



CITY OF SALINAS

COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: APRIL 7, 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 limit, 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. Speed limits set further below this practice 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). This practice changed in July 2024 based on California Assembly Bill 43 (AB 43) allowing speed limit establishment to also consider “vulnerable roadway users” and “safety corridors”.

A key speed survey expired in January 2026, staff is presenting a new E&TS for Council consideration. Approval of this survey is required to allow law enforcement to continue using radar on this road segment.

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 “85th 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 further 5-mph reduction is permitted based on

roadway conditions and constraints. 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. 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 reduced 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.

California Assembly Bill 43 (AB 43) signed in 2021, gives local agencies more power to set speed limits based on safety goals rather than just the “speed trap” rules. 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).

Salinas Engineering & Traffic Surveys

Following recent speed surveys, staff recommend reducing the speed limit for one specific road segment: Williams Road.

The Salinas Vision Zero Action Plan identified Williams Road as the City’s second highest collision corridor. While the measured 85th percentile speed on Williams Road is 37 mph, standard speed survey procedures allow for the speed limit adjustment based on safety. By rounding the measured speed to the nearest 5-mph increment (35 mph) and also applying a 5-mph safety reduction, staff recommend a new speed limit of 30 mph. See Table 1: 2026 Speed Survey Study Findings.

Table 1: 2026 Speed Survey Study Findings

Street Segment	Speed Survey Study Limits	Posted Speed Limit		AB43 Study Methodology Used
		Existing	Proposed	
Williams Road	East Alisal Street to East Boronda Road	35	30	No

Why not keep the existing speed limit signs arbitrarily 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 and often leads to higher overall vehicle speeds. However, AB 43 provides new flexibility. It allows the City Council to establish safety corridors and reduce speed limits for the benefit of vulnerable road users, provided an additional study confirms that a lower limit is necessary for safety.

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 March 12, 2026, meeting. The Commission voted (5-0) to recommend City Council approve a Resolution to establish the 2026 Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits.

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:

Installation and replacement of speed limits signs is estimated at approximately \$2,000. Sufficient budget is available and appropriated in the City Street Sign Retro Reflectivity Project (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