

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

*TRAFFIC ENGINEERING DIVISION*

**MEMORANDUM**

<b>GENERAL SUBJECT:</b> Engineering & Administration		<b>NUMBER:</b> 365.0
		<b>SUPERSEDES:</b> N/A
<b>SPECIFIC SUBJECT:</b> Speed Limit Change Process		<b>DATE:</b> 02/11/11 Errata changes Oct. 27, 2014
		<b>SUNSET DATE:</b> N/A
<b>DIRECTED TO:</b> District Administrators Regional Operations Directors Regional Traffic Engineers	<b>SIGNATURE:</b> Signed by Raymond J. Khoury, P.E. February 11, 2011 Original on file in the Traffic Engineering Division	

DPM 9-7 (Speed Limits on State-Controlled Roads) establishes general policy on setting speed limits, and delegates the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner's authority to change speed limits in accordance with §§ [46.2-870](#) and [46.2-878](#) of the *Code of Virginia*. This memorandum provides procedures on how this authority is to be implemented.

**Duties and Roles**

Regional Traffic Engineers shall:

1. Review speed limit change requests submitted to VDOT and determine which requests meet the eligibility criteria for a full study.
2. Conduct the required engineering study using the latest methodology and policy guidance, and solicit available data, concurrence or comments from state and local law enforcement authorities and from the locality as appropriate.
3. Sign and seal engineering study.
4. Keep the District Administrators apprised of speed studies and results.
5. Approve the speed limit.
6. Forward the final, signed & sealed engineering studies with Regional Traffic Engineer approval signature, to the Central Office Traffic Engineering Division. For interstate routes, concurrent approval is required by the State Traffic Engineer.

Regional Operations Directors shall:

1. Insure the installation of the speed limit signs in a timely fashion, normally within 30 calendar days of the determination that a speed limit be posted or changed.
2. Notify the Central Office Traffic Engineering Division of the date & location of all speed limit postings.

The State Traffic Engineer shall:

1. Provide concurrent approval, as appropriate, for speed limit changes for study recommendations on interstate highways.
2. Maintain the written records of speed limit changes as required by the *Code of Virginia* in the Central Office.
3. Maintain a database of speed limits on VDOT-maintained roads.
4. Annually audit a sample of speed limit studies to improve consistency and conformity.

### **Speed Study Review Criteria**

The criteria used by VDOT, in determining whether a full speed study should be performed, vary based on the type of road and type of speed limit. Criteria shall be applied by State and Regional Traffic Engineers as follows:

**Statutory Speed Limits** – Statutory speed limits are not generally posted on secondary roads but are typically posted for primary routes. If a determination is made to post the speed limit, and the statutory speed limit for that road is appropriate based on engineering judgment, then the statutory speed limit may be posted without conducting a full speed limit study. If the maximum safe speed of the horizontal or vertical alignment of the road is below the statutory speed limit, appropriate warning signs must be posted prior to posting the statutory speed limit. All Rural Rustic Roads are to be posted. Statutory speed limits for various localities and types of roads are set out in §§ [46.2-870](#), [46.2-873.1](#), [46.2-873.2](#), and [46.2-874](#) of the *Code of Virginia*.

**Posted Speed Limits** – Posted speed limits may be based on statutory limits or established through speed limit studies. If there has been no significant change (e.g., there has been no significant increase in the frequency or severity of crashes, no significant increase in traffic volumes or roadside development) since a properly established speed limit was last posted, since the last speed study was conducted, or within an appropriate evaluation period, and there has been no improvement to the roadway (e.g., no project completed to reconstruct or realign the roadway), then a study does not need to be conducted and the posted speed limit may remain.

**Low Volume Roads** - If the road is unpaved, or has a traffic count of less than 400 vehicles per day (VPD) and averages fewer than three crashes per year over a recent 3 year period, it should be reviewed only for warning signs or other necessary traffic control devices. If there is a crash history where an average of three or more crashes per year over a recent 3 year period has occurred; or, if there are more than 10

entrances, on a single side, per mile of roadway, a more detailed field review of the road section should be conducted.

