

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, Vision Zero is a holistic strategy to end traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all; and

WHEREAS, the City first adopted Vision Zero as part of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan in 2015, then reaffirmed its commitment to Vision Zero with the adoption of the Vision Zero Action Plan in 2016 and the passage of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan in 2019; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan prioritizes safety; and

WHEREAS, the Austin community has supported working towards the Vision Zero policy goal by approving the passage of mobility bonds in 2016, 2018, and 2020, which have increased investments in safer infrastructure for people walking, biking, rolling, driving, and using transit services; and

WHEREAS, Austin's Vision Zero efforts lead with traffic engineering improvements, and the major intersection safety projects funded through the three mobility bonds have demonstrated positive early results, including about a 30% reduction in all reported crashes and about a 35% reduction in crashes resulting in injury or death; and

WHEREAS, despite these improvements, total traffic fatalities in Austin reached a record high in 2021 and are on a pace to exceed 2021 totals as of late May 2022, part of a national and statewide trend in rapidly rising fatalities on roadways; and

23 **WHEREAS**, there are significant emotional and economic impacts to
24 individuals, families, and the City from the 12,000+ crashes requiring reports each
25 year, including loss of life, loss of quality of life, loss of ability to access jobs and
26 services, increased traffic congestion and delays, and the high cost of public safety
27 resources needed to respond to crashes; and

28 **WHEREAS**, most traffic fatalities occur on higher speed and wider
29 roadways with large vehicular volumes—like freeways, frontage roads, and major
30 arterials—and it is difficult to quickly implement engineering solutions on these
31 types of roadways; and

32 **WHEREAS**, recent analysis on Austin Municipal Court traffic citations
33 shows a 90% reduction of speeding-related citations issued from 2016 through
34 2021; and

35 **WHEREAS**, recent focus group discussions organized by the Austin
36 Transportation Department with relatively younger licensed drivers reported a
37 common belief that there is a lack of traffic enforcement in Austin, and therefore
38 drivers believe there are few consequences for speeding; and

39 **WHEREAS**, the Vision Zero “Safe System” approach needs all parts of the
40 transportation system to work together, including ensuring safety for all roadway
41 users; and

42 **WHEREAS**, one strategy utilized in places which have seen significant
43 reductions in fatalities and serious injuries is targeted enforcement of traffic laws
44 with a primary focus on speeding violations, as risk of severe injury or death rises
45 exponentially with higher vehicle speeds, particularly for people walking and
46 biking; and

47 **WHEREAS**, narrowly focusing traffic enforcement on behaviors which
48 impact the immediate safety of roadway users has been shown to have a positive
49 outcome on reducing both severe crashes and reducing racial disparities in traffic
50 stops, and other cities and states are considering or have taken action towards this
51 approach; and

52 **WHEREAS**, analysis on severe crash victims shows that the Black
53 community is overrepresented by a factor of two as compared to their share of the
54 Austin population; and

55 **WHEREAS**, the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force recommended
56 “end(ing) investigative / discretionary stops” with context of reducing focus on low
57 level traffic and “quality of life” offenses within neighborhoods; and

58 **WHEREAS**, other US cities, including Berkley, CA, Minneapolis, MN, and
59 Philadelphia, PA, are implementing or considering tasking unarmed civil service
60 staff with handling traffic enforcement and issuing citations, with a goal of limiting
61 traffic-related fatalities and injuries, racial disparities in stops, and undue searches,
62 arrests, and uses of force; and

63 **WHEREAS**, increasing traffic enforcement on high-speed roadways in a
64 manner that is narrowly focused on offenses impacting the immediate safety of
65 roadway users is a near-term strategy which can be deployed quickly and have
66 immediate impact while the necessary engineering changes continue to progress
67 over time and result in the creation of a safer transportation network that does not
68 overly rely on enforcement strategies; and

69 **WHEREAS**, City staff has begun discussions with Travis County
70 Constables about developing a partnership on enforcement to fill in some of the

current traffic enforcement gap with peace officers who can enforce state traffic laws within the City’s full purpose jurisdiction; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to explore near-term strategies to increase narrowly-focused traffic safety enforcement on speeding, impairment, and other driver behaviors that directly reduce safety for all roadway users and that have led to rapidly rising numbers of fatal traffic crashes in our community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The near-term strategies that the City Manager considers should be designed to change driver behaviors and increase safety for all people and should not be focused on assessing fines and penalties.

The focused traffic safety enforcement strategies should be primarily targeted to freeways, frontage roads, and major arterials (mostly Austin Strategic Mobility Plan Level 4 and Level 5 roadways) on which most severe car crashes occur, with specific locations prioritized based on crash and data analyses conducted through the City’s Vision Zero efforts. Other important areas of focus to be considered include speeding in school zones and emergency response to serious crashes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

As part of the fiscal year 2022-2023 proposed budget, the City Manager should consider maintaining or increasing funding for the Austin Police Department’s (APD) “No Refusal Initiative.” City Council also desires an analysis

93 of the impact of the “No Refusal Initiative” on impaired driving on Austin
94 roadways.

95 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

96 The City Manager should consider strategies which utilize City resources as
97 well as outside resources. The outside resources considered could include
98 negotiating an interlocal agreement with Travis County, which employs peace
99 officers with jurisdiction to enforce state traffic laws in the City. Considerations
100 for using outside resources through an interlocal agreement could include:
101 comparing the type and level of training provided to outside officers in contrast to
102 the training provided to new APD officers; and determining whether and how the
103 City will receive adequate performance reporting data from outside agencies to
104 demonstrate good value and continued alignment with stated goals in exchange for
105 its expenditure.

106 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

107 The City Manager should research and report back on civil service-staffed
108 and technological alternatives to traffic monitoring and enforcement being
109 implemented around the U.S. and Canada (at least) and provide a legal and cost
110 analysis examining whether and how similar strategies and staff could be deployed
111 to achieve the goals of this resolution.

112 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

113 The City Manager should provide City Council an interim update on or
114 before July 15, 2022, so that discussions regarding the fiscal year 2022-2023
115 budget can reflect the City Manager’s recommended strategies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager should report back to Council by December 1, 2022, with a plan that includes a timeline to increase City resources dedicated to proactive, consistent, narrowly-focused traffic enforcement that fills in remaining traffic safety enforcement gaps over the next two years and is in full effect by fiscal year 2024-2025. This may include researching the use of effective strategies used in other states and cities and identifying any needed state legislative changes to enable those strategies in Austin.

ADOPTED: _____, 2022 **ATTEST:** _____

Myrna Rios
City Clerk