



DATE: March 26, 2012

TO: Chairperson and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Development Services Department/Transportation Division

SUBJECT: **ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIMA FACIE SPEED LIMITS UPON VARIOUS STREETS**

**SYNOPSIS**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council approve the establishment of prima facie speed limits for the following streets:

- ❖ College Boulevard:
  - 40 mph – North River Road to Adams Street
  - 45 mph – Adams Street to State Route 76
  - 50 mph – Roselle Street to Waring Road/Barnard Drive
  - 35 mph – Waring Road/Barnard Drive to Lake Boulevard
  - 45 mph – Lake Boulevard to South City Limits
- ❖ El Camino Real:
  - 40 mph – Douglas Drive to Mission Avenue
  - 45 mph – Mission Avenue to Oceanside Boulevard
  - 45 mph – Oceanside Boulevard to Vista Way
- ❖ Vista Way
  - 30 mph – Coast Highway to I-5/SR-78 Interchange

**BACKGROUND**

The basic speed law, per the California Vehicle Code, Section 22350, states, "No person shall drive a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent having due regard for weather, visibility, the traffic on, and the surface and width of, the highway, and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons or property." A prima facie speed limit for a street is deemed reasonable and prudent under normal conditions. A prima facie speed limit can be changed if an appropriate engineering and traffic survey is conducted by the governing agency, per the standards outlined in the California Vehicle Code (CVC). The City of Oceanside's Traffic Code also requires that speed limits be established by a City Council Ordinance.

A new engineering and traffic study shall be conducted if the speed zone changes, the prima facie speed limit changes, or a new prima facie speed limit is established. The process of establishing a prima facie speed limit requires that an engineering and traffic survey be completed in which necessary data is included in the study justifying a specific speed limit for a road. A few of the details reviewed in the process of establishing a prima facie speed limit is the 24-hour traffic volume, reported traffic collision history, and the critical speed. The critical speed (also referred to as the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile) is the speed at or below which 85 percent of the traffic is traveling. Establishing a prima facie speed limit will allow the Police Department to enforce the posted speed limit.

One way to achieve a safe roadway and to enhance efficient traffic flow is to establish proper and reasonable prima facie speed limits that can be enforced. Establishing a prima facie speed limit that is reasonable can help achieve voluntary compliance by the majority of drivers without the need for the presence of a police officer. Studies have shown a reduction in accidents on streets where proper speed limits have been established.

## **ANALYSIS**

The California Roadway System Maps, approved by the Federal Highway Administration, is reviewed to determine the classification of the street that requires a speed survey. If a street is classified as a principal arterial, a minor arterial, or a collector road, an engineering and traffic study is conducted for the street.

Speed limits are established by rounding the critical speed, obtained from a speed survey, to the nearest five (5) mile per hour increment. There are three ways that a speed limit can be reduced and still be enforceable. For example:

- If the critical speed is 37 mph, then it would round down to the nearest 5 mph increment, which would be 35 mph. If there are any conditions not readily apparent that justify lowering the speed limit another 5 mph, then the speed limit could be lowered to 30 mph.
- If the critical speed is 38 mph, then it would round up to the nearest 5 mph increment, which would be 40 mph. If there are any conditions to justify lowering the speed limit another 5 mph, then the speed limit could be lowered to 35 mph.
- If the critical speed is 38 mph, then one could round down to the nearest 5 mph increment, which would be 35 mph, but then the speed limit would not be able to be rounded down any further.

“Not readily apparent conditions” that would warrant the reduction in the speed limit would be conditions such as:

- Residential density
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Collision data (such as comparing the City of Oceanside’s accident rate to the Statewide accident rate)

As seen in Table A, there are six segments that have a higher accident rate than the statewide accident rate. For all six locations, this was justification to lower the speed limit another 5 miles per hour, using the critical speed as the base speed. There were two segments where the speed could have been rounded up to the higher 5 mph increment, but due to the existing speed limit and/or existing conditions, the critical speed limit was rounded down to the nearest 5 mph increment. Then there was one segment where the critical speed was rounded to the nearest 5 mph increment and there was no need to justify lowering it further.

In the City of Oceanside’s Municipal Code, there are street segments already identified along with their established speed limit. However, due to certain changes in the road’s characteristic it is required that the limits to the speed zones be changed.

**Table A: Speed Survey Data**

Location	Limits	Accident Rate (MVM)	California Statewide Accident Rate	Current Speed Limit (MPH)	Critical Speed (MPH)	Proposed Speed Limit (MPH)
College Boulevard	North River Road to Adams Street	2.15	1.60	35	46	40
College Boulevard	Adams Street to State Route 76	1.93	1.60	50	51/46	45
College Boulevard	Roselle Street to Waring Road/Barnard Drive	0.40	1.60	45	52	50
College Boulevard	Waring Road/Barnard Drive to Lake Boulevard	2.14	1.60	N/A	41/40	35
College Boulevard	Lake Boulevard to South City Limits	1.28	1.60	45	49	45
El Camino Real	Douglas Drive to Mission Avenue	1.81	1.60	35	44	40
El Camino Real	Mission Avenue to Oceanside Boulevard	1.02	1.60	45	49	45
El Camino Real	Oceanside Boulevard to Vista Way	2.93	1.60	45	52	45
Vista Way	Coast Highway to Interstate 5/State Route 78 Interchange	3.55	1.42	35	35	30

Table A shows that three street segments show an increase in the posted speed limit, two segments show a decrease in the posted speed limit, and three segments will keep the same posted speed limit. Then there is one segment that currently does not have a posted speed limit and a new posted speed limit will be established.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The installation of speed limit signs on all the segments will cost approximately \$400 per segment with an increase in annual maintenance of one work hour.

**CITY ATTORNEY'S ANALYSIS**

Does not apply.

**RECOMMENDATION**

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