



City of Santa Ana
20 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701
Staff Report
October 3, 2023

TOPIC: Ordinance Adding Article XV, Sections 36-706 through 36-710, Entitled "Street Racing and Reckless Driving Exhibitions Prohibited" to the Santa Ana Municipal Code

AGENDA TITLE

Ordinance Adding Article XV, Sections 36-706 through 36-710, Entitled "Street Racing and Reckless Driving Exhibitions Prohibited" to the Santa Ana Municipal Code Prohibiting Spectators at Illegal Speed Contests and Reckless Driving Exhibitions

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approve first reading of an ordinance to prohibit spectators who knowingly attend or assist with illegal speed contests and reckless driving exhibitions. If approved, Article XV, sections 36-706 through 36-710 entitled "Street Racing and Reckless Driving Exhibitions Prohibited" will be added to the Santa Ana Municipal Code.

GOVERNMENT CODE §84308 APPLIES: No

DISCUSSION

As a result of the serious public safety threat street racing and reckless driving exhibitions (commonly referred to as intersection/street takeovers or "sideshows") pose to other drivers, residents, and visitors, the Santa Ana Police Department ("SAPD"), in partnership with the Public Works Agency, developed a comprehensive program to deter street racing and reckless driving exhibitions in the City.

The program, dubbed S.T.E.A.R.R.D (Strategic Traffic Enforcement Against Racing and Reckless Driving), is a three-pronged approach to address the racing and reckless driving problem in the City. The three prongs of the program are Enforcement, Engineering, and Education.

The Public Works Agency (PWA) has been actively involved in S.T.E.A.R.R.D's Engineering component. Public Works has strategically re-phased specific traffic lights to "Rest in Red" along major arterial roadways throughout the City. The re-phasing deters street races by presenting a traffic signal resting in red rather than green. PWA is also evaluating roadway designs and speed limits where street racing and reckless driving

exhibitions are prevalent.

SAPD emphasizes the educational component of S.T.E.A.R.R.D through various social media platforms, focusing on the dangers and consequences of street racing and takeovers. SAPD has produced an anti-racing video and continues to educate the public about the dangers of street racing and takeovers, as well as legal and safe alternative locations, (Irwindale Speedway).

SAPD has also partnered with several other law enforcement agencies throughout the County and outside the County (including the CHP), who have experienced an increase in street racing, takeovers/sideshows, and reckless driving. The partnership works together to combat these activities on a weekly basis. To date, this partnership has completed over 360 multi-agency enforcement operations, resulting in 7,297 citations, 462 vehicles impounds, and 276 arrests related to racing, takeovers, and reckless driving. Efforts have also led to arrests for drunk driving and weapons violations. Additionally, SAPD has been experiencing an increase in noise-related calls for service related to speeding, racing, and takeover activities throughout the community.

In general, spectators gather where takeovers/sideshows occur. These takeover groups and crews often use their own social media to provide the location (public streets and intersections), date(s), and time(s) where they are planning these unlawful events. Spectators are typically associated with street takeover crews and are their "followers" on social media.

"Spectator" is defined as any person who is present at a street race or reckless driving exhibition (takeovers and/or sideshows), or the site of the preparations for either of these activities, for the purpose of viewing, observing, watching, recording, or witnessing the event as it progresses. A spectator will be considered "present" if the person is within a certain distance from the location of the street race or reckless driving exhibition or from the site of the preparations for either of these activities.

Spectators are often, but not always, young persons in their teens and twenties. Spectators describe these "takeover" events as an exhilarating, intense, and thrilling public show at no cost to the spectator. The relationship between the driver(s) and the spectator(s) include two primary components: PERFORMANCE and AUDIENCE. The takeover groups put on the "performance" with their driving patterns (donuts and burnouts) while the "spectators" act as the "audience," who by their presence and sheer numbers, also create a barrier for law enforcement.

For this ordinance to be impactful, law enforcement personnel will be trained to discern suspected "spectators" from ordinary motorists, residents, or other persons unrelated to the event who by happenstance are at or near the location of these unlawful activities. Spectators are often discernable based on their actions rather than their appearance.

Historically, law enforcement has observed hundreds of spectators who attend these unlawful activities and who typically block an entire intersection resulting in significant traffic flow issues including, but not limited to, preventing emergency personnel from responding to critical calls for service, defacing City street surfaces with tire marks, and causing numerous noise complaints. Spectators also act as "blockers" by protecting the drivers and their vehicles from apprehension by law enforcement. Finally, the spectators often act in a violent manner towards officers at the scene to allow the drivers an avenue of escape.

The following municipalities have adopted ordinances that ban spectating: Long Beach, Anaheim, Buena Park, Modesto, Paramount, and Ontario. This type of ordinance provides an additional tool to complement the continuing enforcement efforts against the takeover groups and drivers to curb and/or eliminate these dangerous activities by addressing the two primary components simultaneously: PERFORMANCE and AUDIENCE.

The City has evaluated the needs and concerns of the community in recommending the adoption of an ordinance relating to street racing. Specifically, the proposed ordinance (Exhibit 1) will provide law enforcement with additional enforcement and deterrence tools in its ongoing goal to mitigate street racing and reckless driving exhibitions. The provisions of the ordinance include the following:

- The ordinance will allow the Police Department to issue infraction or misdemeanor citations to any person who is knowingly present as a Spectator of a street race or reckless driving exhibition on a public street, highway, or off-street parking facility. Alternatively, the Police Department can issue an administrative citation to violators.
- The ordinance defines "present" as a person who is within two hundred (200) feet of the location of a motor vehicle speed contest or reckless driving exhibition or within two hundred (200) feet of the site of the preparations for either of these activities.

Common intersections in the city where reckless driving has been observed and/or documented include the following:

- Flower Street and Memory Lane
- Flower Street and Santa Clara Avenue
- Flower and 19th streets
- Mabury and Fruit streets
- Fairhaven Avenue and Linwood Street

Common intersections in the City where street takeovers have been observed and/or documented include the following:

- 17th and King streets
- 17th Street and Penn Way

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- Main Street and Memory Lane
- Main Street and Warner Avenue
- Main and 15th streets
- Grand and Chestnut avenues
- Grand Avenue and St. Andrew Place
- Standard Avenue and St. Andrew Place
- Standard and Chestnut avenues
- Euclid Street and McFadden Avenue
- Newhope Street and McFadden Avenue

Staff recommends approval of the ordinance.

EXHIBIT(S)

1. Ordinance

Submitted By: David Valentin, Police Chief

Approved By: Kristine Ridge, City Manager