

# SPEED LIMIT SETTING FACT SHEET

## **How do speeds impact safety?**

The speed at which a vehicle is traveling before a crash is a major factor in the seriousness of the crash. High speeds are particularly hazardous for pedestrians. When a pedestrian is struck by a moving vehicle at 23 MPH, the risk of death is 10%. When struck by a vehicle traveling at 50 MPH, the risk of death is 75%. Safer speeds is a primary objective of the Safe System Approach.

## **What makes DOT&PF decide to consider a speed limit change?**

Sometimes DOT&PF decides to change a speed limit as part of the design process when a road is reconstructed. Other times, the process begins with a formal request made by a community or neighborhood.

## **What is the process for deciding whether to change a speed limit?**

After receiving a formal speed limit change request, DOT&PF may decide to move forward with a speed study, which examines a variety of factors to determine if a change is warranted. The speed study report will include a recommendation about whether or not a change is warranted and it may also recommend additional outreach to determine community support or engineering changes, like narrower lanes, to influence driver behavior.

## **What is a speed study?**

A speed study is an engineering and traffic investigation that considers a variety of factors including crash history, potential conflicts between different users like vehicles and pedestrians, potential conflicts between vehicles including at driveways and side streets, current driver speeds, and more to determine if a speed limit change is warranted.

## **How effective are posted speed limit reductions at reducing driver speeds?**

Studies have shown that most drivers will choose the speed that gets them where they're going as quickly as possible without endangering themselves, others, or their property. Posted speed limits are one factor, but not the only one, and not the most important one when it comes to the speed people drive. According to a report published by the Federal Highway Administration that looked at driver behavior and crash data from 100 sites in 22 states where speed limits had been lowered or raised, changing speed limits had little effect on how fast people drive. One of the conclusions of the report states, "Changing speed limits alone, without additional enforcement, educational programs, or other engineering measures, has only a minor effect on driver behavior."

**For more information visit**

**[dot.alaska.gov/traveltopics/how-are-speed-limits-set.shtml](https://dot.alaska.gov/traveltopics/how-are-speed-limits-set.shtml)**