

Setting Safe Speed Limits

Strategy and Method for Evaluating and Setting
Speed Limits for Safe and Comfortable
Non-Motorized Transportation on Kitsap County
Roads

The Need to Set Safe Speed Limits:

- Non-Motorized Transportation (NMT) will become a larger share of trips as KC population increases.
- NMT contributes to health, improves livability, reduces carbon emissions, provides transportation choice, and strengthens community cohesion. Encouraging NMT is part of KC's goals.
- NMT will rely on *existing roads*, most of which have little or no NMT infrastructure (sidewalks, paved shoulders, bike lanes), and most of which will *not be getting* NMT infrastructure due to lack of funds.
- High vehicle speed creates dangerous and intimidating NMT experiences on KC roads, which discourages people from using NMT (and encourages more vehicle use).
- High vehicle speed leads to more frequent and more severe crashes, with greater injuries and deaths for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Need for a Safe-Systems Approach:

Safe-Systems approach:

- Is context-sensitive:
 - Emphasizes hazards of crossing points (intersections and driveways)
 - Emphasizes present and future activity levels (traffic volume, NMT volume)
- Based on these contexts, sets a target safe speed for a road segment, and then sets speed limit accordingly. On new construction or major road revision, target speed can be baked into the design of the road itself, shaping driver speeds to meet target (narrowed lanes, speed humps, etc.)
- Current system (USLIMITS2) sometimes recommends speed limits that are too high; uses 85%-ile as a factor in recommending speed limits.

Kitsap County is unique.

- KC has rural, suburban, and urban areas.
- KC has a lot of hills, forested areas, and curvy roads in each of these areas.
- The character of roads in each of these areas have unique contexts.
- The safety and comfort of NMT needs to be a high priority in setting speed limits.
- Setting speed limits needs to be sensitive to these unique contexts and needs.
- A one-size-fits-all approach to setting speed limits is inadequate.
- KC needs more tools to set speed limits to reflect unique contexts and NMT needs.

A Safe-Systems Tool for Setting Speed Limits:

[City Limits: Setting Safe Speed Limits on Urban Streets](#) is a new guide for evaluating and setting speed limits from [NACTO](#) (National Association of City Transportation Officials). This guide offers KC a new tool for setting speed limits.

- Context-sensitive:
 - Emphasizes hazards of crossing points (intersections and driveways)
 - Emphasizes present and future activity levels (traffic volume, NMT volume)
- Prioritizes safety and comfort of walking and biking to encourage more NMT
- Appropriate for many--but not all--KC roads. Good for roads in urban and suburban areas.
- Not appropriate for rural roads.

Our recommendations:

- To have KC PW incorporate [NACTO City Limits](#) guide into KC speed limit setting policy for new roads or for major road revisions, as appropriate.
- To have KC PW work with NMC to evaluate speed limits on existing KC roads with NMT as a high priority consideration:
 - In Urban Growth Areas, LAMRIDs (Manchester, Keyport, Kingston, Suquamish, etc.), and other areas with urban/suburban characteristics, use the [NACTO City Limits](#) guide. Give priority to roads that have been identified as NM routes.
 - In rural areas, focus on roads that have been identified as NM routes.
- To have KC PW and the NMC develop a method for setting speed limits on rural roads that increases NMT safety and comfort.

Examples: