

10 Dexter Street  
Newburyport, MA 01950  
2 June 2022

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee  
City Hall  
Newburyport, MA 01950

RE: High Street Speeding

Dear TSAC Members:

High Street between the Three Roads intersection and the High School has an ongoing speeding problem. One crucial factor is the absence of any speed limit information for eastbound drivers entering High Street from Storey Avenue at Three Roads.

Storey Avenue eastbound is signed for 35 mph in four places: just before Hoyts Lane; between Daniel Lucy Way and the I-95 ramps; before Low Street (at the Atria driveway); and after Low Street (at the Sunoco station). However, there is no indication that the speed limit changes from 35 mph on Storey Avenue to 25 mph on High Street. After the series of 35 mph signs there is no speed limit sign until the 20 mph school zone sign just before the driveway to the Senior Community Center and Bresnahan School.

I request that you consider installing a speed limit sign and an advance warning sign as follows:

1. A 25 mph speed limit sign could be located just past the Three Roads intersection, before the crosswalk in front of the Home for Aged Men. This would provide about 200 feet of sight distance to drivers rounding the curve from Storey Avenue.



2. A Reduced Speed Limit Ahead sign west of the Three Roads intersection may be justified because vehicles rounding the wide curve from Storey Avenue at 35 mph may not see the 25 mph speed limit sign until they are almost upon it.

The MUTCD states, “A Reduced Speed Limit Ahead (W3-5 or W3-5a) sign (see Figure 2C-7) should be used to inform road users of a reduced speed zone where the speed limit is being reduced by more than 10 mph, or where engineering judgment indicates the need for advance notice to comply with the posted speed limit ahead.” [Sec. 2C.38] In this case the speed limit reduction is 10 mph so engineering judgment would be required to justify the placement of the advance warning sign.



There appear to be two reasonable locations for a Reduced Speed Limit Ahead sign:

Option 1: About 135 feet east of Kelleher Way, just before the utility pole and line of trees. This location would have excellent visibility and would be 650-700 feet in advance of the 25 mph speed limit sign.



Option 2: Just before mile marker 49.0. There is an existing crosswalk sign at this location but the crosswalk has been removed and is unlikely to be replaced due to the elevation difference between the road and the sidewalk. The distance to the 25 mph speed limit sign would be about 450-500 feet.



The following map summarizes these proposed sign locations:



I suggest that the speed limit sign be installed first and that speeds then be monitored for compliance. If speeding continues after installation of the speed limit sign, it may be necessary to consider installing a Reduced Speed Limit Ahead sign. (Redesign of the Three Roads intersection based on the MVPC study in progress would likely help slow down traffic through the intersection but is unlikely to be implemented in the near term.)

In addition to the absence of regulatory and warning signs, drivers are guided to drive above the 25 mph limit by incorrect speed limit information provided by in-vehicle GPS devices. As noted at TSAC last week, the GPS service providers have not revised their data to show the 25 mph speed limits on most roads in Newburyport. The following website provides information about contacting mapping services (Google, TomTom, etc.):

<https://www.gps.gov/support/user/mapfix/devices-and-maps/>

Finally, large commercial vehicles such as trucks and buses that are going over the speed limit can be intimidating to other drivers, pushing them to go faster than they might otherwise. It would be helpful for the City to reach out to area commercial and transportation entities to remind them that the default speed limit in the City is 25 mph and that this limit applies to High Street. I have observed an MVRTA bus traveling at 35 mph from Market Basket through the Bresnahan school zone, and I am sure that if the City made a request the Authority would advise its drivers of the legal speed limit.

Regards,

Rick Taintor