

TRAFFIC INFORMATION BROCHURES

Available to the Public

*Traffic Safety in Your
Neighborhoods*

Traffic Signals

Stop and Yield Signs

Paint Striping

Marked Crosswalks

Pedestrian Signals

Flashing Beacons

Presented by

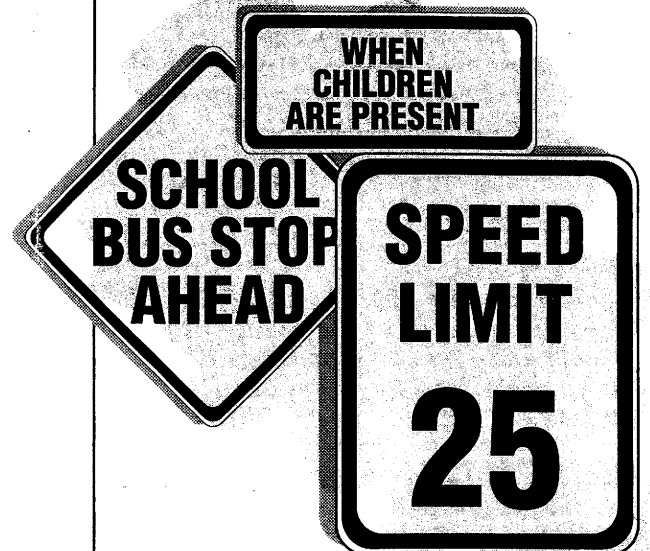
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Traffic Safety In Our Neighborhoods



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We would like to give you an idea of the engineering knowledge and experience which your Road and Street Department relies on when evaluating neighborhood traffic situations.

What are the official guidelines?

The Department follows Agency policies and the Revised Code of Washington (RCW or State Law). The RCW's require us to follow the national guidelines outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Traffic control devices include signal lights, traffic signs, and paint markings. The MUTCD covers all aspects of the placement, construction and maintenance of every form of approved traffic control. The guidelines prescribe five basic requirements for all devices. They must:

- *Fulfill a need.*
- *Command attention.*
- *Convey a clear, simple meaning.*
- *Command respect of road users.*
- *Give adequate time for proper response.*

The MUTCD emphasizes "uniformity" of traffic control devices. A uniform device conforms to the regulations for dimensions, color, wording and graphics. The standard device should convey the same meaning at all times. Consistent use of traffic control devices protects the clarity of their messages. As stated in the MUTCD, "uniformity" must also mean treating similar situations in the same way.

Why not post lower speed limits?

Posting lower speed limits appears to be an easy answer to the problem of controlling speeders. Engineering studies, however, show that posted speed limits are not the most significant factor influencing driver speed.

Research indicates that a reasonable and prudent driver will drive the speed suggested by roadway and traffic conditions, to the extent of disregarding the posted speed limit. The State Department of Transportation emphasizes that "laws cannot be effectively enforced without the consent and voluntary compliance of the public majority." A speed limit that is realistic invites the majority of drivers to comply.

Uniformity of speed

Realistic speed limits help preserve uniformity of speed. Uniformity of speed is valuable for a number of reasons:

- It maintains consistency in traffic gaps for crossing traffic.
- It enables pedestrians to more accurately judge the speed of traffic.
- It reduces the possibility of conflict between faster and slower drivers.
- It makes unreasonable violators more obvious to enforcement personnel.

Unreasonably low posted speed limits interfere with the preservation of uniformity of speed which increases the potential for accidents.

