



City Council Agenda Item Staff Report

CITY OF SAN BRUNO

DATE: April 12, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Jovan D. Grogan, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Matthew Lee, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: Receive Report on 15 MPH Speed Limit Signs on School Zones

BACKGROUND: At the City Council meeting on October 26, 2021, citing local safety concerns near schools and neighboring cities that have either reduced speed limits near K-12 schools or committed to study doing so, the City Council requested that staff investigate the City's ability to reduce speed limits near San Bruno schools and the San Bruno Senior Center. The discussion and direction was prompted by an agendaized Councilmember Comment from Mayor Rico Medina titled "Speed limits near schools and the San Bruno Senior Center." During the discussion, information was requested on the Police Department's ability and the cost to enforce the reduced speed limits. In addition to assumption that reduced posted speed limits will increase safety around school sites, Councilmembers cited a newly adopted state law (AB 43) and alignment to actions (or potential actions) by neighboring cities as the rationale for examining reduced speeds near school sites in San Bruno.

In addition to the above direction to examine reducing speeds to 15 mph, in FY 2020-2021, the City Council authorized work on a Safe Routes to School Plan and the City was awarded \$248,929 from a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant to develop a Safe Routes to School Plan. The Plan will identify infrastructure improvements and propose program activities such as education and enforcement needed to improve safety conditions for children who walk and bicycle to schools. The Plan will be framed on the six Es of Safe Routes to School programs (Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Equity), and the content will be based on input from school and community-based groups such as parent-teacher organizations, citizen advisory committees, three open community meetings, online parent and student surveys, in-depth analysis of collision data, and comprehensive walking audits at each school. Participating schools include Belle Air Elementary, Decima Allen Elementary, Rollingwood Elementary, John Muir Elementary, Portola Elementary, Parkside Intermediate, Capuchino High, St. Robert Catholic Elementary, and Palos Verdes and El Portal Schools. Members of the community are welcome to provide feedback for non-participating schools during the public engagement process. The Plan will include school specific summaries that describe existing conditions, proposed recommendations, and a list of prioritized projects per school and district-wide. Plan adoption by City Council is anticipated for Winter 2022-2023.

The California Vehicle Code (CVC) is the section of the California Codes which contains almost all statutes relating to the operation, ownership, and registration of vehicles including bicycles in the state of California.

CVC identifies a prima facie speed limit of 25 mph on local streets and streets contiguous to schools when approaching or passing school grounds (up to 500' of the school grounds before 2008), without the need for Engineering & Traffic Survey (E&TS). On streets with posted speed limits of 30 mph or higher, the 25 mph prima facie speed limit in school zones is only in effect when children are present, which is generally when children are going to, or leaving the school during morning, lunch period or afternoon. For schools that are located on local streets, the 25 mph prima facie speed limit in school zones is in effect all the times.

California Assembly Bill 321 (approved October 10, 2007), an act to amend CVC Section 22358.4, became effective in January 2008 allowing local agencies to extend the 25 mph prima facie speed limit up to 1,000 feet from the school grounds or to establish a 15 mph speed limit in school zones (up to 500' from the school grounds) under certain conditions. Specifically, the reduced or extended school zone speed limit is only applicable on streets in a residential district that have a maximum of two traffic lanes and a maximum posted speed limit of 30 mph. Such reduced or extended speed limits must be established for both directions of traffic and the reduced or extended school zone speed limit would only be in effect when children are present.

In addition to the above, CVC Section 22358.4 as well as the CA MUTCD also require (1) documenting all provisions of CVC section 627 (traffic collisions, unusual traffic conditions, residential density, pedestrian/bicycle safety) that support the need to lower or extend the school zone speed limit, in an engineering study and (2) a Council resolution or ordinance establishing reduced or extended school zone speed limits. While the 85th percentile speed forms the basis of determining radar enforceable speed limits, the 85th percentile speed is not required to be the basis for the reduced 15 mph or extended 25 mph school zone.

Recently, AB 43 was approved by Governor on October 8, 2021. Among other things, AB 43 authorizes local agencies to reduce speed in Residential and Business Districts to 20 or 15 mph based on an E&TS. Most of the AB 43 provisions will not be effective until Caltrans and the California Judicial Council have developed and formalized procedures related to the new provisions. Staff estimates these provisions may not be effective until 2023 or 2024 because of the time required for Caltrans and others to update their rules and regulations.

California Assembly Bill 321 does not apply to senior centers, however under AB 43 the speed limit can be reduced to 15 or 20 mph at any residential streets or business districts based on Engineering and Traffic Survey. Without further study, it is not possible to state if AB 43 can be used to reduce the speed limit near the San Bruno Senior Center to 15 or 20 mph, as it is unclear if the area would qualify as a residential or business district under AB 43.

