

Highway District No. 1 Procedures to get a speed limit changed

If you feel that a speed limit is either too slow or too fast, there is something that you can do; you should know that Payette County Ordinance states that if a speed limit is NOT posted outside of the city limits then the speed limit is 55 mph; with that being said if you feel that drivers are going too fast the 1st thing you can do is call the Sherriff's office and report it to them; the Highway District has no way of enforcing the laws. However, if you feel that you would like to see the speed limit changed then you will need to contact the Clerk, Wendy Adamsen, at 208-278-3041 or by e-mail at hwd1@fmtc.com. These are the steps that will be taken if we haven't already conducted either a preliminary or engineering study within the last 3 years:

1. A preliminary speed study will be done by setting traffic counters out along the road to see how fast drivers are driving the road so that it can be determined if an engineering speed study is warranted; these are a couple of things that I am are looking for:
 - a. Is it a high or low volume road meaning is there a lot of traffic?
 - b. What is the 85th percentile? This is the most important thing I am looking for, the theory is that 85% of drivers will drive the road safely so therefore the formula that is used will determine what the 85th percentile is driving the road and that will determine what the speed limit will be set at in most cases.
 - c. If the traffic counters show that the 85th percentile is lower than the current speed limit by at least 5 mph than an official engineering speed study will be done; however, if results are that 85th percentile is fairly close to what the speed limit already is then an engineering study will not be done; if the 85th percentile is at least 5 mph over the current speed limit, than an engineering speed study will be done to see if raising the speed limit is warranted.
2. If an engineering speed study is warranted, than one will be done but it's not something that would get done quickly. Here are the steps that are taken:
 - a. Measurements of the road width and pictures are taken, I also take pictures and note if there are any rolling hills or sight distanced issues that can be taken into account. I also look to see if there are unusual circumstances that need to be considered like many bus stops and I also check to see if the crash data is really high on the road.
 - b. I physically go out and watch traffic and take my own speed counts, I am also watching to see if there are many pedestrians or bicyclists and also large farm equipment that frequent the road.
 - c. All of the field study information is put into a formula and transferred into graphs and spreadsheets in order to make a recommendation to the Board if the speed limit should either be lowered or increased and potentially add signage to the road such as rolling hills signs.

- d. If the Board agrees to change the speed limit, all of the information is sent to an engineer with LHTAC (Local Highway Technical Assistance Council) at which time the engineer will go thru all of the information that was sent and the engineer will also make their recommendation; now this can take a very long time to get back depending on how busy their engineers are.
- e. If they agree that a change in the speed limit is warranted they will put their engineering stamp on it and send it back to the District at which time the Board will decide if they want to change the speed limit and if they do, a resolution will be done by our Board to actually change the speed limit typically at the next regular Board meeting.
- f. If the LHTAC engineer does not agree that the speed limit should be changed then it gets sent back to the District and the Board then decides if they will go off of the engineer's recommendations or if they go off my recommendation. Please note that generally the Board does not change the speed limit if there is no engineering stamp to support it for the following reasons:
 1. The reduced speed may not be enforceable thru a court of law should the motorist get ticketed.
 2. Research done by ITD has found that it is hazardous and unsafe to lower the speed limit under the 85th percentile and that reducing a speed limit has little effect on the speed at which motorists will travel.
 3. To lower the speed limit under the 85th percentile requires a public hearing at which time the Board of Commissioner's would have to have concrete reasons as to why they are lowering the speed limit.