

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA**  
**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	February 7, 2022
Action Required:	Adoption of Ordinance (2 readings, no public hearing required)
Presenter:	Brennen Duncan, PE, City Traffic Engineer, Public Works
Staff Contacts:	Brennen Duncan, PE, City Traffic Engineer, Public Works
<b>Title:</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Street SW Speed reduction</b>

**Background**

State law, Virginia Code Sec. 46.2-1300(A), requires that localities may change established speed limits when a change is supported by findings within an engineering and traffic investigation.

**Discussion**

In response to public engagement and several fatal accidents along the 5<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, an engineering and traffic investigation as conducted by the City Traffic Engineer. This included multiple speed studies as well as reviewing recent crash reports and the safety analysis performed as a part of the 5<sup>th</sup>-Ridge-McIntire Multimodal Corridor Study completed in 2018. Although it was determined that the posted speed limit was not a factor in the most severe crashes, there were nearly 40% of all of the crashes that could have been mitigated, either in occurrence or severity, by a lower speed limit.

**Budgetary Impact**

Cost to install/replace speed limit signs along the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor

**Recommendations**

Staff recommends adoption of the proposed ordinance, based on the recommendation supported by an Engineering and Traffic Investigation conducted by the City Traffic Engineer

## **Attachments**

1. Engineering and Traffic Investigation Memo
2. Proposed Ordinance



**TO:** Sam Sanders, Deputy City Manager

**FROM:** Brennen Duncan, PE, City Traffic Engineer

**DATE:** February 2, 2022

**SUBJECT:** 5<sup>th</sup> Street Engineering and Traffic Investigation Speed Analysis

The Virginia General Assembly establishes the statutory speed limits and gives authority to cities and incorporated towns to decrease speed limits under their jurisdiction. In order to do so, the locality must perform an engineering study.

The City of Charlottesville traffic engineering office has conducted such a study along the 5<sup>th</sup> Street SW corridor between Harris Road on the south end, and Cherry Avenue on the north end. The current speed limit along this stretch is 45 miles per hour. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds falls in line with the posted speed limit, but accidents along the corridor are much higher than the statewide average.

In reviewing the 5<sup>th</sup>-Ridge-McIntire Multimodal Corridor Study performed in 2018 by EPR, this stretch of roadway is #17 in the district for segments of roadway for its "Potential for Safety Improvements" and is 2-3 times higher than the statewide average. In looking at the micro data for the 243 accidents between the 2011-2016 study window, it was determined that the largest category of accident, with nearly 40% of all accidents, were of the rear end variety. This type of accident is normally a result of the failure to stop, and the stopping distance is directly proportional to the traveling speed. A reduction of the speed limit from 45mph to 40mph should reduce the required stopping distance for vehicles by approximately 17%, resulting in fewer of the rear end type of accident.

After reviewing the data, lowering the posted speed limit by 5 mph should have very limited negative impact on the traveling public while increasing safety along the corridor for the most prevalent type of accident. The City Traffic Engineer thus recommends formally reducing the posted speed limit from 45mph to 40mph. This should take effect as soon as City Council is able to vote to amend Section 15-99 of the City Ordinance regarding speed limits.

**ORDINANCE**  
**AMENDING AND REORDAINING SECTION 15-99 OF CHAPTER 15 (MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC) OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, 1990, AS AMENDED, TO REDUCE THE SPEED LIMIT ON 5<sup>TH</sup> STREET S.W**

WHEREAS the City’s Traffic Engineer has prepared a report entitled "5<sup>th</sup> Street Engineering and Traffic Investigation Speed Analysis", dated February 1, 2022, for the City Engineer, who concurs with the recommendations made by the Traffic Engineer for appropriate speed limits (from an engineering and safety standpoint) on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W., from Cherry Avenue to the south corporate limits of the City; and

WHEREAS the traffic engineer notes that accident type and frequency indicates the need to reduce speed limits on this public street. Now, therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, that Section 15-99 of Article IV (Speed Limits) of Chapter 15 (Motor Vehicles and Traffic) of the Charlottesville City Code, 1990, as amended, is hereby amended and re-ordained with a change to the established speed limit for 5<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W., as follows:

**Sec. 15-99. Maximum limits on specific streets**

Pursuant to a traffic engineering and traffic survey as required by Code of Virginia, section 46.2-1300, the following speed limits are imposed as hereinafter set forth and no person shall drive a vehicle at a speed in excess of such limits:

....

Street	From	To	Speed Limit (MPH)
5 <sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.	Cherry Avenue	South corporate limits	<del>45</del> <u>40</u>