



## **CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS**

### **Committee of the Whole Agenda Communication**

**Meeting Date:** October 13, 2025

**Prepared By:** Dennis Carr – Interim City Administrator/City Engineer  
Jeff Stevens – Police Chief

**Agenda Item:** Golf Cart on City Streets Discussion

#### **Background:**

The topic of allowing golf carts on city streets has resurfaced periodically over the years. It was previously discussed at the Public Safety Committee meeting in July 2019, followed by the Committee of the Whole (COW) in August 2019, again at the COW in May 2023, and most recently during a preliminary conversation with the current City Council in July 2025. At that time, Council expressed interest in revisiting the topic at a future meeting.

In preparation, staff consulted with both the Fire Chief and the EMS Chief to gather their professional perspectives. The EMS Chief was generally supportive, noting that while accidents are inevitable—as with any vehicle—golf carts may pose less risk than e-scooters or e-bikes, though he acknowledged they are comparable in nature. Conversely, the Fire Chief opposed the idea, citing repeated past rejections by previous councils due to safety concerns.

Following the July 2025 COW meeting, staff also engaged with a resident interested in using a golf cart for transportation from an area north of the Bypass to Walmart and McDonald's. This route would involve travel on multiple arterial roads, crossing US Route 24, and navigating traffic signals—raising potential safety and infrastructure concerns.

While various ideas and opinions were shared during the most recent discussion, no definitive direction was established.

To support further discussion, staff offers some potential benefits related to authorization of golf carts on at least some local roadways, some of which have been mentioned in previous discussions.

**Mobility & Accessibility:** Provides seniors and mobility-limited residents an additional option for short trips.

**Environmental Benefits:** Low-energy vehicles reduce emissions and noise relative to conventional cars.

**Traffic Calming:** Golf carts inherently travel at lower speeds, potentially reducing aggressive driving in neighborhoods.

Event Support: Carts are useful during festivals, parades, and special events, reducing demand for automobile parking.

Local Control: Ordinance can be tailored with permitting, inspection, and restrictions (e.g., mapping eligible streets, limiting hours of use). Toward consideration of limiting cart authorization to certain roads or neighborhoods, staff has prepared a map identifying roads in the city that carry more than 1,000 vehicles per day. Please note that traffic counts on Jaders and Courtney have not been updated since the Nofsinger realignment, but these roads may also exceed 1,000 vehicles daily.

Additionally, staff compiled a list of Illinois communities with populations between 14,000 and 19,000 for comparison. Among those, Morris, Ottawa, Morton, Chatham, Sycamore, and Bradley were identified as strong comparables, given their non-metro locations and similar demographics. Of these, only one currently permits golf carts on public roadways.

Ottawa ordinance passed in 2025:

[https://library.municode.com/il/ottawa/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=CH102TRVE\\_ARTIIOPVE\\_DIV6GOCA](https://library.municode.com/il/ottawa/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH102TRVE_ARTIIOPVE_DIV6GOCA)  
<https://ottawail.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/CityCouncil/EQ3kheR-GWZDn0kXIWLd4xEBXodyncKSdpsrNAV5xvyqjg?e=rveEsN>

The framework for consideration of authorization of carts on local roads must include restrictions under Illinois law. Golf carts are regulated under Section 11-1426.1 of the Illinois Vehicle Code, which governs non-highway vehicles. Under current law, municipalities may authorize the operation of golf carts on local streets, provided that public safety will not be jeopardized. Requirements include that operators hold a valid driver's license, vehicles operate only on streets with posted speed limits of 35 mph or less, and carts/vehicles are equipped with specified safety features (brakes, mirrors, lights, slow moving vehicle emblem, and turn signals). Municipalities must also consider traffic volume, speed, and character, post signage, and remain mindful of liability implications under the Tort Immunity Act, because authorization is an affirmative act making golf cart drivers and passengers "*intended and permitted users*" of the public roadway. Previous discussions alluded to Illinois' requirement that motor vehicles carry liability insurance. Police Chief Stevens points out that the 625 ILCS 5/7-601 requirement applies to motor vehicles designed to be used on a public highway, while golf carts may not be so designed, regardless of the addition of specific safety features, leaving the question of insurance for courts and this Council.

