



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2020

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

FROM: DAVID JACOBS, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

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TITLE: REDUCED SPEEDS LIMITS IN SCHOOL ZONES

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion to approve a Resolution establishing reduced speed limits in school zones.

RECOMMENDATION:

Public works staff recommends that the City Council approve a Resolution establishing reduced speed limits in school zones.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City adopted reduced speed limits at school zones in 2008 in accordance with California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 22358.4 and implemented 15-mph speed limits at several elementary schools. City staff has recently re-evaluated school locations throughout the City to ensure applicability of reduced school zone speed limits in accordance with the CVC. The recent evaluation recommends reducing speed limits at more school zone locations throughout Salinas.

BACKGROUND:

Per the standards, set forth in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and California Vehicle Code (CVC) speed limits cannot be set arbitrarily low and must be established around the 85th percentile of surveyed speeds. However, California Assembly Bill (AB) 321 permits local jurisdictions to modify the posted speed limits within school zones. The law allows local jurisdictions, through an ordinance or resolution to extend the 25 miles per hour posted speed limit in school zones from 500 feet to 1,000 feet from the school property lines, and/or reduce the posted speed limit to 15 or 20 mph within 500 feet of the school grounds, under certain conditions. If a street has a school zone, is in a residential district, the posted speed is no greater than 30 mph outside of the school zone and the roadway has no more than two traffic lanes, the MUTCD offers the option to reduce and/or extend a school zone speed reduction. Under these specific conditions the posted speed at school zones can be reduced to 20 or 15mph and the 25mph zone can be extended, if the determination to reduce a prima facie speed limit to 20 or 15mph and/or extended a 25 mph school zone speed limit is documented in writing in an engineering study.

In 2008, the City adopted reduced speed limits at school zones however statewide concerns with effectiveness and enforcement resulted in limited implementation to a few schools citywide.

However, growing support for implementing lower speed limits result from recent studies that indicate a correlation between speed and risk of serious or fatal injuries, particularly as it relates to pedestrians and bicyclists. Higher vehicle speeds are strongly associated with a greater likelihood of both pedestrian crashes and severity of injury. A 2018 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration engineering study (Attachment 3) found that in urban areas approximately 10% of pedestrian fatalities occurs on roadways with a posted speed limit of 25mph. The same study found that in urban areas where the speed limit is posted 20mph or 15mph the percentage of pedestrian fatalities is less than 0.4% in each case. The data indicates that there is a pedestrian safety benefit in reducing posted speeds in school zones. The lower travel speed does increase travel time, however; a decreased speed from 25 mph to 15 mph over 1000 feet only increases travel time by approximately 18 seconds.

The 2018 study supports further the reduction of speeds to curb injuries and fatalities. The study also supports the development of the City's Vision Zero Policy which has the objective of reducing injuries on city streets.

Staff has re-evaluated school zone areas throughout the City and recommends a citywide uniform application of reduced and extended speed limits in school zones where permitted by the CVC and MUTCD. School zones are recommended to span the maximum allowable limits where feasible, unless roadway limits are constrained by a major intersection or other similar feature. Attachment 1 provides a table summary of the street segments evaluated by staff and the corresponding speed limits in accordance with the MUTCD.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION:

At its January 9, 2020 meeting, the Traffic and Transportation Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend the approval of reduced speed limits in school zones.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

Installation of new signage and pavement markings on a City street is exempt under CEQA 15301, Class 1(c) since the actions consists of operation and minor alteration of an existing City street.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

This action supports the Council's initiative of Safe, Livable Community by installing the reduced speed limit signs and school zones.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Public Works Department is responsible for installing and maintaining reduced speed limit signage. The police department is responsible for enforcing speed limits.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Staff estimates the total construction costs for the installation of all the required speed limit and school zone signs as shown in the plans (Attachment 4) is \$62,750. Administrative costs are approximately 30% of the construction costs (15% finance department, 10% engineering, and 5% inspection). Staff recommends a 10% contingency. The total estimated cost to install the speed limit and school zone signs improvements is \$89,000.

Capital Improvement Project Number 9391, School Safety Enhancements, is typically used to maintain school signs and crosswalks. The adopted budget for fiscal year is \$20,000, insufficient to complete all of the proposed work. If the proposed speed limit reductions at schools are approved, staff will pursue the installation of these improvements as funding allows, prioritizing elementary schools, then middle schools and lastly high schools. Staff may seek to fully fund the balance of school zone enhancements in the next budget cycle.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Summary of Proposed Reduced Speed Limits in School Zones

Attachment 3: A 2018 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Study

Attachment 4: School Speed Zone Plans

Attachment 5: Resolution 19411