

5-7049-01: Implementation of Improving and Communicating Speed Management Practices

Background

Regulatory speed limits are a highly complex issue involving engineering, human factors, and political and societal concerns. On a national level, recent research and calls to change how speed limits are set, especially for city streets, have generated extensive discussion of future speed-limit-setting procedures.

What the Researchers Did

Within this Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) implementation project, the research team presented three workshops for practitioners from TxDOT and other agencies to discuss practices and procedures being used, and to introduce the practitioners to analysis tools and products that are available to assist them in setting regulatory speed limits and communicating their practices to stakeholders.

The communication products include:

- Videos (one for engineers and another for citizens that was produced in both English and Spanish).
- A pamphlet for public distribution (Figure 1) produced in both English and Spanish.
- Answers to common questions about speed and speed limits.

The citizen videos and pamphlets are available online for the benefit of practitioners and the public (see the callout box).

The analysis tools include:

- A spreadsheet tool that was developed in a national research project to facilitate speed zone studies.
- A matrix showing the typical order of implementation for common speed management treatments in Texas.

Project Deliverables

The following deliverables were generated and can be found at this link using the search engine and keyword of “5-7049-01”:

<https://library.ctr.utexas.edu/Presto/home/home.aspx>.

- “Setting Speed Limits”: a two-page informational pamphlet (English version).
- “Setting Speed Limits”: a two-page informational pamphlet (Spanish version).
- *Improving and Communicating Speed Management Practices: Instructor Guide*.
- *Improving and Communicating Speed Management Practices: Student Guide*.
- Speed-limit-setting tool spreadsheets (SLS-Tool-Texas-macro and SLS-Tool-Texas-nomacro).
- *Setting Speed Limits in Texas* (citizen video, 2 minutes), English version. Also available at <https://youtu.be/9bCaHSRDUpC>.
- *Setting Speed Limits in Texas* (citizen video, 2 minutes), Spanish version. Also available at <https://youtu.be/8uD9HglDLQA>.
- *Procedures for Setting Regulatory Speed Limits in Texas* (engineer video, 8 minutes). Also available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvJrrquIR0>.

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What They Found

Vehicle speeds and regulatory speed limits are a topic of interest for practitioners in various agencies—TxDOT, local jurisdictions, and consultant firms. These practitioners can benefit from tools and communication materials to help them analyze and explain the various factors that are weighed in the decision to set a regulatory speed limit, as well as in decisions to identify and implement speed management treatments.

Participants generally gave positive feedback on the tools and communication materials that were presented in the workshops, and the opportunity to use the tools in the workshop sample problems led to informative discussions on practices, issues, and solutions. In discussions during the workshops and feedback provided by participants after the workshop, it was apparent that practitioners are aware of the different factors that need to be weighed to set regulatory speed limits on different facility types based on the users present on the facilities (e.g., motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists), and they appreciate the provision of resources (such as the videos and the pamphlet) to assist them in identifying and considering these factors.

What This Means

Improved communication materials available to the public, stakeholders, and decision-makers for speed limits will encourage a more informed dialogue about speed limits, speed-limit-setting procedures, and other speed-related issues, including safety. Analysis tools and

communication materials will help to improve consistency in practices for setting regulatory speed limits and using speed management treatments. Additionally, these resources will result in improved consideration of the needs of different roadway users at different facility types.

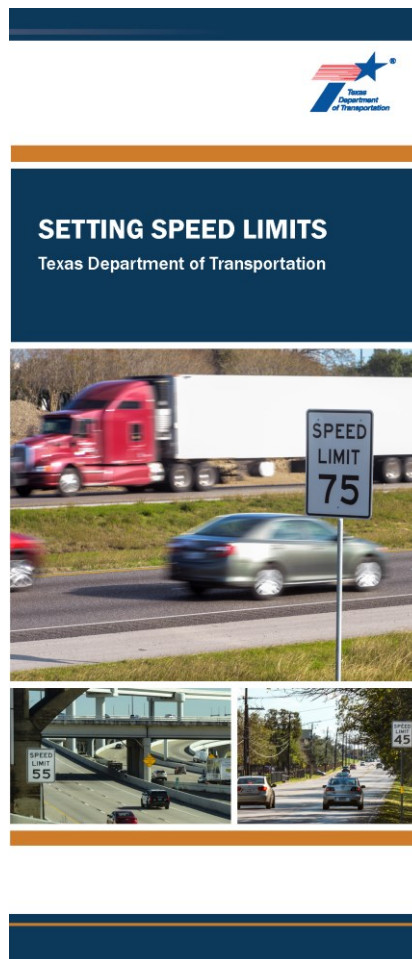


Figure 1. Excerpt of Pamphlet Cover.

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