

DEPARTMENT: Police Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: William P. McManus, Chief of Police

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT: Street Racing Update

SUMMARY:

The San Antonio Police Department will provide an update to the Public Safety Committee on local street racing trends and recommendations for a street racing spectator ordinance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This briefing is a follow up to the March 24, 2021 Public Safety Committee Meeting where the San Antonio Police Department provided a presentation on the emergence of street takeover events and the actions taken by the Department to identify and address such events. The Department also discussed a proposed street racing spectator ordinance to establish penalties for individuals who attend and assist in the coordination of street takeover events.

To address street racing incidents, the Police Department has conducted outreach with business owners where street racing activity has occurred and as a result property owners have signed criminal trespass affidavits and property owners have enhanced their security services. Additionally, the Department created the Ad Hoc Street Racing Task Force that is comprised of the Southwest Texas Fusion Center (Fusion Center), Eagle Helicopter unit, DWI Unit, Street Crimes Unit, Traffic Unit, Patrol and San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) Unit.

For the period of September 2020 to June 2021, the SAPD responded to 213 street racing incidents. In response to these incidents, the department issued 276 citations, conducted 116 arrests and towed 81 vehicles.

The 87th Legislature passed two laws designed to increase penalties for street racing and street takeover events: Texas Senate Bill 1495 – Effective September 1, 2021 and Texas House Bill 2315 – Effective January 1, 2022. These two bills provide additional tools for the Police Department to address street racing incidents.

SB 1495: In an effort to cut down on dangerous reckless driving exhibitions and street racing, lawmakers added the definition of “reckless driving exhibition” to the Penal Code and increased the penalties for people who participate in reckless driving events. Obstructing a highway or passageway by participating in a reckless driving exhibition is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable

by up to a year in jail and a maximum \$4,000 fine. The penalty is increased to a state jail felony if the driver has previously been convicted of this offense; operates a vehicle while intoxicated; or causes someone to suffer bodily injury. The bill also creates the Class B misdemeanor offense of interference with a peace officer investigation of a highway racing or reckless driving exhibition.

HB 2315: The Bill amends the Penal Code to include as “contraband” any property used in the commission of the felony or Class A misdemeanor offenses of Racing on a Highway. Vehicles that are used in street racing offenses are now subject to seizure and civil asset forfeiture.

In addition to the recently passed laws, the SAPD proposes a street racing spectator ordinance. This proposed ordinance would create a Class C misdemeanor offense against spectators with a fine up to \$500 which could lessen the appeal and impact of street racing activities

ISSUE:

The Public Safety Committee will be briefed on street racing activity in San Antonio and a proposed spectator ordinance to deter street racing incidents.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Police Department seeks input from the Public Safety Committee to continue to move forward the proposed street racing spectator ordinance for consideration of the full City Council.