Again, to support Council discussion and consideration, staff offers potential avenues:

Crash Vulnerability: Lack of occupant protection results in disproportionate injury severity when crashes occur.

Mixed-Traffic Risk: Arterials and state routes create unavoidable exposure points that cannot be fully mitigated.

Enforcement Challenges: Anecdotal experience in other Illinois municipalities shows issues with unlicensed drivers, after-dark operation, and non-compliant modifications.

Emergency Response: At least some Fire and EMS leadership have raised concerns regarding predictable increases in preventable injuries, although their conclusions were not uniform.

Date Prepared: 10/10/2025

Staff sought reference material to assist in determining whether public safety would be jeopardized by the operation of golf carts on local streets, as this appears to be a key factor in Illinois law.

### **Golf Carts on Public Roads – Literature Review of Legislation and State of the Practice in the United States**

Louisiana Transportation Research Center, Technical Assistance Report 1902TASA (Oct 2020).

*Why it matters:* Synthesises 60+ prior studies, state crash statistics, and 130 golfcart fatalities recorded in FARS (20132018). Highlights that carts offer “limited occupant protection” when mingling with 25–35 mph traffic and lists engineering/registration countermeasures already adopted by large municipalities. [https://www.ltrc.lsu.edu/pdf/2020/19-02TA-SA\\_printready.pdf](https://www.ltrc.lsu.edu/pdf/2020/19-02TA-SA_printready.pdf)

### **Analysis of Death and Disability Due to Golf Cart Crashes in The Villages, Florida (20112019)**

Traffic Injury Prevention, 21(7): 437441. doi: 10.1080/15389588.2020.1799995

*Key findings:* 446 streetcrash victims; 65 % ejected, 11 % sustained moderate–severe TBI, and 7 % had permanent disability. Authors recommend seatbelt and lighting mandates for municipal carts. (note this studied a large community, but one that is subdivided into smaller neighborhoods).

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32812819/>

### **Multicenter traumaregistry study (10 Florida cities)**

Golf Cart Injuries Have Similar Severity to AllTerrain Vehicle Injuries in Children

Trauma Surgery & Acute Care Open 9(1): e001286 (May 2024).

*Scope:* 179 golfcart and 496 ATV crashes (20162021) treated at Level1 pediatric centers. Intracranial injuries were *more* common in carts (34 % vs 19 %), and 20 % required ICU care—underscoring that low travel speeds do not guarantee low clinical severity on city streets.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11086201/>

### **National emergencydepartment study with streetlocation subset**

Golf Cart–Related Injuries in the United States, 19902006

American Journal of Preventive Medicine 35(2): 143151.

*Highlights:* NEISS sample projects 147 696 ED visits; 15 % occurred on roads/public property (vs 70 % at recreational facilities). Hospitalisation rate 7.8 %; injuries rose 132 % over the study window.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18541177/>

### **Nationwide orthopedicinjury update (20122021)**

Nationwide GolfCartRelated Orthopedic Injuries: Trends and Areas for Improvement

American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopaedics (2023 conference paper).

*Takeaway:* Fractures of the upper extremity and spine increased 38 % in the last decade; authors call for municipal helmet and restraint requirements on streets  $\leq 25$  mph.

<https://journal.aoao.org/?p=720>

### **Pediatric headtrauma focus (singlestate, 40 000plus carts in circulation)**

Putting the Golf Cart Before the Horse: Pediatric Head Trauma Outpaces Education and Safety Regulations

(Linked as ancillary article in the Trauma Surg Acute Care Open paper above). Shows that 88 % of injured children were ejected and lacked restraints; authors urge municipalities over 10 000 population to require agestratified licensing/training. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11086201/>

**Action Requested:** Staff seeks direction and discussion from Council regarding the potential allowance of golf carts on city streets. Council options include, but are not limited to:

Take No Action – Continue prohibition of golf carts on City streets.

