



# TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING DIVISION

## FACT SHEETS

### Speed Limits

*How are speed limits determined?*

*Can I get the speed limit in my neighborhood lowered below 25 mph?*

*Why aren't more speed limit signs posted?*



#### *How are speed limits determined?*

As described in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), speed limits are established either *statutorily* – a maximum speed limit applicable to a particular class of road as established by State law; or as *speed zones* – a speed limit set by the city based on an engineering study.

Engineering studies to establish speed limits consider the following factors in accordance with traffic engineering practices:

- Roadway environment (e.g., roadside development, frequency of driveways and intersections, functional classification, transit use and number of stops, parking, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities and activity);
- Roadway characteristics (e.g., lane widths, shoulders, longitudinal grade, alignment curvature, median type, and sight distance);
- Geographic context (e.g., urban or suburban area) and multi-modal trip generation (i.e., non-motorized);
- Crash experience;
- Speed distribution of free-flowing traffic (e.g., 50<sup>th</sup>-percentile and 85<sup>th</sup>-percentile speeds<sup>1</sup>); and
- Review of past studies that may reveal trends in operating speeds.

The city uses USLIMITS2, a web-based expert system tool available through the FHWA to assist in setting reasonable, safe, and consistent speed limits.

#### *Can I get the speed limit in my neighborhood lowered below 25 mph?*

The setting of speed limits in the city of Las Vegas is governed by Chapter 11.16 of the Municipal Code. The prima facie speed limit is 25 mph on all streets and highways unless a different speed limit is posted as set forth in Chapter 11.16. Generally, speed limits below 25 mph are limited to school zones, the grounds of City parks, and certain intersection crossings. It is important that speed zone speed limits be based on an engineering study so they are safe, reasonable, and enforceable. Artificially low speed limits can lead to poor compliance and greater speed variations, which can create more conflicts and passing maneuvers that can increase crash frequency.

#### *Why aren't more speed limit signs posted?*

As required by the MUTCD, speed limit signs are posted at jurisdictional boundaries and where speed limits change. As recommended in the nationally recognized Traffic Control Devices Handbook published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, speed limit signs are also posted beyond a point where significant numbers of motorists may enter the roadway (i.e., major interchanges, intersections, and traffic generators), and at periodic intervals to remind motorists of the speed limit. This criterion typically results in the posting of speed limits approximately every one-half mile in the city. Speed limit signs are not normally posted in residential subdivisions, but a 25-mph limit may be posted at entrances to subdivisions.

<sup>1</sup> The 85<sup>th</sup>-percentile speed is the speed that 85 percent of traffic is traveling at or below.

#### Want More Information?

This flyer is for general purposes only. For more information, please contact the city of Las Vegas Department of Public Works, Transportation Engineering Division at (702) 229-6331 or <https://seeclickfix.com/las-vegas>

**NOTE:** The **Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)** is used throughout the country as the standard by which traffic control decisions are made. Nevada Revised Statute 484A.430 requires its use for placement of all traffic control devices. Find the **complete MUTCD** at <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/> or scan the QR code.



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