



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

A uniform speed of vehicles helps traffic move more safely and efficiently.

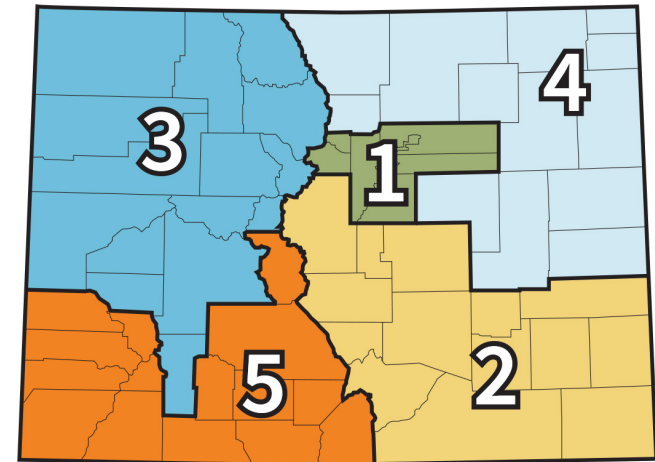
The Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) goal is to establish speed limits that maximize safety and that are respected by motorists.

By using sound engineering principles, CDOT can provide a balanced transportation system that gets motorists to their destination as safely and efficiently as possible.

What You Can Do

If you believe that there is a safety or speed limit concern posted on a roadway (City Street, County Road or Highway), you may report this to an official in charge of that road.

If the segment is a portion of the State Highway System, including U.S. and Interstate routes, contact should be made with the corresponding CDOT Region Traffic and Safety Engineer through your local agency representative.



Region 1: Denver Metro/Central

Phone: 303-512-4040

Region 2: Southeast Colorado

Phone: 719-546-5734

Region 3: Northwest Colorado

Phone: 970-683-6271

Region 4: Northeast Colorado

Phone: 970-385-1423

Region 5: Southwest/South Central

Phone: 303-512-5530

Setting Realistic Speed Limits for Colorado

Some believe that lower speed limits are the solution to all accidents and traffic control problems. Studies have shown that most people will drive as they perceive the conditions of the roadway, ignoring a speed limit that is unrealistically low or high. A speed limit that is "too low" may actually decrease the overall safety of the roadway.

Speed Limit Principles

Setting realistic speed limits helps to protect the public by reducing the potential for vehicle conflicts while moving traffic efficiently. Speed limits also provide a basis for enforcement and sanctions for those who travel at speeds excessive for conditions which could endanger others.



The Law: CRS § 42-4-1101

Speed limits are posted primarily to regulate motorists to the speed considered reasonable and safe by the majority of drivers on a particular roadway. Prima facie speed limits are those which “at first appearance” are reasonable and prudent under normal conditions.

In Colorado, prima facie speed limits are:

- 20 mph on narrow, winding mountain roads
- 25 mph in any business district
- 30 mph in any residential district
- 40 mph on open mountain highways
- 55 mph on non-interstate open highways
- 65 mph on interstate highways, freeways, or expressways

The absolute speed limits, listed below, are the maximum lawful speed limits and may not be legally exceeded under any circumstances.

- 75 mph
- Posted work zone and school zone speeds

CDOT's Speed Management Process

The CDOT process for setting speed limits balances safety and travel time. Speed Management is science-based, data-driven and develops a climate of natural compliance.

It considers the roadway environment and the purpose of the facility to ensure that Colorado highways provide safe access and mobility for all users. CDOT Speed Management is a transparent process that provides a consistent, rational basis for setting speed limits in different environments and contexts.

CDOT's Speed Management process includes speed studies, school zone studies, speed compliance studies, and no-passing zone studies that are included under traffic engineering studies.

For state highways, the speed study is typically conducted and approved by the CDOT Traffic Safety and Engineering Services Branch. Each speed study follows requirements within the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and traffic engineering standards.

Factors which should be considered, if applicable, include:

- A. Roadway environment (such as roadside development, number and frequency of driveways and access points, and land use), functional classification, public transit volume and location or frequency of stops, parking practices, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities and activity;
- B. Roadway characteristics (such as lane widths, shoulder condition, grade, alignment, median type, and sight distance);
- C. Geographic context (such as an urban district, rural town center, non-urbanized rural area, or suburban area), and multi-modal trip generation;
- D. Reported crash experience for at least a 12-month period;
- E. Speed distribution of free-flowing vehicles, including the pace, median (50th-percentile), and 85th Percentile speeds; and/or
- F. A review of past speed studies to identify any trends in operating speeds.

Types of Speed Limit Signs

Once a speed limit is determined, signs are posted along the roadway segment. The following speed limit and speed limit advisory signs reflect a few types you may see along a road when traveling.

Regulatory Speed Limit and Variable Speed Limit



Black and white sign shows the maximum speed limit under ideal conditions.



Variable speed limits that change based on road, traffic, and weather conditions.

Advisory Speed



Black and yellow sign to advise motorists of a safe speed. Typically, they are used with a warning sign.

Regulatory Work Zone Speed Limit



Used to identify maximum speeds within a work zone. These speed limits may not be exceeded under any circumstances.

Regulatory School Zone Speed Limit



This regulatory speed limit is in effect during a specific time and may not be exceeded under any circumstances.