

Minnesota SPEED LIMITS



WHAT ARE SPEED LIMITS?

Speed limits are used to set the legal speed at which a vehicle may travel. The goal of a speed limit is to account for traffic safety and mobility to determine the safe and reasonable speed for the roadway.

HOW ARE SPEED LIMITS SET?

There are two ways that speed limits are set in Minnesota, by statute and by traffic investigation. Minnesota state law establishes statutory speed limits for specific roadways.

A traffic investigation evaluates:

- Driver behavior
- Roadway information
- Crashes
- Roadside land use

The resulting recommended speed limit is posted on signs along the roadway to inform drivers of the speed limit.

The MnDOT Commissioner of Transportation holds the authority to establish speed limits on nearly all roads in Minnesota. This allows for a uniform, consistent, and repeatable approach for establishing speed limits.



A city may establish speed limits on roads they own if they meet a specific set of criteria.

SPEED CONCEPTS

Operating speed is the speed drivers choose when operating on the roadway. Each day drivers choose to drive the speeds at which they feel most comfortable. When the posted speed limit matches their expectations, most will obey, while others may travel above that limit.

Drivers tend to travel at speeds they feel are reasonable for the road and traffic regardless of the posted speed limit. Road design can be modified to encourage slower and more uniform speeds. As vehicles travel uniformly at or near the same speed, smoother traffic flow occurs, resulting in decreased conflicts and the creation of a safer road environment.

WILL LOWERING THE SPEED LIMIT REDUCE SPEEDS?

Studies shows that in most cases lowering the speed limit alone, without other roadway changes or increased enforcement, has little effect on driver behavior. Drivers travel at speeds they feel are reasonable for the road and traffic regardless of the posted speed limit.

ISN'T A SLOWER SPEED LIMIT ALWAYS SAFER?

Vehicles moving slower together are safer, however, drivers chose their speed based on changes to the roadway, surrounding land use, and driving conditions. Changing the speed limit without changes to the roadway or its environment could increase the difference in speed between the fastest and slowest drivers, which increases the risk of crashes and driver frustration.

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT CREDIBLE SPEED LIMITS?

Credible speed limits minimize speed differentials by providing safe, consistent, and reasonable speeds to protect drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists along the roadway. Lowering speed limits unreasonably can make violators out of sensible and otherwise law-abiding citizens, creating a difficult situation for police and the community. When speed limits are difficult to enforce, drivers are left to regulate their own speeds rather than adhering to the posted speed. With credible speed limits, drivers are encouraged to travel at a speed that is safe and reasonable based on the roadway design and surrounding land use.