Direct Staff to Draft an Ordinance allowing golf cart use on designated local streets, with conditions such as:

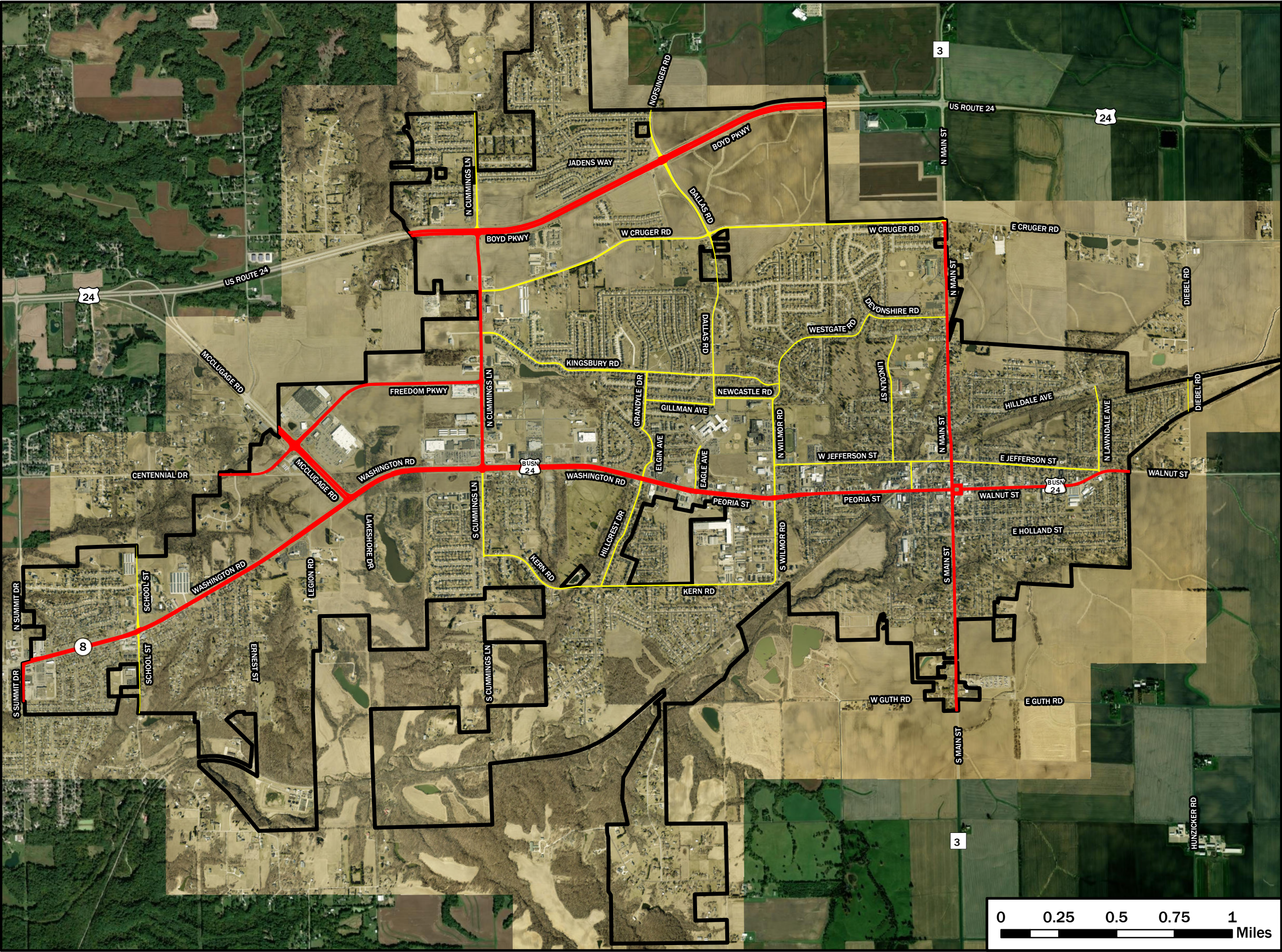
- Limiting to streets  $\leq$  30 mph and excluding arterials.
- Requiring annual permits, insurance with verification, and vehicle inspection.
- Specifying hours of operation (e.g., sunrise to sunset).
- Enforcing operator qualifications (licensed drivers only, minimum age).
- Mapping and signing permitted streets to avoid U.S. 24 and high-volume arterials.

