Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	22-0815	**Name:**	
Type:	Ordinance	**Status:**	Agenda Ready
File created:	2/1/2022	**In control:**	City Council Legislative Meeting
On agenda:	3/8/2022	**Final action:**	
Title:	Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Sections 10-3-30 and 10-3-874 of Article B (RECKLESS DRIVING, SPEEDING, ETC.) of Chapter 3 (OPERATION OF VEHICLES) of Title 10 (MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. 22-0815_Attachment 1 - Ordinance Cover, 2. 22-0815_Attachment 2 - Ordinance, 3. 22-0815_Attachment 3 - Speed & Traffic Safety, 4. 22-0815_Attachment 4 - Presentation		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 1, 2022

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:
Introduction and First Reading. Consideration. Passage on First Reading of an Ordinance to amend and reordain Sections 10-3-30 and 10-3-874 of Article B (RECKLESS DRIVING, SPEEDING, ETC.) of Chapter 3 (OPERATION OF VEHICLES) of Title 10 (MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1981, as amended.

ISSUE: Consideration of an ordinance to authorize the City Manager to reduce speed limits to less than 25 miles per hour, but not less than 15 miles per hour, on any city street located in a business or residence district.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the proposed ordinance (Attachment 2) to authorize the City Manager to reduce posted speed limits to less than 25 miles per hour, but not less than 15 miles per hour on any city street located in a business or residence district on first reading, and schedule it for second reading, public hearing, and final passage on Saturday, March 12, 2022.

BACKGROUND: In 2017, the Alexandria City Council adopted a Vision Zero Policy and Action Plan, which sets a goal to eliminate fatal and severe crashes in Alexandria by 2028. Vision Zero recognizes that transportation systems affect human life and that no traffic-related loss of life is acceptable. The plan includes a multi-pronged approach to traffic safety based on data, engineering, enforcement, and education initiatives. See Attachment 3 for more information on the relationship between speed and traffic safety. A key strategy recommended in the plan is to "develop a neighborhood slow zone program…to reduce vehicle speeds," which involves a combination of lower speed limits and traffic calming treatments.

Through outreach for the Vision Zero Action Plan and Alexandria Mobility Plan, as well as Alex311, staff has heard from many residents and neighborhood groups across Alexandria that vehicle speeds and cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods are concerns and that additional City action is desired to mitigate these issues. The City Council has also repeatedly supported efforts in the General Assembly that help the City achieve its Vision Zero goal to eliminate all traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2028. The City has repeatedly supported legislative principles that protect vulnerable road users.

Va. Code § 46.2-874 states that the maximum speed limit on highways in business and residence districts shall be 25 miles per hour. However, in 2021, the Virginia General Assembly passed H.B. 1903, and Va. Code § 46.2 -1300 was amended to include subsection (A)(4) below:

> Va. Code § 46.2-1300 [Current Version. Effective July 1, 2021]
>
> A. "The governing body of any county, city, or town may by ordinance, or may by ordinance authorize its chief administrative officer to:"
>
> (1) "increase or decrease the speed limit within its boundaries, provided such increase or decrease in speed shall be based upon an engineering and traffic investigation…and such speed area or zone is clearly indicated by markers or signs."
>
> (4) "Reduce the speed limits to less than 25 miles per hour, but not less than 15 miles per hour on any highway within its boundaries that is located in a business or residence district…[if] such reduced speed limit is indicated by lawfully placed signs."

DISCUSSION: The City has always had the authority to decrease speed limits, so long as the City fulfilled the statutory requirements set by the Commonwealth. However, the City was restricted to a posted speed limit of no less than 25 miles per hour per the Code of Virginia. The attached ordinance enables the City to exercise the newly granted authority from the Commonwealth to reduce speed limits as low as 15 miles per hour in business or residential districts.

This legislation enables the City to begin piloting "slow zones" in Alexandria, which typically include a combination of lower speed limits and traffic calming treatments such as speed cushions, curb extensions, and signage. Alexandria has committed to making streets safer through its Vision Zero program, which identifies speeding as one of the most pressing community concerns related to safety.

With this ordinance, staff would continue to adhere to the requirements set forth in City Code that speed limit changes be preceded by an engineering study by Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), a recommendation from the Traffic & Parking Board, approval by the City Manager, and the installation of clearly visible speed limit signs. Staff will not immediately consider individual requests outside of slow zone areas for speed limit reductions on neighborhood streets to less than 25mph. Should there be an eventual desire to reduce speed limits outside of slow zones, staff will develop a process for identifying which streets would qualify.

Amending City Code to allow the City Manager to reduce speed limits below 25 miles per hour is consistent with several adopted City plans and policies, including the Vision Zero Action Plan, Alexandria Mobility Plan and Environmental Action Plan. As noted above, it is also consistent with prior City legislative packages.

At their February 28th meeting, Traffic and Parking Board recommended that City Council approve the proposed ordinance. Staff recommends that the above changes be effective immediately. The proposed changes will not have any immediate impact on existing posted speed limits, but they will enable staff to move forward with associated traffic calming projects.

FISCAL IMPACT: Adopting the proposed ordinance will not have a negative fiscal impact. Any future speed limit changes in accordance with the proposed ordinance may incur costs related to fabrication and installation of signs. While there is the possibility of future revenue for speeding citations, revenue is not a goal of the Vision Zero program.

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover
Attachment 2: Ordinance
Attachment 3: Speed & Traffic Safety
Attachment 4: Presentation

STAFF:
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