



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: JANUARY 27, 2025

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS

FROM: DAVID JACOBS, P.E., L.S., PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

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

TITLE: 2024 ENGINEERING AND TRAFFIC SURVEY FOR SPEED LIMITS

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion to approve a Resolution establishing speed limits as recommended by the 2024 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In California, an engineering and traffic survey (E&TS) is the tool used to establish a speed limit with surveys updated every 5-7 years and may be extended up to 10 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.

Traditionally, speed limits set further below the 5-mph reduction were not allowed as they would create a Speed Trap which would result in an inability of law enforcement to enforce the roadway with radar per the California Vehicle Code (CVC). This practice changed in July 2024 based on the California Assembly Bill 43-Traffic Safety (AB 43) which allows speed limit establishment to also consider “vulnerable roadway users” and “safety corridors” defined by a local agency. In essence, the new practice eliminates the current Speed Trap rule allowing agencies to establish speed limits based on policy direction.

Considering this, staff recommended to City Council in the 2023 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits that three (3) roadway segments (Sherwood Drive, Skyway Boulevard, and Work Street) be resurveyed following the implementation of AB 43 which would allow the current posted speed limit to be reduced or retained, otherwise it would have resulted in an increase of the posted speed limit. City Council approved Resolution No. 22835 as recommended by staff on November 7, 2023 (Attachment 4). This report summarizes the findings of the E&TS that staff resurveyed for these three (3) roadway segments.

BACKGROUND:

The regular 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 defined by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Speed surveys are currently established using the 85th Percentile Method defined within the MUTCD and involves taking an indiscriminate sample data set during normal traffic conditions to calculate the 85th percentile speed of the roadway and then setting the speed limit to the closest 5-mph increment of the calculated 85th percentile speed. A further 5-mph reduction is permitted based on roadway conditions and constraints. The CVC further clarifies that if a valid speed survey is not available or if a speed limit is set below that practice that a Speed Trap is established (CVC 40802) limiting the use of radar enforcement on that roadway segment.

For example, a roadway segment with a measured 85th percentile speed of 37 mph would be rounded down to have a recommended speed limit of 35 mph. A 5-mph reduction to 30 mph is permitted based on geometric constraints such as horizontal or vertical curves that limit roadway visibility or non-visible constraints such as the roadway serving as a suggested route to school or a portion of an identified bicycle network resulting in a higher-than-normal pedestrian or bicycle activity. If this same roadway segment were signed at 25 mph, it would be considered a Speed Trap and radar enforcement would not be admissible.

California Assembly Bill 43 - Traffic Safety (AB 43) removed the current Speed Trap limitation by allowing local agencies to set speed limits based on policy direction. Speed surveys can take into consideration vulnerable roadway users (i.e., students, disabled persons, bicyclists) into consideration to allow lower speed limits than those calculated by the 85th percentile method. The establishment of a Safety Corridor by the local agency is required to allow for the reduced speed limit to take effect.

Salinas Engineering & Traffic Surveys

In 2023, Public Works staff identified three (3) roadway segments to be resurveyed following the implementation of AB 43. Staff identified these roadway segments as “safety corridors” due to the presence of schools, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities. Increasing the posted speed limit on these roadway segments would decrease the safety of vulnerable roadway users such as students, pedestrians, and bicyclists. As a result of the resurvey, retention of the current posted speed limit is recommended for all three roadways segments surveyed. See Table 1 below.

Table 1: 2024 Engineering & Traffic Survey (Speed Survey) Study Findings

Street Segment	Speed Survey Study Limits	Speed Limit		AB43 Study Methodology Required
		Existing	Proposed	
Sherwood Drive	East Market Street to East Bernal Drive	40	40	X
Skyway Boulevard	Airport Boulevard to East Alisal Street	35	35	-
Work Street	East Alisal Street to South Sanborn Road	35	35	X

Why not keep the existing speed limit signs arbitrarily low to slow the speed of traffic?

It is important to point out that under current state law, it is not permitted to set arbitrarily low speed limits that do not align with measured speed limits. As mentioned above, this results in Speed Traps that limit the use of radar enforcement by law enforcement which in turn may result in higher vehicle speeds. However, following implementation of AB 43 further reductions in roadway speed limits are permitted following additional study to determine if vulnerable roadway users may benefit from the establishment of Safety Corridors by the City Council.

Traffic and Transportation Commission Hearing

The recommendation for the establishment of the 2024 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits was presented to the Traffic and Transportation Commission at its December 12, 2024, meeting. The Commission voted (3-0) to recommend City Council approve a Resolution to establish the 2024 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits. At this meeting, three out of the five appointed members were present, there are currently two vacancies in the Commission for Districts 1 and 4.

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 survey, recommend, and monitor 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:

There is no fiscal and sustainability impact. The posted speed limits for all three (3) roadway segments will be retained, therefore, there is no need for replacement of existing speed limit signs.

Fund	Appropriation	Appropriation Name	Total Appropriation	Amount for recommendation	FY 24-25 Operating Budget Page	Last Budget Action (Date, Resolution)
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution

Attachment 1: 2024 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits Technical Report

Attachment 2: FHWA Functional Classification Maps

Attachment 3: Speed Limit Informational Brochure

Attachment 4: Resolution No. 22835