	are the cost differences between the two options?	A roundabout-first approach is an adopted policy in Kirkland's 2024 Transportation Strategic Plan[9] under the **"Goal T-1 Eliminate all transportation-related fatal and serious injury crashes, while reducing all crashes in Kirkland by 2035."** Policy T-1.2: Implement the principles of a Safe System Approach by prioritizing safe street designs and strategies. f) Make roundabouts the default design for new intersections or major intersection improvements, unless shown to be infeasible. Roundabouts are one of the FHWA's proven safety countermeasures[10] to address certain crash patterns such as angle crashes. While roundabouts have been shown to reduce fatal and injury crashes, they don't necessarily reduce the total number of crashes overall. They do usually also provide an operational benefit to reduce vehicle delay and queueing. Extra considerations for pedestrians and bicyclists need to be considered in the design of roundabouts as well. Development of cost estimates to implement roundabouts at specific intersections would be outside the scope of the KTSAP, but could be explored in a separate work item, if desired by Council and directed by the City Manager.
9	Does the context component of the expert-based approach allow for special handling of school zones or high-activity pedestrian streets?	The policy document addresses local streets, school zones, neighborhood greenways, and construction work zones as separate items. Instead of applying the expert-based approach to evaluate speed limits, local streets have a default speed limit of 25 mph, and designated school speed zones and neighborhood greenways have a default speed limit of 20 mph. All other streets would be evaluated using the expert-based approach by using a

[9] https://www.kirklandwa.gov/Government/Departments/Public-Works-Department/Transportation/Plans-and-Studies-Transportation-Division/Transportation-Strategic-Plan
[10] https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/roundabouts

Number	Comment or Question	Staff Response
		tool that incorporates land use, crash history, and roadway contextual factors such as pedestrian use, bicycle level of traffic stress, driveway density, on-street parking, presence of signals, roadway geometrics, and more.
10	How will the Transportation Commission be involved?	The Transportation Commission has been involved in the development of an update to the Speed Limit Setting Policy and the KTSAP over five separate briefings since March 2024. Their feedback has been incorporated into the draft policy and KTSAP. The Commission has been supportive of the work effort and draft policy document as it advances the city's Vision Zero goal.