

SAFER SPEEDS ON NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

20 IS PLENTY!

Councilman Paul Kashmann, District 6

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- **THE PROBLEM** - Since Mayor Hancock declared Denver's commitment to Vision Zero in 2016 (ending fatalities and serious injuries on city streets) some 380 people have died in traffic accidents. 2021 was the worst year yet.

Month	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	3	2	4	7	5	6	6	2	3	4	6
February	1	4		2	5	2	2	4	7	3	5
March	2	1	6	6	8	3	3	6	4	8	2
April		6	4	2	8	5	5	4	9		7
May	7	2	6	1	3	6	2	7	10	6	6
June	7	4	8	8	2	6	6	7	6	2	11
July	3	5	1	5	3	5	10	3	10	6	6
August	2	3	5	3	2	4	6	9	8	6	7
September	3	2	2	6	7	9	2	7	4	6	9
October	3	3	2	2	9	7	3	8	3	7	12
November	8	3	4	3	2	6	2	4	3	4	3
December	1	5	5	4	3	2	4	3	4	5	
Total	40	40	47	49	57	61	51	64	71	57	74

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- **THE PROBLEM** – We know that the faster a vehicle is moving when a crash occurs, the more serious the injuries. A 2011 study by the AAA Foundation for Auto Safety found that the average risk of death for a pedestrian increases by a startling 150% when struck by a vehicle at 32 mph compared to 23 mph. Similarly, the average risk of severe pedestrian injury is 50% at 31 mph - compared to 25% at 23 mph and just 10% at 16 mph. Slower is, indeed, more safe.
- **THE PROBLEM** – Frequently, when neighbors complain about excessive speeds on neighborhood streets, DPD finds most traffic traveling within a few miles per hour of the posted speed limits. Traffic traveling at or near existing posted speed limits on local streets are perceived as going “too fast” and “dangerous for our kids.”

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- THE PROBLEM - “The second main point is that once cars reach a certain speed (just above 20 mph), they rapidly become more deadly. According to Tefft's data, a person is about 70 percent more likely to be killed if they're struck by a vehicle traveling at 30 mph versus 25 mph.” (ProPublica, May 2016)
- THE PROBLEM - “Indeed, the risk [of death] increases dramatically between 20–40 mph,” said Tobias Niebuhr in an email. Niebuhr's a statistician at the University of Hamburg who studies pedestrian injury risk. He recently [published a paper on how older people are much more likely to suffer serious injuries](#) or be killed at all collision speeds.

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- PORTLAND – From an Oct 2020 report, *Effect Of Residential Street Speed Limit Reduction (25mph-20mph)*: “Overall, the analysis suggests that the reduction of posted speed limits to 20 mi/hr has resulted in lower observed vehicle speeds and fewer vehicles traveling at higher speeds (e.g. over 30 mi/hr). It is most noteworthy that the reduction in the percentage of vehicles faster than 30 mi/hr and 35 mi/hr are larger in magnitude than the other changes. These changes are more meaningful for the Vision Zero speed reduction efforts, given the link to crash severity for vulnerable road users. The models also suggest the role that roadway characteristics such as surface width, pavement condition, and presence of curbs contribute to vehicle operating speeds.”

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- “THE BOTTOM LINE is that a 25mph speed limit, as currently conceived, places pedestrians and bicyclists at unnecessary risk in neighborhoods where Denverites are most inclined to exercise their freedom not to drive.” Skyler McKinley, Regional Director, Public Affairs, AAA Colorado
- THE MANDATE - The Denver Vision Zero Action Plan holds reducing speed limits on City streets among its main goals.
- GETTING THERE - City Council amended the 2021 budget to fund a study of speed limits on Denver streets to understand how that goal might be achieved as resources and funding allow. The study examined the feasibility of lowering the speed limits on each of four different street types: Neighborhood Streets, Collectors and Arterials, School Zones and Slow Zones.

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- EACH STREET HAS ITS OWN SPECIFIC NEEDS – “In some cases, such as School Zones and Slow Zones, policies will need to be updated prior to any implementation action. In other cases, such as Collectors and Arterials, additional study may be needed. **For Neighborhood streets, the primary tool would be a change in speed limit signs and a sign placement policy.** For Collectors and Arterials, where there is already a certain level of speed limit compliance, the extent to which there is deviation from the speed limit will help identify where resources could be most effective to reduce high-end speeders.” From Denver’s Speed Limit Reduction Feasibility Study
- SLOWING TRAFFIC IS NOT A SIMPLE MATTER – To succeed, Denver must implement a comprehensive strategy of reducing posted speed limits to ENCOURAGE people to drive more slowly, while we increase our tool box of roadway engineering solutions that will CAUSE drivers to travel more slowly. We must also be sure our enforcement strategies lead to an increase in road safety.

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- **THE PROPOSAL** – Reduce the default speed on unposted city streets from 25mph to 20mph. This applies most specifically to neighborhood streets with no center line. Simultaneously, we will reduce speed limits in Denver parks from 20mph to 15mph. The lower speed has been DPR policy for several years. This action simply brings ordinance in line with existing policy.
- **IMPLEMENTATION** – The transition is set to begin in 2022. The length of time required for conversion is based on contractor availability. Cost estimates are in the \$1.2 - \$1.5 million range. DOTI expects to use contractors due to transportation operations staffing shortages. Current thought is to pull signs from within the neighborhoods and install new signs on the borders of neighborhoods based on average daily traffic counts and larger street speed limits.

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NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



External Gateway Sign:
All freeway off ramps, Arterials intersecting with City/County boundaries



Stacked Speed Limit Sign:
All 35mph+ or 20k ADT roadways to local roadways, alternating

- Estimated cost: \$1,200,000, contracted team of 3 crews, timeframe TBD

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- EDUCATION – DOTI plans to follow best practices and include a robust public education campaign along with the roll-out of the lower speed limit.
- ENFORCEMENT – DPD has no plans to use the reduced speed limit for a “gotcha” enforcement policy. Enforcement efforts will continue as necessary to be protective of public safety.
- STREET TYPE TIMEFRAMES
- Local Streets: Ordinance change 2021; sign changes begin 2022
- Collectors and Arterials: 2022 program ramp up
- Slow Zones: 2022 program ramp up
- Safety Zones (School Zones): Policy drafting 2021-22

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QUESTIONS?

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