



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION DECLARING SPEEDING CARS AND RECKLESS DRIVING AS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

WHEREAS: Pedestrian and road safety is a critical component of not only public safety and overall quality of life for our residents, but it is also a public health issue as unsafe traffic conditions can be a leading cause for injuries and deaths; *and*

WHEREAS: Pedestrian fatalities and injuries have been a serious issue for the City of Boston. In recent weeks, there have already been two pedestrian fatalities and one pedestrian being seriously injured by cars. Last year in 2023, there were seven pedestrian fatalities, and in 2022, there were twelve pedestrian fatalities; *and*

WHEREAS: In recent years, the number of pedestrian deaths and serious injuries caused by car crashes have soared, not just in Boston, but nationwide, with pedestrian deaths being up 77% since 2010 in 2022, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association, the same report registered 7,508 people killed by vehicles in 2022, the highest number since 1981; *and*

WHEREAS: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have calculated more than 6 million crashes from 2020 to 2021, and in in 2021, 42,939 Americans died in car crashes, the highest number in 15 years, and a sizable portion of those are caused by intoxicated or unrestrained drivers, or by speeding vehicles; *and*

WHEREAS: Some have noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed many drivers to treat less congested roads as a license to speed or drive recklessly, which become normalized even after the pandemic is over. In the mix is also the proliferation of smartphone use, which can lead to distracted driving; *and*

WHEREAS: Advocates, researchers, and public health organizations have discussed the link between road safety and public health, with the World Health Organization highlighting road safety as a public health issue due to the high incidence of death and injuries caused by traffic back back in 2004, and the New York State Department of Health identifies motor vehicle traffic injuries as a major public health problem; *and*

WHEREAS: These recent crashes remind us of the work that must be done to realize Vision Zero in terms of the infrastructure improvements to our built environment, slower speeds, and enforcement needed to address pedestrian and traffic safety, and the urgency that we need to act with; *and*

WHEREAS: Declaring speeding cars and unsafe roads as a Public Health Emergency will help to raise public awareness and elevate this issue to facilitate the attention and urgency required, and allow our dedicated city departments and the Boston Public Health Commission to work together to develop strategies to reduce car crashes and traffic fatalities and injuries; *and*

WHEREAS: While lowering the speed limit, enforcement, and other initiatives are measures to ensure pedestrian safety, we should also look at additional traffic-calming measures in high traffic areas where cars and pedestrians come in conflict, such as speed humps, raised crosswalks, curb extensions, rapid flash beacons with pedestrian islands, implement exclusive pedestrian crossing signals, and other safety improvements; *and*

THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the Boston City Council declares speeding cars and reckless driving as a Public Health Emergency and advocates for the infrastructure improvements to address this issue, and that the relevant Boston city departments work together to develop strategies to ensure pedestrian safety and reduce traffic fatalities and injuries.

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