

Responses to Council Questions and Comments

4/8/2024

Item #12: An Introduction of an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Petaluma to Reduce Enforceable Speed from 25 mph to 20 mph within 500 Feet of School Zones and from 25 mph to 20 mph Speeds within the Business Activity District Pursuant to Vehicle Code Sections 22358.4 and 22358.9

- Question: It does not go unnoticed that the arterial streets near the targeted schools are not proposed for speed limit reductions. South McDowell in front of McDowell Elementary is not changed, nor are Ely Blvd. or Casa Grande Road in front of Casa. How meaningful are the proposed changes going to be?
 - Response: Per the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD-Ca) South McDowell Blvd, Ely North or Casa Grande did not meet the requirements for school zone speed reduction. To meet the requirements of the MUTCD, the posted speed limit no greater than 30 mph and has no more than two thru traffic lanes (one in each direction). The following streets exceed the number of lanes (red) or exceeded the 30 mph speed (red).

Street Name	No. of Lanes (one direction)	Existing Speed
South McDowell Blvd	2 Lane	35 MPH
Casa Grande	2 Lane	35 MPH
Ely North	1 Lane	35 MPH

In the future there are opportunities to include these streets in the school zone speed reduction when the lanes are reduced on these streets (lane reduction) and these arterials are classified as safety corridors and the speeds can be reduced to 30 mph.

- Question: Is there accident history data showing speeding related accidents involving students for any of the streets proposed for speed limit reductions?
 - Response: Collisions history was overlayed with the 500ft school zone buffer for each school but an in-depth review of all the collisions was not conducted as collision factor was a criteria used by the MUTCD. In many instances the collision within the 500ft buffer included a bicycle or pedestrian.
- Question: Why are the new proposed speed limits to be in effect 24/7 when the current practice is to have reduced speed limits effective "when children are present"?
 - Response: Per Vehicle Code Section 22358.4, the reduction in speed only occurs 7 a.m. through 10 a.m., inclusive, and 2 p.m. through 5 p.m., inclusive, Monday through Friday, on days the school is in operation. The posted signs are required to include that language to inform the public about when the reduced speed limit is in effect. Accordingly, the reduction of speed limits in the school zones are effective while children are going to or leaving the school.
- Question: Does the Police Department have the staff bandwidth necessary to enforce a 20 mph speed limit on obscure places like Wren Court or Selmart Lane? It seems the police lack the staff needed to provide an appropriate level of traffic enforcement in town now. If there is no realistic ability to enforce these new speed limits, the public will likely regard them as "Driving While Black" rules that are only selectively, if ever, enforced.

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- Response: The list of streets was identified to meet the requirements of the MUTCD and fall within the 500ft buffer of each school. A comprehensive list of streets provides more flexibility in locating and installing speed limit signs to be most effective. Similar to the work completed around McDowell Elementary school a work order was constructed to provide to identify the most effective locations. School zone speed limits are not enforceable until the signs are installed.

In reviewing with our Traffic Engineers, we believe that the speed reductions will lead to improved safety conditions. We will monitor compliance, driving behaviors, and prioritize the assignment of officers in those areas to ensure adequate patrols and enforcement. The taking of any action or enforcement on the basis of race is unlawful and prohibited at all times. The City and its police department are committed to enforcing all laws and treating all members of the public equally and with dignity and respect.

- Question: I am confused by the interaction between the new statutes staff cite, on the one hand, and A.B. 2583 on the other, which is currently pending in the legislature but not yet enacted. A.B. 2583 would authorize reduced speed limits in school zones, which apparently the bill's author feels is not adequately provided for under existing law. [Bill Text - AB-2583 School zones and walk zones. \(ca.gov\)](#)
 - Response: Under either the proposed ordinance or AB 2583 would result in 15 mph school zones. AB 2583 would amend Vehicle Code Section 22352 to have 15 mph be the prima facie limit for school zones from 7am-10am and 2 pm-5pm. This is exactly what the proposed ordinance would do here.
- Question: I would also like to see a map of Petaluma with all the schools (public and private) shown and the streets of speed change to compare to ATP maps and future safe school route maps. It seems not all schools were put in the table so concerned if these limits are applied equally across the city including private schools and preschools. Not sure if we are asking for 20 mph in school zones when resolution states 15 mph when students are in motion coming or going during school days.
 - Response: Exhibit A and B has been updated to include the school zone map and the business activity map. Per the California Manual of uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD-Ca) a school is defined by a public or private educational institution recognized by the state education authority for one or more grades K through 12. This definition was used to identify the schools that would be eligible for speed reduction during school hours. The title of the ordinance will be revised from 20 mph speed limit to 15mph to match the language in the ordinance for school speed zone reduction. Vehicle code section 22358.4 subsection (a) allows the speeds to be reduced to 20 or 15 mph with an engineering survey. An engineering survey was not completed for the streets within the school zone. Subsection (b) allows the reduction to 15 mph if the roadway requisites and only needs consideration of an engineering study. Apart of the analysis for the reduction of the school zone speeds the roadway prerequisites were analyzed and determined all the street met those requirements.

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https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=VEH§ionNum=22358.4