

# Community Corner

## Not so fast!

### Why can't the local highway department change the speed of the road?

Speed limits are set for very specific reasons and before making a change, residents and municipalities must conduct a speed study to prove a reason for change. Setting speed limits too low actually can decrease safety as drivers tend to violate speeds that are not properly set.

### Who sets the speed of the road?

Most speed limits on Town and County roads are controlled by the NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).

NYS Vehicle & Traffic law gives the authority to set speed limits to:

- Villages & cities
- Counties and Towns within towns whose population is over 50,000 or is designated by law as "suburban."

Note that all changes in speed limit must be done **AFTER** a study by a licensed professional engineer.

### How can the community ask for a speed study?

For roads where the speed limit is set by NYSDOT:

- Create a petition to the town board requesting they look at improvements to traffic safety. Don't just ask for a lower speed limit.
- The board will review the request and if there appears to be a need, they will ask the County Highway Superintendent to endorse the request.
- The request will be forwarded to NYSDOT who will conduct a speed study.

For roads and streets where the municipality can set the speed limit, the study will be conducted by an engineer working for or hired by the municipality. A proper speed study will look at safety issues as well.

Turn over for more information

## Not so fast - Speed Limit Study

### A speed study involves:

- **Bringing key community members together**; such as residents, highway officials, police, and school district reps to discuss the issue
- **Conducting a site visit & gathering data**; including traffic speeds and counts plus crash info
- **Meeting to discuss the findings**; share concerns and brainstorm solutions
- **Creating a plan**; such as community education, enforcement, structural changes, or speed limit changes
- **Keeping an open mind**; if the first solution doesn't work be flexible, this is a process that takes time & patience. Lowering the speed is just one possible outcome

### Some possible outcomes:

- Changing the speed limit to match both driver expectations and the surrounding community
  - Note the lowest speed limit outside a school zone is 25 mph
- Suggesting other measures such as traffic calming, more enforcement, or an overall local roads safety plan may be a better fit than changing the speed limit.

### How long does a speed study take?

- NYSDOT will need to collect data and visit the site to review conditions. Depending on the time of year, this can take several months. This is not a quick fix, please be patient.

