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DATE: April 8, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Jeff Stutsman, PE, TE - Deputy Director of Operations (PW&U)  
Gina Benedetti-Petnic, PE - Interim Director, PW&U

SUBJECT: An Introduction of an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Petaluma to Reduce Enforceable Speed from 25 mph to ~~20-mph~~ **15 mph** within 500 Feet of School Zones and from 25 mph to 20 mph Speeds within the Business Activity District Pursuant to Vehicle Code Sections 22358.4 and 22358.9 (**Ordinance Title Updated 04-08-24**)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council Introduce an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Petaluma to Reduce Enforceable Speed from 25 mph to **15** mph within 500 Feet of School Zones, and from 25 mph to 20 mph Speeds within the Business Activity District Pursuant to Vehicle Code Sections 22358.4 and 22358.9.

### **BACKGROUND**

The basic intent of speed zoning is to influence drivers to operate at or near the same speed, thus reducing conflicts created by differentials in operating speeds. The California Vehicle Code (CVC) reflects the viewpoint that speed zoning should be based on traffic conditions and natural driving behavior.

The Basic Speed Law states, “No person shall drive a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent having due regard for weather, visibility, the traffic on, and the surface and width of, the highway, and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons or property” (California Vehicle Code Section 22350). The law is founded on the belief that most motorists are able to modify their driving behavior properly, as long as they are aware of the conditions around them.

### **DISCUSSION**

Agenda Bill (AB) 43 took effect on January 1, 2022, and made a number of additions and modifications to the CVC that authorize local jurisdictions to set safer speed limits on certain

streets. The most immediate opportunity for the City to set safer speed limits under this new law is below:

**California Vehicle Code Section 22358.9** permits local authorities to reduce the speed limits contiguous to a business activity district by five mph. To reduce by 5 mph, pursuant to CVC Section 22358.9, the street must meet the following conditions:

- A. A maximum of four traffic lanes,
- B. A maximum posted 30 miles per hour prima facie speed limit immediately prior to and after the business activity district, if establishing a 25 miles per hour speed limit,
- C. A maximum posted 25 miles per hour prima facie speed limit immediately prior to and after the business activity district, if establishing a 20 miles per hour speed limit.

As used in the California Vehicle Code, a “business activity district” is that portion of a highway and the property contiguous thereto that includes central or neighborhood downtowns, urban villages, or zoning designations that prioritize commercial land uses at the downtown or neighborhood scale and meets at least three of the following requirements:

- 1. No less than 50 percent of the contiguous property fronting the highway consists of retail or dining commercial uses, including outdoor dining, that open directly onto sidewalks adjacent to the highway,
- 2. Parking, including parallel, diagonal, or perpendicular spaces located alongside the highway,
- 3. Traffic control signals or stop signs regulating traffic flow on the highway, located at intervals of no more than 600 feet,
- 4. Marked crosswalks not controlled by a traffic control device.

Based on the criteria set forth in the California Vehicle Code Section 22358.9 for reduction of speeds in the commercial business district, staff has analyzed all the streets in the downtown business district and has determined the streets shown in **Attachment A: Reduced Speeds in Commercial District** meet all the requirements of the code. The primary factor in the selection was identifying all the streets that met the definition of the “business activity district” and comparing them to the existing speed limit to ensure the speed limits prior to and after the business district were within the 25 mph and 30mph thresholds.

Additionally, **California Vehicle Code Section 22358.4** permits local authorities to reduce the speed limits **to 15** mph within 500 feet of school grounds for streets that meet the following conditions:

- A. 20 miles per hour prima facie limit in a residence district on a highway with a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour or slower when approaching at a distance less than 500 feet of the school grounds.

The prima facie limits established for a **15**-mile-per-hour limit shall meet all the following requirements:

- A. Maximum of two traffic lanes

- B. Maximum posted speed of 30 miles per hour prima facie speed limit immediately prior to and after the school zone.

Based on the criteria set forth in the California Vehicle Code Section 22358.4 for reduction of speeds within 500ft of school grounds, staff has analyzed all the streets within the 500'buffer of the school grounds and has determined the streets shown in **Attachment B: Reduced Speeds in School Districts** meets all the requirements of the code for reduction of speed to **15** mph. The primary factor in the selection was identifying all the streets within 500 feet of the school grounds and comparing them to the existing speed limit to ensure that the speeds did not exceed 30mph.

These proposed reductions **are just the first phase of speed reductions** that staff will bring for the Council's consideration. Newly enacted AB 43 allows for reductions on the basis of safety or vulnerable road users which does come into effect until after June 30, 2024. The State has not released formal guidance on what they consider to be a safety corridor, but it may relate back to the mapping of fatal and serious injuries, such as from the County's vision zero high injury network or the City's Local Road Safety Plan. Staff are currently compiling this data, identifying what corridors would meet those criteria, and determining what additional speed studies would be required. Once this work is complete, **an additional ordinance will be brought to the Council later this summer that would cover speed reductions for safety corridors.**

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This agenda item appeared on the City's tentative agenda document on March 18, 2024, which was a publicly-noticed meeting. Prior to the installation of signs and enforcement, extensive outreach will be provided through community updates, social media posts, and a dedicated webpage.

### **COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT**

The completed project supports the following Council Goals, Objectives, and Workplan Items through upgrading the roadways, signals, and walking surfaces, creating safer paths of travel, and increasing public safety in the city right of way. These improvements enhance the safety and comfort of all roadway users, especially pedestrians and bicyclists.

### **A SAFE COMMUNITY THAT THRIVES**

Support facilities and design programs that create a healthy, resilient, and engaged community that is prepared, safe, and housed.

**Workplan item #84.** Enhance pavement management programs to improve the safety and serviceability of our roads and to protect drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

**Workplan item #85.** Implement City Vision Zero plan with a focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety with improvements to uncontrolled crosswalks, curb ramps, sidewalks, and bicycle infrastructure.

## **CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS**

The reduced speeds encourage walking, biking, and active transportation use in the city and improve safety for all users.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The action being considered by the City Council is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c) (Existing Facilities) as the removal and replacement of signs and minor speed reduction are a minor alteration to the City's existing streets and do not create additional automobile lanes and Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) as the reduction in speed and new signs are a minor alteration to the existing streets and will not remove trees. This action is also exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (Commonsense Exemption) as the reduction in speed will result in less green house gas emissions from vehicles and may increase the amount of bicycle and pedestrian users.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

The reduced speed limits will have minimal financial impact. The installation of new signs will be completed and installed by City Staff and paid for out of the Street operating budget for the new signage.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The City Council has the option of adopting all, none, or any of the street reductions proposed in the Ordinance.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Ordinance
  - a. Exhibit A – Reduced Speeds in Commercial District
  - b. Reduced Speeds in School Districts