



POLICE DEPARTMENT

February 1, 2022

Without immediate action by Utah legislators, those knowingly participating in and viewing illegal street racing events will become more brazen. We cannot allow our streets to be overtaken by a criminal element whose intent is to turn rural and neighborhood streets into illegal and potentially deadly dragstrips. We are all touched by the danger associated with street racing events. In Salt Lake City, we have seen the deadly consequences of street racing. We've also seen how coordinated and dedicated efforts between private and public stakeholders can mitigate street racing events and protect our communities from the greater harm that comes with street racing.

The tragedy of street racing events remains on the minds of the women and men of the Salt Lake City Police Department who worked April 18, 2021. On that night, officers learned about a serious crash at 2948 West 900 South. Our officers arrived to find a chaotic scene. Debris from two vehicles littered the skid-marked roadway as bystanders stood by watching the growing emergency response. Remarkably – and more sadly – most of those people stood by with their cellphones in hands recording the moments of pure tragedy. Through the investigation, the Collision Analysis Reconstruction Team determined that during a street racing event, a vehicle driven by a 25-year-old man made a U-turn into a vehicle driven by a 19-year-old man racing his vehicle down the roadway. The impact caused catastrophic injuries to the driver and despite the heroic efforts of our first responders, the 25-year-old man died at a local hospital.

Allowing street racing events to go unchecked will erode the community safety we hold dear. In 2020, the Salt Lake City Police Department saw a dramatic increase in calls for service for illegal street racing. Calls for service rose from 71 in 2019 to 409 in 2020. That is a 467% increase in just one year. Our calls for service remained at an abnormally high level during 2021 – a reality law enforcement across the country experienced. Known for its long and wide open streets, street racers have flocked to the city's industrial area of the Pioneer Division. The once largely uninhabited area gives street racers unfettered access to dragstrip-like roadways conducive to fostering this illegal and dangerous activity. Because of its distance from residential homes and area businesses, these street racing events, both in size and frequency, rarely draw attention.

The vast amount of Salt Lake City's growth during the past decade has centered in/around its industrial areas. The growth brings many 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operations and their workforce into the area. Local businesses have been notably impacted by both the racing and the large crowds that have gathered to watch, gamble, and cheer them on. Roadway and private lot obstructions have impacted business operations, inhibited distribution of goods and critical materials, and effectively caused some to close their doors.



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Evidence supports that street racing attracts other illegal activity such as drug use, weapons violations, assaults, theft, gambling, and nuisance crimes (disorderly conduct, trespass, urinating in public, littering, vandalism, etc.). Gang activity is not uncommon amongst the large crowds that gather, which can reach into the hundreds if not thousands. The act of racing itself creates an obstruction to the roadway and inhibits free access for others. This poses a clear and inherent public safety risk.

Street racing can present a nearly insurmountable challenge for the Salt Lake City Police Department. Curbing these events commands vast amounts of resources – resources the city does not have while simultaneously trying to prevent other crimes and/or responding to quality of life issues for the city's visitors and residents alike.

For those who engage in street racing, there is little to no fear of punitive action and even less fear of being caught. As it is nearly impossible for law enforcement to navigate their way through the immense crowds, to the actual offenders – who rarely yield and typically flee. At the same time, there is absolutely no penalty for the crowds who fuel this dangerous activity.

The Salt Lake City Police Department has discovered the deployment of steel construction plates on the roadway to be a great inhibitor of street racing. While this is a useful tool, it is not all encompassing or without difficulty. Logistical and financial limitations prevent widespread and consistent deployment.

I support Senate Bill 53 because it will, among other important actions:

- Increase the penalty – going from a Class B misdemeanor to a Class A misdemeanor – for drivers engaged in street racing events,
- Prohibit a person from being spectator or preparing for speed racing (street racing event), and
- Allow law enforcement to seize and confiscate a vehicle that is not street legal that is engaged with a speed race or exhibition of speed on a highway.

I urge the passage of Senate Bill 53.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Brown".

Chief Mike Brown  
Salt Lake City Police Department

cc: Administration File