DISCUSSION: There are a total of 15 private and public schools in the City of San Bruno. A preliminary review of school locations indicates that all of the schools are located at qualifying locations meeting CVC criteria. Reducing school zone speed limits below 25 mph is not allowed by law on roads that exceed two travel lanes, or posted speed limit of higher than 30 mph or are not located within residential districts. In order to post 15 mph reduced or 25 mph extended school zone speed limit signs, the following major steps will be essential.

1. Conduct an engineering study for each location. A cursory look indicates that most locations may qualify for posting 15 mph speed limits within school zones.
2. Council action and passage of resolution for implementation
3. Installation of signs

California MUTCD Figure 7B—103(CA) shows the typical school zone signs required to be posted at each school site (Attachment 1). A minimum of 6 (six) signs are required per school site or more depending on cross streets within the school zone and/or contiguous streets to the school grounds.

If the City decides to implement the reduced speed limit around schools, there will be fiscal impacts. It will require the City to budget a capital improvement project for about \$300,000 to cover the cost of performing engineering study, preparing plans and bid documents, advertising the project for construction and the cost of construction and contract administration.

In addition, the City desires to actively enforce the reduced speed limits there will need to be additional annual costs incurred by the City for traffic enforcement. The Police Department's Traffic Section is currently staffed with one Traffic Sergeant and one Traffic Officer. The Traffic Sergeant's duties require them to remain primarily in the office as their duties include reviewing and approving traffic collision reports, reviewing parking citation appeals, conducting vehicle impound hearings and managing the Department's Office of Traffic Safety grants. The Traffic Officer is assigned to respond to traffic collisions, investigate major traffic collisions and conduct traffic enforcement including speed enforcement. If the Traffic Officer were to be diverted from all their other duties to ensure that they are proactively enforcing the reduced speed limits around schools; the Traffic Officer would only be able to be at each school site, once each month. In addition, while the Traffic Officer is dedicated to a school each day; their normal workload will have to be handled by other Officers. The Police Department projects that the City will need to hire additional Traffic Officers depending on the level of proactive speed enforcement that is desired at the school sites. A Traffic Officer is estimated to cost \$191,900 annually (at Step 5). For each Traffic Officer, a police motorcycle will need to be purchased at an approximate cost of \$73,100.

An additional Traffic Officer would allow for speed enforcement at each school site once each month and allow the current Traffic Officer to maintain their current workload. Two new Traffic Officers would allow for speed enforcement at each school site twice each month. The new state law (AB 43) requires that certain violations be subject to a warning citation for the first 30 days of implementation. In addition, the Police Department will have to conduct further research to determine the enforceability of these reduced speed limits in comparison to existing authorized speed limits. The Department may have to have consultations with other agencies and the Traffic Court. It is suggested that we wait to implement AB 43 (reducing speed on residential and business districts to 20 or 15 mph) until June 2024 as recommended in the AB 43 text).

It is noteworthy to mention that speeding issues are complex and street design and geometry of the road, street landscaping, number of lanes, lane width, etc., play a role.

Installing signs and enforcement while may reduce speeding in some instances, it is not a complete solution. Also, City has a traffic calming program where residents can submit a petition for their street to be considered for traffic calming measures to be installed if the speeding on the residential streets meet the speeding thresholds as defined in the City's Traffic Calming Process.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact to the City's budget from providing this report. However, as noted above, should the City Council wish to proceed with a project to lower speed limits at 15 private and public schools to 15 mph, staff estimates one-time project costs of \$300,000. Additionally, depending on the desired level of enforcement, one or two Traffic Officers may be needed at an estimated annual cost of \$191,000 per Traffic Officer and a one-time capital cost of \$73,100 per police motorcycle.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: Receiving a report is not a project subject to CEQA. City Council's action is not considered a "Project" per CEQA Guidelines and therefore no further environmental analysis is required. Should a project be approved to reduce speed limits around schools, the project is categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c) – Existing Facilities.

RECOMMENDATION: Receive information on reducing speed limits to 15 mph near schools and discuss next steps with guidance to staff of the following options:

1. Direct staff to immediately identify funds to implement 15 MPH school zones when the regulation allows and includes funds for enforcement by the San Bruno Police Department (SBPD) in the City Manager's Proposed Budget for next fiscal year.
2. Request that staff bring this item back to the City Council for prioritization and identification of funding sources at an upcoming City Council budget study session for next fiscal year.
3. Take information into consideration and discuss next steps after the City Council receives the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan in the Winter of 2022- 2023.
4. Request that the Traffic, Safety and Parking Committee (TSPC) look into this matter along with the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan and provide a recommendation to the City Council.

ALTERNATIVES: Alternatives are identified above, under the Recommendation section.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. CA-MUTCD Figure 7B—103(CA)