Interstates – For consideration of Interstate speed limit increases, the roadway should be compared to the criteria in VDOT's Guidelines for Interstate Speed Zoning to determine if the existing speed limit is appropriate. If the existing speed limit appears appropriate in comparison with the Guidelines, then the speed limit remains the same and a study is not required. Where a decrease in the speed limit for a section of Interstate is being considered, and there has been no significant change (e.g., there has been no significant increase in the frequency or severity of crashes and no significant increase in traffic volumes) since the speed limit was last posted, since the last speed study was conducted, or within an appropriate evaluation period, then the speed limit remains the same and a study is not required.

## Reference

- *Code of Virginia*, §§ [2.2-604](#) and ~~33.1-8~~ [33.2-224](#)
- *Code of Virginia*, §§ [46.2-870](#), [46.2-873.1](#), [46.2-873.2](#), [46.2-874](#), [46.2-878](#)
- DPM 9-7 (Speed Limits on State-Controlled Roads) [2/11/2011]
- VDOT's Guidelines for Interstate Speed Zoning
- VDOT's Speed Study Template

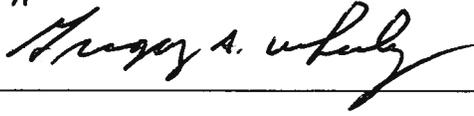


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VDOT DEPARTMENT POLICY MEMORANDA (DPM) MANUAL

Date: 2/11/11

Approved:



DPM Number: 9-7

Supersedes: None

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## SPEED LIMITS ON STATE-CONTROLLED ROADS

### Introduction

The Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) approach to reviewing and setting speed limits on state-controlled roads includes three major components:

1. VDOT performs periodic reviews of corridors to determine whether speed limit changes are appropriate.
2. VDOT reviews many roads that have statutory speed limits but are not posted to determine if appropriate warning signs are warranted.
3. VDOT may perform speed limit reviews upon request.

Code 33.1-8 replaced by Code 33.2-224. Errata change 10/27/14

This memorandum delegates to VDOT staff the authority to establish speed limits on state-controlled roads, as allowed by law.

### Commissioner Delegation of Authority

Pursuant to §§ 2.2-604 and 33.1-8 of the *Code of Virginia*, the Commissioner hereby delegates to the State Traffic Engineer and the VDOT Regional Traffic Engineers authority to perform the duties of the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner with regard to changing speed limits in accordance with §§ 46.2-870 and 46.2-878 of the *Code of Virginia*. The Commissioner also approves detailed procedures to implement this delegation set out in Traffic Engineering Memorandum 365.0, "Speed Limit Change Process."

All previous delegations regarding the duties as described herein, regardless of form, are hereby rescinded. If the position of State Traffic Engineer or any of the Regional Traffic Engineer positions should become vacant, that person appointed in an acting capacity to those positions shall have the same authority as that delegated to the State Traffic Engineer or the Regional Traffic Engineers, as appropriate.

Authorizing these positions to perform the acts described herein is in no way intended to abrogate the authority or ability of the Commissioner to accomplish these acts himself/herself, if he/she so desires. Consequently, in this sense, the duties and responsibilities are concurrent. Furthermore, this expressed delegation of authority is not intended to negate the authority or ability of the Commissioner to delegate further responsibilities in specific situations, as he/she may deem necessary.

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## SPEED LIMITS, *Continued*

Code 33.1-8 replaced by  
Code 33.2-224. Errata  
change 10/27/14

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### Reference

- Code of Virginia, §§ 2.2-604 and 33.1-8.
  - Code of Virginia, §§ 46.2-870, 46.2-873.1, 46.2-873.2, 46.2-874, 46.2-878.
  - VDOT's Guidelines for Interstate Speed Zoning.
  - Traffic Engineering Division Memorandum 365.0, "Speed Limit Change Process."
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