

Community Corner

Not so fast!

Why can't the local highway department change the speed of the road?

Speed limits are set for very specific reasons and before making a change, residents and municipalities must conduct a speed study to prove a reason for change. Setting speed limits too low actually can decrease safety as drivers tend to violate speeds that are not properly set.

Who sets the speed of the road?

Most speed limits on Town and County roads are controlled by the NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).

NYS Vehicle & Traffic law gives the authority to set speed limits to:

- Villages & cities
- Counties and Towns within towns whose population is over 50,000 or is designated by law as "suburban."

Note that all changes in speed limit must be done **AFTER** a study by a licensed professional engineer.

How can the community ask for a speed study?

For roads where the speed limit is set by NYSDOT:

- Create a petition to the town board requesting they look at improvements to traffic safety. Don't just ask for a lower speed limit.
- The board will review the request and if there appears to be a need, they will ask the County Highway Superintendent to endorse the request.
- The request will be forwarded to NYSDOT who will conduct a speed study.

For roads and streets where the municipality can set the speed limit, the study will be conducted by an engineer working for or hired by the municipality. A proper speed study will look at safety issues as well.

Turn over for more information



Not so fast - Speed Limit Study

A speed study involves:

- **Bringing key community members together**; such as residents, highway officials, police, and school district reps to discuss the issue
- **Conducting a site visit & gathering data**; including traffic speeds and counts plus crash info
- **Meeting to discuss the findings**; share concerns and brainstorm solutions
- **Creating a plan**; such as community education, enforcement, structural changes, or speed limit changes
- **Keeping an open mind**; if the first solution doesn't work be flexible, this is a process that takes time & patience. Lowering the speed is just one possible outcome

Some possible outcomes:

- Changing the speed limit to match both driver expectations and the surrounding community
 - Note the lowest speed limit outside a school zone is 25 mph
- Suggesting other measures such as traffic calming, more enforcement, or and overall local roads safety plan may be a better fit than changing the speed limit.

How long does a speed study take?

- NYSDOT will need to collect data and visit the site to review conditions. Depending on the time of year, this can take several months. This is not a quick fix, please be patient.

