



Speed Limit Zones – Guidelines for Establishment

Public Works Department

Transportation Committee
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BACKGROUND

1. Public Works performs engineering and traffic surveys to establish appropriate speed limits on collector, arterial and local roadways where statutory limits do not apply.
2. Surveys are performed in accordance with the California Vehicle Code (CVC) and California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD).



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IMPORTANCE

1. Setting of speed limits is crucial in defining the maximum safe, reasonable, and enforceable speeds.
2. Allows for the regulation of motorist's travel speeds.
3. Appropriate speed limits are set using state standards and guidelines.



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ENGINEERING AND TRAFFIC SURVEYS

1. Required to establish enforceable speed limits on segments of roadways which do not meet CVC definitions for prima facie speed limits.
2. Involves a sampling of free-flowing traffic.
3. Determines the 85th percentile speed (speed which 85 percent of drivers travel at or below).
4. Includes assessment of collision history and roadside conditions not readily apparent to motorists.



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SETTING SPEED LIMITS

1. Per the CA MUTCD speed limits should be set in 5 mph increments and typically at the nearest 5 mph increments of the 85th percentile speed.
2. Utilize 85th percentile speed as a base condition for further assessment / consideration of factors including:
 - a. Collision history;
 - b. Residential density; and
 - c. Roadway / traffic conditions not readily apparent to motorists.



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REDUCTIONS IN SPEED LIMITS

1. CA MUTCD allows for the reduction in speed limit in compliance with CVC 627 and 22358.5 when certain conditions not readily apparent to motorists exist but does not allow for downward speed zoning for readily apparent conditions such as width, curvature, etc.
2. Alternately allows for optional reduction of 5 mph when nearest 5 mph increment of 85th% speed requires rounding up if no further reduction is used.
3. Justification for reductions must be documented on survey and approved by registered Civil/Traffic Engineer.



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FHWA STUDY FINDINGS

1. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of using the 85th% speed to set speed limits .
2. Data showed speed limits set near the 85th% speed:
 - a. Are deemed safer;
 - b. Produce less variance in vehicle speeds;
 - c. Are considered reasonable and prudent; and
 - d. Facilitate the orderly movement of traffic.



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ADDITIONAL FHWA STUDY FINDINGS

1. The majority of motorists drive at speeds they perceive as comfortable.
2. Setting speed limits that are arbitrarily low:
 - a. Make a disproportionate number of drivers in violation;
 - b. Hinder the efficient movement of traffic; and
 - c. Require frequent enforcement to achieve compliance.



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SURVEY EXPIRATIONS

1. Surveys are required to be conducted at least once every 5, 7 or 10 years in compliance with CVC 40802 relates to speed traps or if significant changes in roadway configuration, characteristics or traffic volumes have occurred.
2. Traffic Engineering Division typically resurveys roadways every 7 years.



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SPEED LIMIT ZONE CHANGES

1. Proposed changes to speed limits or zone boundaries are considered by the Transportation Board (Board).
2. The Board makes recommendation to City Council.
3. If adopted by City Council, changes are reflected in section 10.76.010 of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC).
4. New or additional speed limit signs are installed on our roadways per the adopted speed limit zone.



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RECOMMENDATION

That the Transportation Committee review the information provided in the report outlining the guidelines for the establishment of speed limit zones and receive and file the report.

