

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date: March 31, 2022

To: Honorable City Council
c/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Monica Rodriguez, Chair, Public Safety Committee

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager 
Department of Transportation

Subject: **STREET RACING FEASIBILITY STUDY**

SUMMARY

In response to Council File (CF) 21-0870, this report discusses the Department of Transportation's recommendations for the use of traffic control devices to discourage street racing and a plan to install devices at three pilot locations in Council District Seven (CD 7) to deter intersection takeovers.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council DIRECT the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to design, implement, and evaluate a pilot installation of raised pavement markers and double yellow delineator extensions at three intersections within CD 7 to discourage intersection takeovers.

BACKGROUND

The City of Los Angeles (City) and the surrounding region experienced an epidemic of street racing and related activities in recent years. These activities include drag racing and other exhibitions of speed, drifting, donuts, intersection takeovers, and other illegal activities. Some of these activities are organized and planned, while others are spontaneous and occur randomly with little warning. While enforcement by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is the primary method of curtailing this activity, LAPD reports that enforcement is difficult due to the number of intersections where events can occur, the brevity of the events, and the organizers' use of social media to reorganize after police interventions. Select traffic control devices may assist in deterring these activities.

DISCUSSION

The City Council (Council) directed the LADOT to work with the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) and LAPD to create a menu of traffic control devices available to combat street racing and intersection takeovers. LADOT held task force meetings with the three LAPD Traffic Divisions and StreetsLA to discuss problematic locations and potential solutions. The task force identified a number of treatments to address specific street racing events and related behaviors.

Street Racing

Several treatments are available to address street racing, depending on the type of street racing observed.

- *Rumble strips:* Rumble strips are sets of 10 thermoplastic bars placed five feet apart perpendicular to the path of travel. When a driver drives over these bars, they will hear a rumbling sound and feel feedback through the steering wheel. Rumble strips are not appropriate in every setting, as they can increase noise levels by up to 8 decibels measured from beyond the limits of the roadway, but LADOT successfully reduced speeds and drag racing on Plummer Street through a rumble strip pilot. The estimated cost to install rumble strips is approximately \$3200 per lane, per set. LADOT may recommend multiple sets depending on the length of the problem location and the number of blocks involved.
- *Raised Pavement Markers:* Raised Pavement Markers (RPMs) are reflective plastic four-inch squares, usually yellow or white in color, that are just over a half-inch high. They are typically installed near lane lines or edgelines to increase their visibility at night or during adverse weather conditions. The RPMs generate a bumping sensation and audible cue when driven over that alerts drivers that they may have veered out of their lane or onto the shoulder. Placing RPMs in roadway shoulders, center turn lanes, or painted medians discourages participants from racing in the center of the roadway or on the shoulder of the road. The task force recommends RPMs for streets where racing frequently occurs on the shoulder or in the painted center median. The projected cost for this treatment is approximately \$15,000 for every ¼ mile length of the street.
- *Speed humps:* Speed humps are raised asphalt berms installed perpendicular to the vehicle's path of travel on a roadway. They reduce vehicle speeds on collectors and local streets. Speed humps are limited to streets with a speed limit of 25 mph or less and may reduce street racing in residential neighborhoods. A typical speed hump treatment costs approximately \$20,000 for a set of three humps.
- *Speed tables:* Speed tables are extended versions of speed humps with a raised flat section that extends 20 feet long instead of six feet. They may successfully lower speeds on streets with posted speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less, or on streets where the roadway grade is a factor, and speed tables may reduce street racing on arterials and collector streets. Speed table treatments cost approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000 per set of two speed tables.

Intersection Takeovers (Donuts)

To address intersection takeovers, LADOT can strategically place Raised Pavement Markers (RPMs) or install double yellow delineator extensions within identified intersections.

LADOT can implement these features independently or together. Installing RPMs costs approximately \$6,000 per intersection. The double yellow delineator extensions cost roughly \$4,000 per intersection. The task force recommends using these treatments selectively at locations with repeat incidents, or incidents that are more prominent or lead to other illegal activities. There are thousands of potentially attractive intersections for intersection takeovers citywide, making a priority system necessary. The task force recommends piloting RPMs to evaluate their effectiveness in deterring intersection takeovers.

All of the devices described above are permanent treatments. The task force also explored temporary treatments to address the issue of street racing and intersection takeovers, but was unable to identify any viable devices that can be temporarily installed on the street and then easily relocated for this purpose. However, portable speed feedback signs and portable video surveillance cameras may deter these activities by providing the Police Department with information to help target enforcement.

At this time, the task force recommends piloting the RPM treatments and double yellow delineator extensions at three intersections within CD 7 to discourage intersection takeovers. Once the task force determines the specific locations, LADOT proposes to design, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot project.

FISCAL IMPACT

LADOT estimates the cost of the recommended treatments at three pilot intersections to total approximately \$30,000, which the Department will absorb within the existing budget. LADOT does not anticipate an impact to the General Fund as a result of these recommendations.

SJR:DM:sr