Refer to an ad hoc committee for additional study, including public input and comparative data from other Illinois or demographically and otherwise similar municipalities.

Name	Population	Allowed
<a href="#">Sycamore</a>	18,968	no
<a href="#">Brookfield</a>	18,885	No
<a href="#">Homewood</a>	18,789	No
<a href="#">Ottawa</a>	18,775	Yes
<a href="#">Round Lake</a>	18,654	No
<a href="#">Bensenville</a>	18,629	No
<a href="#">Matteson</a>	18,566	No
<a href="#">Shorewood</a>	18,522	Yes
<a href="#">Alsip</a>	18,486	Yes
<a href="#">Lemont</a>	18,203	No
<a href="#">Bellwood</a>	18,132	no
<a href="#">Franklin Park</a>	18,110	no
<a href="#">Bourbonnais</a>	18,083	No
<a href="#">Cary</a>	18,031	Yes
<a href="#">Palos Hills</a>	18,026	No
<a href="#">East St. Louis</a>	17,808	No
<a href="#">Jacksonville</a>	17,801	Yes
<a href="#">Godfrey</a>	17,610	No
<a href="#">Hinsdale</a>	17,598	no
<a href="#">Morton</a>	17,557	No
<a href="#">Charleston</a>	17,361	no
<a href="#">Cahokia Heights</a>	17,052	no
<a href="#">Marion</a>	17,021	No
<a href="#">Mattoon</a>	16,602	yes
<a href="#">Bridgeview</a>	16,559	No
<a href="#">Westchester</a>	16,313	No
<a href="#">Country Club Hills</a>	16,238	No
<a href="#">Fairview Heights</a>	16,115	Yes
<a href="#">La Grange</a>	15,943	No
<a href="#">Washington</a>	15,857	
<a href="#">Prospect Heights</a>	15,566	No
<a href="#">Bradley</a>	15,298	No
<a href="#">Warrenville</a>	15,247	No
<a href="#">Dixon</a>	15,156	Yes
<a href="#">Antioch</a>	15,108	Yes
<a href="#">Norridge</a>	14,817	no
<a href="#">Macomb</a>	14,765	No
<a href="#">Shiloh</a>	14,754	yes
<a href="#">Chatham</a>	14,639	No
<a href="#">Morris</a>	14,587	No
<a href="#">Lindenhurst</a>	14,564	No
<a href="#">Sterling</a>	14,535	yes

<a href="#">Swansea</a>	14,445	yes
<a href="#">Channahon</a>	14,392	yes
<a href="#">Beach Park</a>	14,212	no
<a href="#">Mount Vernon</a>	14,162	yes
<a href="#">Hickory Hills</a>	14,118	no
<a href="#">Wauconda</a>	14,055	yes
<a href="#">Chicago Ridge</a>	14,036	No





Roads with over  
1,000 vehicles  
traveled daily

- Legend
- > 1,000 VPD
  - Arterial
  - City Boundary



Date: 9/3/2025

*This map indicates approximate data locations and may not be 100% accurate. Parcels are provided and maintained by Tazewell County.*