

To: **Financial Affairs Committee**

From: Alderperson Mike Morgan

Date: 10/23/2024

Subject: Proposal to amend vehicle registration fee budget language

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## **A. Background/Rationale**

In the interest of transparency to residents and to gain more specific tactics toward improving city deterrence of reckless driving per community input, I am requesting the changes noted below related to the Vehicle Registration Fee item on page 74 of the 2025 Budget Document.

In 2023, there were 4,707 traffic citations in Wauwatosa including 2,774 moving violations. There were also 1,698 vehicle crash incidents. There were 117 citations for speeding, inattentive driving and reckless driving. (source: Tosa PD)

For violations of Chapter 346, there were 2,192 citations with 552 amended and 91 dismissed.

- 852 speeding citations with 235 amended and 16 dismissed.
- 12 reckless driving citations with 3 amended to speed intermediate and none dismissed.
- 49 inattentive driving citations with 14 amended and 3 dismissed.
- Drivers license suspensions were processed on 638 citations.
- 5,457 City non-parking citations were issued with \$278,957 paid and \$581,205 unpaid (source: Tosa Muni Court)

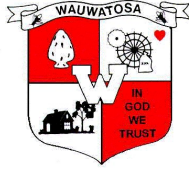
## **B. Key Issues for Consideration**

Appreciating that our community has prioritized reckless driving as a key issue to address, we should consider more specific language and direction in the 2025 budget Vehicle Registration Fee item.

Note that reckless driving is defined as “No person may endanger the safety of any person or property by the negligent operation of a vehicle.”

Criminal negligence is defined as “ordinary negligence to a high degree, consisting of conduct that the actor should realize creates a substantial and unreasonable risk of death or great bodily harm to another.”

More specifically, the reckless driving act must be so egregious that it is obviously very dangerous (very high speed or ignoring traffic control at a moderate to high speed) or a series of actions that taken together are obviously very dangerous like speeding, cutting in traffic or driving in bicycle lanes.



I am proposing the following modifications to page 74 of the 2025 Budget Narrative:

**VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEE (NEXT YEAR BUDGETARY REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE INCREASE \$407,000)**

A \$15 vehicle registration fee is proposed to fund two priorities identified by the Community. The first is [the creation of a Reckless, Accountable, and Distracted Driving \(RADD\) Roads Program for the](#) deterrence of reckless, [inattentive, and unaccountable](#) driving through the implementation of physical improvements to roadways such as the recently constructed bump-outs at 90th Street and North Avenue. The program, as currently envisioned, would fund [various types of](#) roadway and traffic control infrastructure projects across



Wauwatosa through a mix of additions to existing capital infrastructure projects as well as stand-alone projects in areas where problems have been or will be identified. [These projects would be approved by the Common Council through the Capital Budget approval process or would utilize techniques approved for use within the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management Program Calming Guidelines document which is approved by the Transportation Affairs Committee.](#) The second priority identified by the Community as a high need is improving the condition of City streets.

In order to do this the City's roadway maintenance expenditures must increase to allow for expanded maintenance activities such as pothole patching, sealcoating, crack filling, and pavement marking.

The revenue estimate is based on a forecasted 31,989 registered in vehicles in Wauwatosa eligible for this fee. There is a \$0.17 administrative fee per vehicle and a 90-day advance notice required by the Department of Transportation. Based on state-wide registration expirations by month, a March 1, 2025 effective date is assumed to result in 86% of the annual net revenue amount of \$474,398. [Any increases to the Vehicle Registration Fee can only be approved every five years.](#)

[A final priority is community outreach and communication emphasizing the dangers of reckless and inattentive driving so that the behavior leads to accountability in Wauwatosa Municipal Court.](#)

**C. Fiscal Impact**

No change to proposed 2025 budget.

**D. Requested Action**

Modify the 2025 Budget Narrative to reflect the changes shown above.