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TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Steven D. Powers, City Administrator

CC: Jim Baird, Interim Police Chief  
Craig Hupy, Public Services Area Administrator  
Nick Hutchinson, City Engineer  
Cresson Sloten, Systems Planning Manager

DATE: August 17, 2015

SUBJECT: DC-1 – Resolution to Establish Speed Limits no Greater than 25 mph throughout Near-Downtown Residential Neighborhood

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A resolution to Establish Speed Limits no Greater than 25 mph throughout Near-Downtown Residential Neighborhoods was postponed to August 17 to allow time for additional staff input. City Council requested more information regarding the proposed streets to be impacted in the downtown neighborhoods, specifically how would this be implemented in near downtown neighborhoods and which streets would be affected.

Staff has attempted to interpret the resolution text in terms of City and MDOT specifications and definitions. The resolution results in all streets in the City, with the exception of MDOT Trunklines, being eligible for reanalysis for a 25 mph designation.

The third Resolved clause's use of road maintenance, documented safety hazards, and traffic calming program provides guidance, but additional specificity is needed for staff to implement City Council's policy intent and to provide advice on the impacts of the policy direction. What is meant by road maintenance? Does that refer to any road maintenance or only resurfacing/reconstruction projects? What is a documented safety hazard? Using the requirements of the Ann Arbor Traffic Calming Program for petitions would result in a very slow resident engagement, review, and approval process, given the other work demands and commitments of the City's project management and engineering staff.

Staff is prepared to provide further analysis, including estimating the cost of implementing the 25 mph policy directive, once City Council provides direction on the policy objectives of the resolution.

Generally, a city can set the speed limits on the streets within its jurisdiction within parameters set by the Michigan Vehicle Code. Traffic studies should be done to provide rational reasons to set speed limits. A traffic study includes analysis of road geometry (such as sight distance, curvature, etc.); road context; observed modes of travel; measurement of vehicle speeds; review of crash history; and review of any unusual conditions. These criteria allow the engineers to make data driven, defensible decisions.

If City Council desires a proactive effort to reduce speed limits, the City's complete streets policy, crash data, and citizen concerns can be used to prioritize traffic studies. Alternatively, if City Council desires, City Council could provide direction regarding the specific streets that should be studied.

Staff will be at the August 17 City Council meeting to answer questions, including on the City's current processes for establishing speed limits.