



Legislation Text

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Jan Yeckes, Planning Division Manager, Public Works and Development

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Subject:

Fire Lane Establishment Procedures

Purpose and Request:

Public Works Department staff are requesting direction from the Board of County Commissioners on improving the procedure for establishing and enforcing fire lanes on private property.

Background and Discussion: The current process for establishing a fire lane on private property and making it enforceable by the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office is complicated (see included Standard Operating Procedure document). Most needed fire lanes are identified during case review for a proposed development. However, since those fire lanes are usually located on private drives or lanes, as opposed to public roads, the owner must request, in accordance with CRS 42-4-1210, that the property be designated as a no parking zone in order to establish parking restrictions on private property that are enforceable by the Sheriff's Office. Once the County has received a written request to establish the no parking zone, the Traffic Engineer with the Transportation Division reviews the request and initiates a referral engaging the fire district and Sheriff's Office; if there is concurrence among the offices, the applicant is directed to include a fire lane note on the plans. The Traffic Engineer prepares a Board Summary Report and Resolution to establish the parking restriction for the fire lane, which has to be approved by the Board, usually as a Consent Agenda item. Following approval, the Resolution is finalized, the Traffic Engineer notifies the Sheriff's office and fire district of the new fire lane location, and the project developer is responsible for installing the necessary signs and striping.

Staff believe it is possible to improve this process by establishing an ordinance in accordance with CRS 30-15-401(1)(h), which allows the County to establish fire lanes and emergency vehicle access on public or private properties. Such an ordinance would prohibit parking in any fire lane or emergency vehicle access route established through the development review and approval process. The ordinance would be combined with an amendment to the Land Development Code to facilitate identification of fire lanes and emergency vehicle access routes within a proposed development, and may include a new Standard Note to be placed on plans or plats to provide notice of the fire lanes and parking restrictions. In this way, the necessary fire lanes and access routes could be established on private drives and lanes within a development without subsequent need to adopt a resolution under CRS 42-4-1210. This approach would eliminate the need for the applicant to request, in writing, inclusion in the program, and would greatly reduce the chance that a property is left out of the fire lane program because inclusion wasn't requested. The proposed approach would also eliminate the staff time required to prepare a Board Summary Report and the Board time spent reviewing the Report and case. And with the inclusion of a note on the plan or plat, potential renters, buyers, or lessees of a property may be better informed of the parking limitations on the property. The draft ordinance and the Land Development Code text and note would be developed following direction from the Board.

The existing fire lane establishment process would still be available to be used in situations where a development case is not required, and therefore a plan or plat would not be submitted. Fire lanes established using either procedure would be included in the fire lane program and enforceable by the Sheriff's Office.

Staff spoke with contacts at Jefferson County, Adams County, Douglas County, and South Metro Fire Rescue to learn more about their approaches to fire lane establishment and enforcement, and staff from Public Works and Development, the Attorney's Office, and the Sheriff's Office have discussed options that may work for the County. The above-mentioned proposed ordinance and Land Development Code amendment resulted from those discussions, and staff would like the Board's direction on this proposal.

Fiscal Impact: Redesigning the fire lane establishment program will result in a more streamlined process: reducing required staff time to a fraction of the current demands, ensuring necessary properties are easily included in the program, and providing information on plans and plats that will benefit citizens interested in the property. The proposed change is anticipated to have a positive fiscal impact.

Alternatives: The alternative to updating the fire lane establishment program is to maintain the procedure established by the included Standard Operating Procedure document. The existing procedure is demanding of staff time and can add time and confusion to development projects.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ Be fiscally sustainable
- ☒ Provide essential and mandated service
- ☐ Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends changing the fire lane establishment program to be more efficient in terms of case processing; staff, fire district, and Sheriff's Office review; and applicant expectations.

Concurrence: Public Works, Attorney's Office, and Sheriff's Office staff have discussed the proposal and are in agreement on the possible changes.