

STAFF REPORT

Date: December 4, 2024

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jackie Bryant, Interim City Manager

Subject: Staff Report (For Possible Action): Presentation, discussion and potential direction to staff regarding solutions to address excessive vehicular noise complaints.

From: Kathryn Nance, Chief of Police

Department: Police Department

Summary:

Excessive vehicular noise complaints in the City of Reno have raised concerns among residents, prompting the need for effective solutions. Challenges in enforcement include the subjective nature of identifying violations, reliance on real-time police observation, and technical requirements for accurate noise assessment. Staff is seeking Council feedback and direction on how best to address these issues and/or bringing forth an ordinance for introduction on excessive vehicular noise.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Public Safety

Previous Council Action:

There is no recent Council action relevant to this item.

Background:

Excessive vehicular noise has become a growing concern among residents. Complaints commonly involve loud exhaust systems and amplified music from vehicles, both of which can be disruptive to neighborhoods and public spaces. Existing Reno Municipal Code (RMC) provisions regulate noise to some extent but are often insufficient to address vehicular noise effectively.

For exhaust noise, enforcement is challenging because it requires an inspection by a certified mechanic or the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to determine if a vehicle has been illegally modified. While Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS)(NRS 484D.410 and 484D.415) and

Reno Municipal Code (RMC) provisions (6.06.785 and 6.06.790) mandate that vehicles must have functional mufflers and prohibit loud and annoying exhaust emissions, enforcement is subjective and relies on police observation.

The City also lacks a specific ordinance addressing loud music from vehicles. Existing disturbing-the-peace laws (NRS 203.010 and RMC Section 8.12.020) may be applied to loud music complaints, but these require a citizen to sign a complaint and for the disturbance to be ongoing when police arrive, which is often impractical for moving vehicles.

Other municipalities, such as Las Vegas, have adopted noise ordinances with measurable standards, including specific provisions for amplified music from vehicles, which allow for more direct enforcement by police without relying on citizen complaints.

Discussion:

To address exhaust noise, staff proposes increased public awareness of existing state and local regulations. Outreach efforts could include informational campaigns targeting vehicle owners to highlight the legal requirements for mufflers and the consequences of non-compliance. Police enforcement efforts could be bolstered with targeted patrols in areas where excessive vehicular noise is frequently reported, particularly during evening hours. Additionally, staff could explore partnerships with the DMV to streamline referrals for suspected violations and consider the feasibility of creating local inspection programs for modified vehicles.

For loud music complaints, staff recommends researching and drafting a new ordinance that specifically addresses amplified sound from vehicles. This ordinance could include measurable standards, such as limiting music audibility to 50 feet from the vehicle, similar to laws in other jurisdictions. Outreach to residents and stakeholders would be critical to ensure community support, followed by Council review and adoption of the proposed ordinance.

Financial Implications:

Short-term measures, such as increased public outreach and enhanced police patrols, can be managed with existing resources. More comprehensive enforcement, such as decibel meter purchases, may require additional funding and Council approval.

Legal Implications:

All proposed solutions will require review to ensure compliance with Nevada law and avoid potential challenges. Staff will work closely with Legal to draft clear, enforceable language for any new ordinances or regulations.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Council provide direction on the proposed solutions and consider authorizing the development of new ordinances to address gaps in current regulations.

Proposed Motion:

I move to direct staff to proceed with developing solutions based on Council feedback and bring forth a vehicular noise ordinance for introduction.

Attachments: