

## Speed Limits – Myths and Realities

**Myth #1:** Speed limits significantly affect traffic speeds.

**Reality:** Traffic speeds do not significantly change following the posting of new or revised speed limits. Most drivers travel at speeds that they consider safe, regardless of the speed limit.

**Myth #2:** Most drivers travel too fast for road conditions.

**Reality:** The majority of drivers travel at prudent speeds and are capable of recognizing driving conditions that require greater driving caution.

**Myth #3:** Lower speed limits result in safer roads.

**Reality:** The more uniform the speeds of vehicles in a traffic stream, the less chance there is for conflict and crashes. Speed limits that reflect the normal actions of the reasonable majority, therefore, usually provide the most uniform speeds. In fact, unrealistically low speed limits may actually lead to crashes by producing two distinct groups of drivers – those attempting to observe the speed limit and those driving at what they feel is reasonable and prudent. These differences in speeds may result in increased crashes due to tailgating, improper passing, reckless driving and weaving from lane to lane.

**Myth #4:** Lower speed limits allow for effective enforcement.

**Reality:** Unrealistically low speed limits cannot be enforced with reasonable enforcement. In addition, they make the behavior of the majority unlawful and create public antagonism toward the police. However, realistic speed limits (i.e., those that reflect the normal actions of the reasonable majority) allow police to target their enforcement efforts to those drivers clearly out of line with the normal flow of traffic.



Offices: 3535 Grand Oaks Drive  
Howell, Michigan 48843  
Phone: (517) 546-4250  
Fax: (517) 546-9628  
E-mail: [mail@livingstonroads.org](mailto:mail@livingstonroads.org)  
Web site: [www.livingstonroads.org](http://www.livingstonroads.org)

### LCRC Facts

The Livingston County Road Commission (LCRC) maintains and provides the following as part of the county road system:

- ◆ Maintains 1,300 total miles of roadway
- ◆ Maintains nearly 700 miles of gravel roads
- ◆ Accepts approximately 10 miles of new roads into the county road system each year
- ◆ Maintains more than 13,500 traffic signs
- ◆ Issues approximately 1,000 residential driveway approach permits each year

Also, the Livingston County Road Commission:

- ◆ Is funded directly by state gas tax and vehicle registration fees – not by property taxes
- ◆ Is located in a state with a gas tax below the national average and ranks in the bottom nine states in per capita road funding
- ◆ Receives no direct revenue from growth and development
- ◆ Is not part of the Livingston County general government

## SPEED LIMITS



***Policies and procedures for setting and posting speed limits on county roadways in Livingston County, Michigan***

## What types of speed limits are on county roads?

There are four types of speed limits on roadways under the jurisdiction of the Livingston County Road Commission (LCRC).

- ◆ Statutory (55 mph) Maximum Speed Limits
- ◆ Absolute (30 mph to 50 mph) Speed Limits
- ◆ Prima Facie (25 mph) Speed Limits
- ◆ School Zone Speed Limits

## Statutory Maximum Speed Limits

The statutory maximum limit on a county road is 55 mph. Statutory maximum limits will only be posted on paved county roads where a zone changes from a prima facie limit or absolute limit to a statutory maximum limit.

## Absolute Speed Limits

Absolute speed limits are often referred to as modified speed limits and are utilized on roadways requiring speed limits between the 25-mph prima facie and the statutory 55-mph maximum limits.

Absolute speed limits on a county road are established only by a joint administrative action between the Livingston County Road Commission and the Michigan State Police, based on a traffic engineering study. If you would like more information about the factors considered in this study, please ask us for the booklet **Establishing Realistic Speed Limits**.

The Livingston County Road Commission will only consider requests to determine the need for an absolute speed limit on a roadway if all of the following criteria are met.

### Qualifying Criteria:

- ✓ A written request is received from the local unit of government or appropriate law enforcement agency, and
- ✓ The roadway must be classified as a local road, collector road, or arterial highway, intended to serve through traffic, and
- ✓ The roadway is paved, and
- ✓ The roadway is at least one-half mile in length.

## Prima Facie Speed Limits

Prima facie is Latin for “on the face of it” and is the speed limit under most conditions. Prima facie 25-mph limits are intended for residential and business districts and are established by the legislature. These limits apply throughout the state and are not required to be posted.

The Livingston County Road Commission will only consider posting prima facie speed limits on the following streets and roads.

- ❖ Local Subdivision Street - A county street, not intended to serve through traffic, located entirely within the limits of a subdivision plat or site condominium. This type of street automatically qualifies for consideration of a posted 25-mph limit. However, speed limit signs will generally be posted only at each entrance to the subdivision or site condominium.
- ❖ Local Dead End Street – A county street that does not serve through traffic and is less than one-half mile in length.
- ❖ Local Access Road - A county local road intended to serve limited through traffic. Portions of local access roads may be within subdivision plats or site condominiums. Consideration of posting 25-mph prima facie limits will only be given toward sections of paved roads that are at least one-half mile in length and gravel roads at least one-quarter mile in length if the following criteria are met:

### Qualifying Criteria:

- ✓ A written request is received from the local unit of government or appropriate law enforcement agency, and
- ✓ The roadway is located entirely within the limits of a subdivision plat or site condominium, or the density of residential dwellings adjacent to the roadway equals or exceeds 16 in one-quarter mile, or the physical features of the roadway (curvature, width, surface, etc.) do not, under ideal conditions, allow for speeds much higher than 25 mph.

## School Zone Speed Limits

School zone speed limits are intended for the protection of students (eighth grade or below) walking to and from school. The need for such zones are determined from a study involving the LCRC, the Michigan State Police and the appropriate school district. If you would like additional information on the factors considered in this study, please ask us for a copy of **School Zone Speed Limits**

The Livingston County Road Commission will receive requests for school speed zone studies only from the school district’s Superintendent.

If established, school zone speed limits are only in effect for 30-minute periods when children are walking to and from school. The limit that may be posted varies depending on roadway factors, but is never less than 25 mph.

## What is the policy on gravel roads?

The Livingston County Road Commission will only consider posting a speed limit on a gravel road if it meets the criteria specified for Prima Facie Speed Limits. Gravel roads are not considered for absolute speed limits due to the continuously changing conditions of these roadways, which results in continuously changing speed patterns. However, any gravel road that is upgraded to a paved road is subject to consideration of an absolute speed limit, including those previously posted with a prima facie limit.

Motorists on Michigan roads, including unposted gravel roads, are required to drive in a manner consistent with statutory laws including the Basic Speed Law. The Basic Speed Law, as set forth in the Michigan Vehicle Code, reads:

*“A person driving a vehicle on a highway shall drive at a careful and prudent speed not greater than nor less than is reasonable and proper, having due regard to the traffic, surface, and width of the highway and any other condition then existing. A person shall not drive a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than that which will permit a stop within the assured, clear distance ahead.” [MCL 257.627]*