The basic speed law

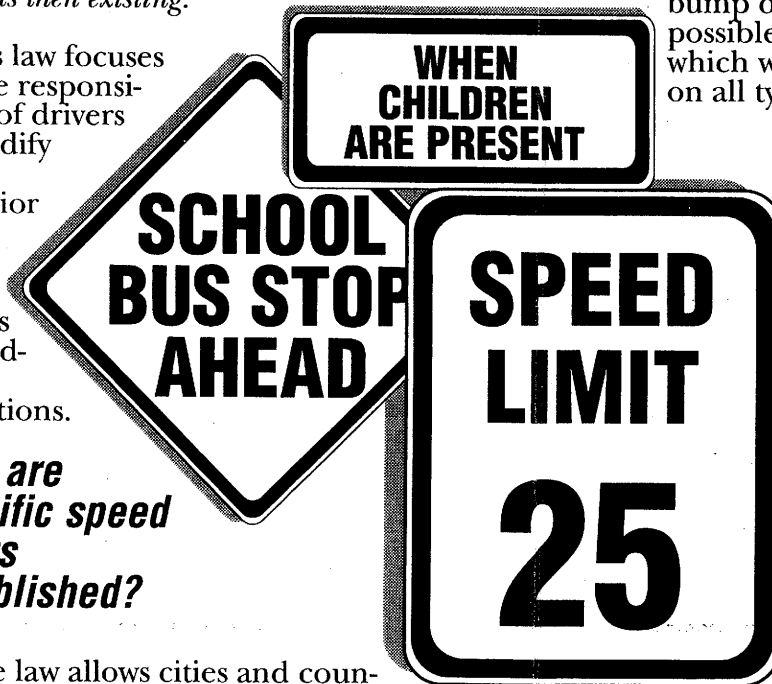
A commitment to establishing realistic speed limits is the foundation of the nationally recognized Basic Speed Law. The Revised Code of Washington says:

"No person shall drive a vehicle on a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions and having regard to the actual and potential hazards then existing."

This law focuses on the responsibility of drivers to modify their behavior in response to changes in roadway conditions.

How are specific speed limits established?

State law allows cities and counties to set speed limits different than the basic speed limits. The basic speed limit under the RCW is 25 MPH on city streets and 50 MPH on county roads, unless otherwise posted. The postings for higher or lower speed limits are determined through individual traffic investigations. Prevailing speed studies, accident history and roadway conditions are considered in the investigations.



Why not install speed bumps?

It is commonly believed that speed bumps are an easy and acceptable means of controlling speeding problems. This widespread belief overlooks the hazards and problems associated with speed bumps. Nationwide studies have revealed a number of disadvantages of speed bumps.

- Experiments with various speed bump designs show that it is not possible to create a speed bump which will have the same effect on all types of vehicles.

- Speed bumps do not consistently decrease speeding - in fact drivers of vehicles with softer suspension systems may increase their speed in an effort to diminish the effects of the bump.

- Speed bumps also cause noise pollution in residential areas. The noise generated as cars cross a bump and as they accelerate after crossing a bump is measurably greater than average traffic noise.

- Speed bumps can be hazardous to bicycles, motorcycles and emergency vehicles.

Speed bumps have not been officially accepted as a standard traffic control device. Traffic engineers generally do not recommend their use.

What can be done about neighborhood speeders?

We encourage neighbors who are concerned about speeding in their area to work in groups to combat the problem. You can make a difference by driving 25 MPH or less in residential areas and by avoiding the use of local streets as shortcuts. The most effective way of reducing a speeding problem is through selective enforcement. You can help by reporting incidents. Give law enforcement agencies as much specific information as possible - such as vehicle description, license number, and date and time of day when speeding most often occurs - so that they may maximize their personnel resources.

What about the safety of children in the neighborhood?

The presence of children in the vicinity of traffic requires unique consideration on the part of parents and traffic officials. Parents often request the placement of "Children at Play" signs as a method of urging motorists to be more cautious in neighborhood areas.

Traffic studies show that "Children at Play" signs do not increase driver awareness to the point of reducing vehicle speeds or reducing pedestrian accidents. In fact, placement of the signs can increase the potential for accidents by conveying to children and parents a sense of protection which does not exist and cannot be guaranteed.

For these reasons, national traffic guidelines, such as the MUTCD, do not recognize such signs and discourage their use. The Department does not wish to encourage children to play within the roadway environment which is intended exclusively for the use of vehicles. In addition, to maintain consistency, if such signs were used, they would be

posted at so many locations throughout the area that they would cease to command the attention or respect of drivers.

What can parents do to protect their children?

We hope that you as parents will educate your children about the dangers of traffic. Teach them to stop and look both ways before crossing a street. Warn them not to play in the streets or to dart into traffic to retrieve a toy. Encourage them to conduct their activities away from the roadway environment. Some neighborhoods have worked together to build playground areas that give children a place to play which is safely removed from the vicinity of traffic.

The basic speed limit on city streets is 25 MPH and on county roads is 50 MPH. Drivers who exceed these limits are a source of concern for both residents and officials. Often the biggest offenders are residents of the neighborhood who are familiar with the streets, as well as other drivers seeking alternatives to busy arterials.