



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

DATE: December 5, 2017

TO: Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)

FROM: Jeffrey Sikes, Planner

SUBJECT: Lower Speed Limits for City Streets

Background:

One of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation's (CACT) Initiatives for 2017 was to study and report on the feasibility and benefits of reducing the minimum posted speed limit on City streets below 25 miles per hour. This was a City Council request that was discussed at the February 27, 2017 Council Meeting when the CACT presented its 2016 Report to Council.

Staff received a legal opinion from the City Attorney indicating that State Code does not prohibit the City of Falls Church from lowering speed limits upon the completion of an engineering study. The State Code does not indicate what the engineering study should consist of.

Issues to Consider:

Issues to consider before adopting a speed limit reduction program for City Streets include:

1. What factors should be considered in the Engineering Study?
 - Number of lanes
 - Lane widths
 - On street parking
 - Surface condition
 - Number of intersections
 - Distance between intersections
 - Number of private/commercial entrances
 - Sight distance
 - Vehicle volume
 - Accident rate

2. What criteria are considered when evaluating a candidate street? (Volumes, speeds, functional class, neighborhood support)
 - Nature of complaints
 - Classification of street
 - Is street on a school route?
 - Traffic volume
 - Average speeds
 - Community support
 - Have other traffic measures been tried?
3. What are the fiscal impacts on other Departments like DPW and Police and staff workload?
 - Professional and administrative time and costs to enact necessary ordinances
 - Costs of signage
 - Labor to install and maintain signage
4. What are and how are public expectations to be managed?

See the following comments below from Major Rick Campbell: "I believe that the public expectations will exceed the actual results achieved. While reducing the speed limit may reduce the overall average speed for all traffic, it may actually the total number of violators. A number of years ago the City reduced the speed limit on Roosevelt Street by the Oakwood Cemetery from 25 mph to 15 mph. For a residential street there was a high volume of traffic with motorists trying to avoid the busier intersection at Seven Corners. Due to the 2 big curves in the road by the entrance to the cemetery, very few cars actually exceeded the 25 mph speed limit. Most of the traffic was at or slightly above the speed limit with a few violators traveling between 32 and 38 mph. Thirty days after the new speed limit signs were up we began enforcement. Virtually every car that came into radar was traveling in excess of 15 mph. The average speed was just below 25 mph, but tickets were issued for cars going 28 mph or above. In the end , it was decided that the reduced speed limit did not achieve the desired results and the speed limit was returned to 25 mph. Stop signs were placed on Roosevelt Street at the entrance to the cemetery as a traffic calming measure with much better results."