

Safer Streets Through Slower Speeds

- ### Speed, Crashes & Consequences
- **389** - The average annual number of Pedestrians and Bicyclists injured in Rochester.¹
 - **3** - The average annual number of Pedestrians and Bicyclists Killed in Rochester crashes.²
 - **1,471** - The average annual number of Monroe County crashes where Speed is a contributing factor.³
 - **13** - The average annual number of people killed in Monroe County crashes where speed is a contributing factor.⁴

Lower Speed Limits are Safer

Reducing the speed limit on residential streets would decrease the rate of serious injuries from crashes and the likelihood of crashes occurring at all. Both the decreased frequency and reduced severity of crashes observed on urban streets with lowered speed limits can be attributed to a number of factors.^{5,6}

Lower speeds provide drivers with more time to perceive and react to potential dangers, such as pedestrians stepping into the roadway from in-between parked vehicles. Once the danger has been perceived, lower speeds allow vehicles to achieve shorter breaking times, and drivers are able to stop or greatly reduce their speed prior to a potential impact.⁷

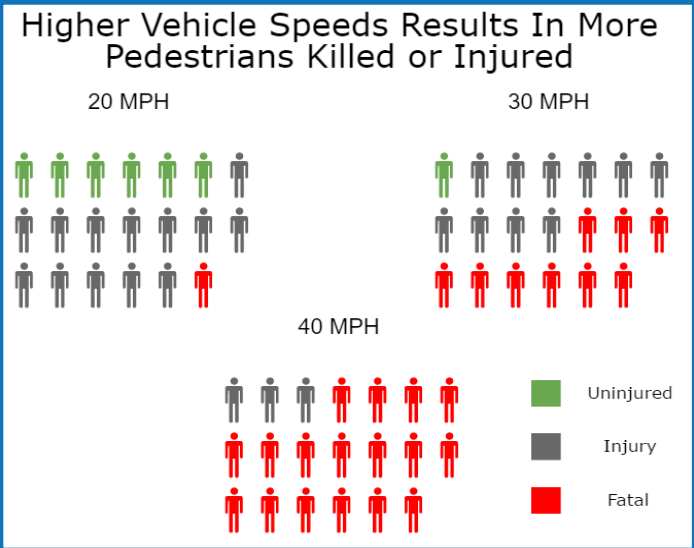


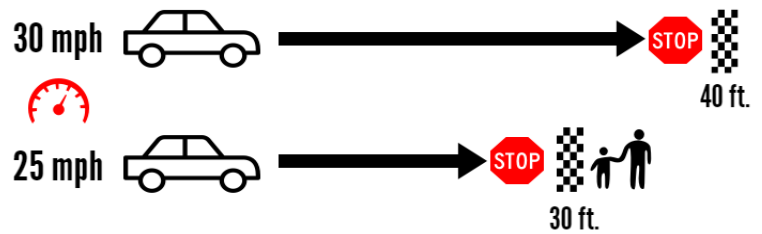
Diagram adapted from: Vision Zero Task Force. "Vision Zero: One Year Report". New York City Mayor's Office for Communication April 2015.

Kids and Speed

Vehicle speed plays a part in the ability of children to safely walk, bike and play in their neighborhoods. Young children have yet to develop the visual and cognitive tools to correctly gauge the speed of an oncoming vehicle that is travelling more than 20 mph.⁸ Misjudging the time that it will take a vehicle to reach them contributes to children stepping into the path of vehicles.



Slower Speeds Allow Cars To Stop



What is happening in Rochester?

As the City of Rochester continues to create vibrant and connected neighborhoods, it is important that streets represent safe spaces for residents and visitors to travel. Studies demonstrate that creating a safe road environment can foster economic revitalization, reduce crime rates, promote physical activity, and support residents' health, happiness and well-being.⁹

Every year, speed is listed as a contributing factor in almost 1,500 crashes across Monroe County. In the last decade, crashes have resulted in thousands of injuries and dozens of fatalities.¹⁰ Beyond the statistics, speeding cars are frequently cited by Rochesterians as a significant concern in their neighborhoods. Parents have shared with Healthi Kids that traffic safety and speeding cars are key barriers to allowing their kids to walk or bike to school and play in their neighborhood.^{11, 12, 13}

By reducing speeds, Rochester can reduce the number of crashes, improve accessibility to local schools, businesses, and services and promote healthy vibrant neighborhoods.

Speed Limits Across the Country



New York City is the largest city in the United States to lower its speed limit below 30mph.
Photo By: Pedal Power Pete

Across the United States, speed limits are being lowered in urban areas to promote safety for drivers and other road users. Major metropolitan centers including **Seattle**, and **New York City**, have lowered speed limits to 20 or 25 mph. In **Michigan** and **Delaware**, speed limits on residential streets across the state post speeds under 30 mph. While smaller cities like **Sommerville** and **Cambridge**, Massachusetts, have also adopted lower speed limits to promote safety.

Contrary to arguments made against lower speed limits, case studies have demonstrated that lower urban speed limits result in reductions to the average speed of vehicles and reduce the number of crashes.¹⁴ Studies show lowering the speed limit will have only marginal impacts on travel time. Stop signs and stop lights, weather, turning vehicles and other factors, all affect how fast drivers travel on city streets.¹⁵ Even if there were no other factors affecting travel time, a three mile trip would take only a minute longer at 25 mph than it would take at 30 mph.

Lowering Municipal Speeds in New York

In 2015, **New York City** (NYC) became the largest city in the United States to lower its speed limit below 30 mph. To achieve this change, NYC officials navigated New York State's (NYS) Home Rule laws. In NYS, local governments are not permitted to reduce speed limits below 30 mph, except in limited areas such as school zones, without being granted permission by Albany lawmakers. In the case of NYC, its City Council sent a request for home rule to the State legislature. NYS passed legislation that granted the NYC Department of Transportation the right to set a default speed limit of 25 mph. Afterwards, NYC's City Council passed a local law that officially lowered the speed limit for the city to 25 mph.

Other cities and towns (**Niagara Falls**, **Pittsford**, and **several towns on Long Island**) have also requested that State government grant them authority to lower speed limits on their streets.

In May of 2016, Senator Joe Robach introduced a bill that would authorize the town board of **Rochester** to set speed limits within the city, however that bill was not voted on before the Senate session expired.¹⁶

How Do We Lower the Speed Limit in Rochester?

1. A NY state lawmaker introduces legislation authorizing Rochester to lower local speed limit below 30 mph.
2. City governments sends a home rule request to the State legislature.
3. State legislature grants Rochester authorization to lower speed limit.
4. City Council amends city code to lower the speed limit.

Endnotes

- 1 - 4. Institute of Traffic Safety Management and Research, "New York State Traffic Safety Statistical Repository (TSSR)" University at Albany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, Accessed Aug. 2, 2016.
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Creating Healthy Schools
and Communities
in Monroe County