



City Council

AGENDA REPORT

DATE:	May 2, 2023
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Councilmember Cesar Zepeda
Subject:	Council Direction on Ordinance to Enact Catalytic Converter Theft Deterrence Measures
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	There is no financial impact at this phase of the recommendation.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	None
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	Catalytic Converter theft is a regional and national challenge that is causing auto owners significant amounts of money to replace and causing law enforcement agencies to spend time and resources to combat this unlawful trend.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	DIRECT staff in the City Attorney's Office to draft an ordinance within 45-60 days that includes strategies to deter catalytic converter theft by imposing required actions of recyclers who purchase catalytic converters. Councilmember Cesar Zepeda (510-620-6593)

DISCUSSION:

Catalytic converter theft is a challenge that many cities and states are grappling with due to the increase of theft. The City of Richmond has seen an increase

in catalytic converter thefts and I have received several complaints and requests to address this criminal act. In addition to the Police Department's efforts to apprehend the thieves, I would like to ask the City of Richmond's City Attorney's Office to draft an ordinance that requires scrap metal companies, auto repair shops and other companies that may purchase secondhand catalytic converters to collect specific information from the seller at the time of purchase.

According to an article in the Albuquerque Journal by Jessica Dyer/Journal Staff Writer, published on February 20, 2023, insurance claims for stolen converters have soared around the country; the National Insurance Crime Bureau reported a 1,215% increase in such claims between 2019 to 2022. Moreover, many people replace stolen catalytic converters without bothering to file an insurance claim to avoid rate increases.

The Los Angeles City Council is also reviewing a recommendation to adopt an ordinance that would require documentation of being the lawful owner of an unattached catalytic converter. Violators of the ordinance would be fined \$1,000 or spend up to six months in jail. The Los Angeles City Council began discussions on this matter in April of 2022.

Catalytic converters — which help reduce harmful car emissions — are an increasingly popular target for thieves, as they contain valuable palladium, platinum and rhodium. The City of Richmond should make it harder for thieves to sell them to scrap metal dealers.

Legislators in Sacramento are also working to deal with this issue. Here is a link that deals with scrap metal companies, junk collectors and recyclers. There are laws regarding required record keeping and identification of sellers. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=BPC&division=8.&title=&part=&chapter=9.&article=3.

The proposed ordinance should establish a requirement that photos of the seller's identification be collected by the buyer. The buyer should keep identifying information about the catalytic converter. The required documentation should remain with the buyer and made available to law enforcement upon request.

Adopting an ordinance is a step of many to combat this issue; however, it doesn't have any teeth if there isn't implementation or enforcement. It is recommended that a position be created to strengthen regulation and inspect scrap metal dealers and other potential businesses that purchase secondhand catalytic converters. The inspector could also inspect and enforce other regulations that we currently have on the books but aren't able to inspect due to staffing capacity.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

None