



**CITY OF SALINAS  
COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** JUNE 16, 2026

**DEPARTMENT:** PUBLIC WORKS

**FROM:** DAVID JACOBS, PE, LS, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

**BY:** ADRIANA ROBLES, PE, CFM, CITY ENGINEER  
JONATHAN HERNANDEZ, JUNIOR ENGINEER

**TITLE:** 2026 ENGINEERING AND TRAFFIC SURVEY FOR SPEED LIMITS

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion to approve a Resolution establishing speed limits as recommended by the 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits Technical Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In California, an Engineering and Traffic Survey (“E&TS”) is the tool used to establish a speed limits, surveys are updated every 5-7 years and may be extended up to 14 years. Normally the speed limit is set at the closest 5 mph increment of the 85th percentile speed calculated through the E&TS, but a single 5 mph reduction is permitted based on roadway conditions and constraints. An additional 5 mph reduction maybe applied, based on California Assembly Bill 43 (AB 43), if the roadway has “vulnerable roadway users” or the corridor is considered a “safety corridor”. Speed limits set further below these allowed reductions create a “speed trap” that may result in the removal of the ability for law enforcement to enforce the roadway with radar per the California Vehicle Code (CVC 40802).

There are twelve (12) speed surveys that will expire in the second half of 2026. Staff is presenting new E&TS for Council consideration. Approval of these surveys is required to allow law enforcement to continue using radar speed enforcement on these road segments.

BACKGROUND:

The routine analysis and establishment of speed limits on roadways ensures compliance with the Uniform Vehicle Code (UVC”) established by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances.

## *Engineering & Traffic Survey (Speed Survey) Process*

In California the use of Speed Surveys is defined by the California Vehicle Code (“CVC”) and the methodology is defined by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (“MUTCD”). To set a speed limit, staff use a standard “85<sup>th</sup> percentile” survey outlined in the MUTCD. These surveys measure how fast people naturally drive during normal traffic, then set the limit to closest 5-mph mark of the speed used by 85% of those drivers. A 5-mph reduction is permitted based on roadway conditions and constraints.

California Assembly Bill 43 (AB 43) signed in 2021, gives local agencies more power to set speed limits based on safety goals. If a required traffic survey shows a limit is still unsafe, an agency can reduce the speed limit by an additional 5 mph in two cases: designation of a safety corridor or if the road is adjacent to a high-activity area, specifically a facility that may attract more vulnerable groups like children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and the unhoused. Based on the MUTCD, a “safety corridor” is officially defined as a segment within the top 20% of the city’s network for crashes, or any road where these vulnerable groups are present within 1320 feet (1/4 mile).

Under CVC 40802, a “speed trap” is created if a speed survey is missing or if the limit is set lower than the 85th percentile and the allowable speed reductions. In these cases, police are legally prohibited from using radar to issue tickets on that road.

For example, a roadway segment with a measured 85th percentile speed of 37 mph may have a recommended speed limit of 35 mph. Per the CVC, a 5-mph reduction to 30 mph is justified when geometric constraints (horizontal or vertical curves) limit sight distance. Similarly, the limit may be further reduced by an additional 5-mph to 25 mph to account for high pedestrian and bicycle volumes associated with designed school routes or identified bicycle networks. Prior to Assembly Bill 43, if this same roadway segment were signed at 25 mph it would have been considered a “speed trap” and radar enforcement would not be permitted.

### *Salinas Engineering & Traffic Survey*

There are 12 speed surveys set to expire in the second half of 2026. Following recent speed surveys, staff recommends the retention of the current posted speed limit for eight (8) segments, the reduction of the posted speed limit of three (3) segments (Towt Street, John Street, and Freedom Parkway), and an increase to the posted speed limit of one (1) segment (Sconberg Parkway). Table 1 provides the posted speed limits along with the measured speeds on the 12 roadway segments.

**Table 1. Speed Survey Findings**

No.	Street Segment	Speed Survey Study Limits	Posted Speed Limit	85 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Measured Speed	Rec Speed Limit
1	Chaparral Street	North Main Street to Natividad Road	25	24	--
2	Towt Street	East Alisal Street to Garner Avenue	30	32	25
3	Post Drive	Calle del Adobe to North Davis Road	30	32	--

No.	Street Segment	Speed Survey Study Limits	Posted Speed Limit	85 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Measured Speed	Rec Speed Limit
4	Monterey Street	West Market Street to John Street	25	26	--
5	Terven Avenue	South Sanborn Road to Airport Boulevard	25	22	--
6	Hansen Street	Airport Boulevard to Harkins Road	30	34	--
7	John Street	Wood Street to East Alisal Street	35	38	30
8	Freedom Parkway	Williams Road to Sconberg Parkway	35	38	30
9	Sconberg Parkway	Alisal Road to Freedom Parkway	25	43	35
10	North Davis Road	Larkin Street to Westridge Parkway	35	39	--
11	Alisal Street	Capitol Street to Front Street	25	30	--
12	Towt Street	Garner Avenue to Freedom Parkway	25	31	--

The measured 85th percentile speed on Towt Street (East Alisal St to Garner Ave) is 32 mph. While standard speed survey procedures allow for the speed limit adjustment to be rounded to 30 mph. Staff recommends applying a 5-mph reduction based on safety to set the new speed limit at 25 mph.

