



TRAFFIC AND SAFETY MANUAL

Chapter 2 – Signing 2B – Regulatory Signs

Speed Limit Signs

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General

Speed limits are established on primary highways and primary highway extensions upon the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation, commonly referred to as a speed study, as required by statute. The study is described in [Section 7C](#) of the Traffic and Safety Manual. Speed limit changes on primary highway extensions are made by the Iowa DOT, generally with concurrence of the city involved. The process for establishing speed limits is described in [Section 5A](#) of the Traffic and Safety Manual. Speed limit sign placement is covered in [Section 2A-8](#) of the Traffic and Safety Manual.

Statutory Speed Limits

Most speed limits on primary highway extensions have been established on the basis of a speed study, but in cases where no speed study has been conducted, the speed limit should be as stated in [Chapter 321.285 of the Iowa Code](#).

Park and Institutional Roads

The Iowa DOT is responsible for establishing and posting speed limits on extensions of primary highways through parks and institutions. For other state park and institution roads the controlling agency has jurisdiction and is responsible for establishing the speed limits. The Iowa DOT has a duty to maintain those roads, which may include sign installation. For further information about maintenance of State Park and Institutional Roads refer to Iowa DOT [Policy 800.04](#).

School Speed Limits

A School Speed Limit assembly shall be used to indicate the speed limit where a reduced speed zone for a school area or school crosswalk during certain time periods has been established by Staff Action. The assembly consists of a Speed Limit Sign Beacon, School plaque, Speed Limit sign and When Flashing plaque, to identify the time periods that the school speed limit is in effect. The end of the school speed zone should be marked with a End School Zone (S5-2) sign and a standard speed limit sign showing the speed limit for the section of highway that follows. The End School Zone sign and the speed limit sign will be installed in the same post with the speed limit sign installed to the left of the End School Zone sign. A School Advance Warning sign with supplemental Ahead plaque shall be used in advance of a School Speed Limit assembly. The State Traffic Engineer will provide assistance with the determination for use of school speed limits at the request of the District Office.

Minimum Speed Limit Signs

The minimum speed limit on the interstate system in Iowa is forty miles per hour. A minimum speed may also be established on divided multilane highways if warranted by engineering and traffic investigations and established by Staff Action. When used, the minimum speed limit sign shall be placed below the speed limit sign and shall not be used alone.

Speed Feedback Signs on State Highways

Cities and counties may install speed feedback signs on the state highways within their jurisdictions. However, review and approval must be obtained from the DOT prior to installation of the signs. Any city or county considering the placement of speed feedback signs should request department review and approval of the proposed signs before ordering the signs. Not all speed feedback signs are MUTCD compliant, even though they may claim they are on the company website.

Following are MUTCD criteria and DOT criteria for the speed feedback signs:

- The speed feedback sign must be installed with a speed limit sign (MUTCD Section 2B.13)
- The speed feedback sign shall be installed either below a speed limit sign on the same post, or to the right of the speed limit sign mounted on a separate post (MUTCD Section 2A.16).
- The legend on the sign should be “YOUR SPEED XX MPH” or something similar (MUTCD Section 2B.13)
- The background color of the speed feedback sign should be black on yellow.
- The color of the changeable message legend (speed number) should be yellow legend on black background or the reverse of these colors (MUTCD Section 2B.13)
- The letter height for the changeable message legend should be similar to, or smaller than the numbers in the speed limit sign.
- The changeable message legend (speed number) shall not include advertising, animation, flashing, dissolving, exploding, scrolling or other dynamic elements (MUTCD Section 2L.04)
- Strobe lights or any type of flashing lights shall not be used on, or in the sign (MUTCD Section 2A.15).
- No messages other than the approaching vehicle speed shall be displayed in the changeable message legend. Any message displayed would not meet the minimum letter height criteria identified in the MUTCD.

If the city or county plans to use a mobile speed feedback trailer, the following requirements relate to the placement of the mobile speed feedback sign and were developed to promote a safe roadway for motorists, pedestrians, and other users.

- Located where it does not impede, oppose or interfere with free passage along the primary highway right-of-way.
- Located where it does not create a visual obstruction to passing motorists.
- Located where there is a clear view of the speed feedback trailer from a distance of 200 feet in each direction.
- Not be placed or parked within 15 feet of a traffic lane of any Interstate highway, or other fully controlled access facilities, unless shielded by a crashworthy barrier.
- Not be placed or parked on the outside shoulder of any primary highway for longer than 7 days unless shielded by a crashworthy barrier.
- Not be placed or parked within 2 feet of the back of the curb or within 2 feet of any sidewalk.
- Be placed in a manner to avoid creating traffic backups or delays.
- If located within a work zone, the unit should be placed so that it does not interfere with the work activity or create a safety hazard for road users. They should be located with a speed limit sign that is placed in accordance with the project work zone traffic control, or DOT road standard.

- If parked behind a crashworthy barrier, the unit must allow for adequate lateral deflection of the barrier without impacting the speed feedback trailer.
- If requested, the District Office will assist the city/county to identify appropriate locations for the equipment.
- Located where it does not block an official traffic control device or sign.

Cities and counties should contact the local DOT District Office for any questions on whether a sign meets these criteria. Applications to install a speed feedback sign should be submitted to the DOT District Office on a Traffic Control Device Application along with catalog cuts for the proposed speed feedback sign. The sign can't be installed until the application is approved.

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