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# Speed Limits

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The black and white numbered (regulatory) speed limit signs are posted for public safety. Speed regulations and speed limits are intended to supplement motorists' judgment in determining speeds that are reasonable and proper for particular road conditions. Limits are imposed to promote better traffic flow by reducing the wide variance in speeds and to assist enforcement personnel.

The Virginia General Assembly has established statutory speed limits and granted authority to the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner and to cities and certain counties and towns to change speed limits not to exceed the maximum allowed by law for highways under their jurisdiction. Section §46.2-878 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that a traffic engineering investigation be conducted prior to changes in speed limits. The engineering investigation involves a study of roadway geometrics such as lane width, pavement type and condition and terrain as well as the analysis of traffic related data such as prevailing vehicle speeds, average test runs, volumes, crash data and traffic control devices that affect or are affected by vehicle speeds.

When a locality wants to request a speed limit change, the VDOT Residency Administrator at the local VDOT Residency office should be contacted. The Residency Administrator will request the Regional Traffic Section perform the engineering and traffic investigations for roads suitable for study, and the county will be advised of the findings of the engineering study prior to a speed limit change being implemented. When the traffic engineering study recommends a change in speed limit, the results are provided to the Commissioner, or his designee, for approval. Upon approval, the Regional Traffic Section will post the applicable speed limit. However, it should be remembered that reducing the speed limit in itself does not automatically reduce operating speeds. Enforcement is usually needed to achieve compliance.