

Speed zoning, when used with an overall traffic plan, helps traffic move more safely and efficiently. However, it does not provide a quick fix for land-use problems or poor traffic patterns. Instead, speed zoning reflects a reasonable balance between the needs of drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists using public roads for travel and for those who live along these roads.



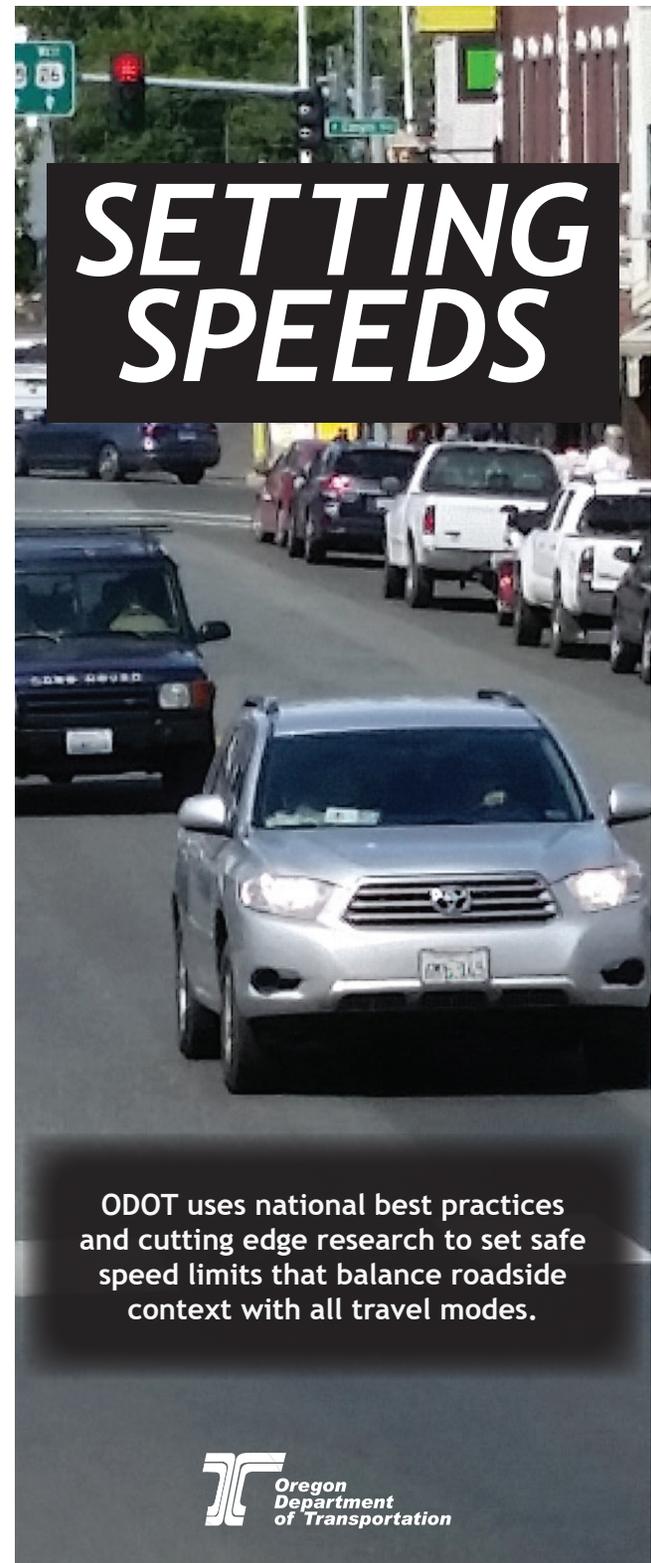
If you have questions about speed zoning, please contact:

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Or visit our website at:
www.oregon.gov/odot/Engineering/Pages/Speed-Zones.aspx



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ODOT uses national best practices and cutting edge research to set safe speed limits that balance roadside context with all travel modes.



THE LOGIC OF SPEED ZONES

Extensive studies from around the U.S. show that traffic moving at a speed that is reasonable for the road and weather conditions results in fewer crashes. Drivers are more patient because a reasonably uniform speed allows progress with less passing, less delay and fewer rear-end collisions. Lowering the speed does not necessarily result in fewer crashes.

SPEED LIMITS IN OREGON

When there are posted speed limits, they override statutory speeds. But when there are no posted speed limits, Oregon state law gives motorists the following statutory speed limits:

- 15 mph** - Alleys, narrow residential roadways
- 20 mph** - Business districts, school zones and some residential
- 25 mph** - Residential districts, public parks, ocean shores
- 55 mph** - Most rural highways; trucks on most interstates
- 65 mph** - Passenger vehicles, light trucks, motor homes and light duty commercial vehicles on most interstates

THE BASIC RULE

Designated and posted speeds are not the final word in Oregon, for all travel on public streets and highways is subject to the Basic Rule.

The Basic Rule is both a safety valve and an acknowledgement that drivers are able to act independently, reasonably and with good judgment.

The Rule states that a motorist must drive at a speed that is reasonable and prudent at all times by considering other traffic, road and weather conditions, dangers at intersections and any other conditions that affect safety and speed.

The Basic Rule does not allow motorists to drive faster than the posted speed or designated speed. Instead, the Rule expects drivers to be responsible for their own actions.

WHEN SHOULD A TRAFFIC STUDY BE CONDUCTED?

- A new development is under construction and it will generate substantial new traffic.
- An existing transportation problem such as a high crash location is evident.
- At the judgment or discretion of jurisdiction staff based on unusual circumstances.
- New construction or reconstruction of a roadway has been completed.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A SPEED ZONE CHANGE IS REQUESTED?

An engineering study must be completed by the road authority or if requested, by the Oregon Department of Transportation, which must include the following:

- lane and shoulder widths;
- signals and stop signs;
- number of intersections and other accesses;
- roadside development and context;
- parking and bicycle lanes;
- number and type of vehicles;
- pedestrian and bicycle activity level;
- crash history; and
- speed checks.



When the investigation is completed, a report is prepared with a recommendation. All of the above considerations are evaluated in deciding whether to propose a change, or retain the existing posted speed.

WHO DECIDES?

If the road authority agrees with the recommendation, the speed zone is established. If the recommendation is outside the authority given in Oregon Administrative Rules or agreement can't be reached, the case is referred to the Speed Zone Review Panel.

SPEED ZONE REVIEW PANEL

The Speed Zone Review Panel hears contested speed zone cases. The panel reviews the speed zone recommendation and receives testimony from the local agency and interested parties.

The panel consists of representatives from the League of Oregon Cities, Association of Oregon Counties, Oregon Transportation Safety Committee, Oregon State Police and ODOT.