The measured 85th percentile speed on John Street (Wood Street and East Alisal Street) is 38 mph. Following standard speed survey procedures, the speed limit would be set at 40 mph. Staff recommends applying the 5-mph reduction based on safety and also applying an additional 5-mph reduction (AB 43) given the proximity to two elementary schools and high pedestrian activity. The recommended speed limit is 30 mph.

Similarly, Freedom Parkway has a measured 85th percentile speed of 38 mph, the rounded measured speed limit would be 40 mph. Staff recommends applying a 5-mph safety reduction to set the speed limit at 35 mph, allowed by MUTCD and also applying the 5-mph reduction allowed by AB 43. Freedom Parkway is located along the northeasterly side of Monte Bella Elementary School and Monte Bella Community Park and has bike lane facilities which encourage vulnerable roadway users to the street. Staff recommends a speed limit of 30 mph for Freedom Parkway.

Additionally, the radar speed survey conducted for Sconberg Parkway measured the 85th percentile speed at 43 mph, the rounded speed limit would be 45 mph. Applying the 5-mph safety reduction would result in a speed limit of 40 mph. However, due to the proximity of Bardin Elementary School and bike lane facilities on Sconberg Parkway, a 35 mph speed limit is recommended by staff.

Table 2 provides the recommended speed limits for the 12 roadway segments.

**Table 2: 2026 Recommended Speed Limits**

Street Segment	Speed Survey Study Limits	Posted Speed Limit		AB 43 Applied
		Existing	Recommended	
Chaparral Street	North Main Street to Natividad Road	25	25	No

Street Segment	Speed Survey Study Limits	Posted Speed Limit		AB 43 Applied
		Existing	Recommended	
Towt Street	East Alisal Street to Garner Avenue	30	25	No
Post Drive	Calle del Adobe to North Davis Road	30	30	No
Monterey Street	West Market Street to John Street	25	25	No
Terven Avenue	South Sanborn Road to Airport Boulevard	25	25	No
Hansen Street	Airport Boulevard to Harkins Road	30	30	No
John Street	Wood Street to East Alisal Street	35	30	Yes
Freedom Parkway	Williams Road to Sconberg Parkway	35	30	Yes
Sconberg Parkway	Alisal Road to Freedom Parkway	25	35	Yes
North Davis Road	Larkin Street to Westridge Parkway	35	35	No
Alisal Street	Capitol Street to Front Street	25	25	No
Towt Street	Garner Avenue to Freedom Parkway	25	25	No

*If safety is a concern, why not keep the existing speed limit signs low to slow the speed of traffic?*

California law prohibits the arbitrary posting of reduced speed limits. Doing so can create a “speed trap,” which legally restricts law enforcement from using radar for speed enforcement and often leads to higher overall vehicle speeds. However, AB 43 provides flexibility allowing the City Council to establish safety corridors and reduce speed limits for the benefit of vulnerable road users.

*Traffic and Transportation Commission*

The recommendation for the establishment of the 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits was presented to the Traffic and Transportation Commission at its May 14, 2026, meeting. The commission expressed concerns with increasing the posted speed limit at Sconberg Parkway as recommended in the 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits Technical Report.

The Commission voted (5-1) on an alternate motion to recommend City Council approve the establishment of the 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey with the exception of Sconberg Parkway. The Commission’s concerns are understandable but setting the speed limit below the allowable speed, based on established laws, would also be arbitrary and capricious and the speed limit at Sconberg Parkway would not be enforceable. Staff recommends City Council to approve the establishment of the 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits including the increase of the current posted speed limit at Sconberg Parkway based on the data provided.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

**Not a Project.** The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 includes the general rule that CEQA applies only to activities which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it

can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Because the proposed action and this matter have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Because the matter does not cause a direct or foreseeable indirect physical change on or in the environment, this matter is not a project. Any subsequent discretionary projects resulting from this action will be assessed for CEQA applicability.

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE §84308 APPLIES:

No.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The establishment of legitimate speed limits support the City Council’s goal of “Public Safety”.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Public Works Department staff survey, recommend, monitor, and install posted speed limits. Established speed zones allow the Salinas Police Department to enforce posted speed limits. Public Works provides the Police Department and the Traffic Court with updates and changes to the established speed limits for proper enforcement.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Funding is available and appropriated in CIP 9162.

Fund	General Ledger Number (Operating/CIP)	General Ledger Account Name	Remaining Budget Appropriation	Amount Requested
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

ATTACHMENTS:

- Resolution
- Attachment 1: 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits Technical Report
- Attachment 2: FHWA Functional Classification Maps
- Attachment 3: Speed Limit Informational Brochure