

Traffic Note 35 – Revision 1

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Guidelines for urban-rural thresholds – Information

Purpose

Where rural and urban areas meet, road controlling authorities can be under pressure to extend the urban speed limit to a point well outside the length justified by normal criteria (set out in *Land Transport Rule: Setting Speed Limits 2003*).

Experience has shown that speed restrictions that can't be justified by normal criteria are rarely effective. The Land Transport Safety Authority (now Land Transport New Zealand) has published *RTS15 Guidelines for urban-rural thresholds* to help address this issue.

Speed at the urban-rural threshold

Local residents argue that drivers don't start to slow down until they've reached the speed limit sign, meaning speeds entering the urban area are much higher than the limit. While their concern is justified, extending the speed limit doesn't produce the desired response – and has sometimes led to an increase in speeds.

Road controlling authorities are often asked by residents to introduce a small length of intermediate speed limit. Where this limit is justified (in terms of normal speed limit policy), this has been found to have some beneficial reduction in speed.

However, where the intermediate speed limit can't be justified by the speed limit policy, the effect, if any, can be negative.

The most effective limits are those drivers can see are justified and which are clearly sign posted.

Options for urban-rural threshold speed limits

If the measured entry speeds into an urban area are high (compared with similar locations elsewhere), and neither an extension to the urban speed limit nor a transitional speed limit is justified (in terms of the normal speed limit policy), consider the following points.

Ensure the speed limit signs are clearly visible¹. The signs should be visible to approaching traffic for at least 120 m and preferably 200 m or even more.

Further actions could include:

- marking the speed value on the road surface (see Transit NZ/LTSA *Manual of Traffic Signs and Markings* Part II Section 4.01)
- if the speed limit sign is not already duplicated, place an additional sign on the right hand side of the road
- consider increasing the size of the speed limit sign/s. Normally they should be at least 750 mm in diameter and may be increased to either 900 mm or 1200 mm
- if the following criteria apply a 'speed restriction ahead' sign² may be considered
 - a transitional speed limit does not exist
 - site restrictions mean the signs can't be effectively duplicated or increased in size
- where traffic volumes, speeds and other factors justify installation, consider a threshold treatment in accordance with *Guidelines for urban-rural thresholds*.

¹ The following definitions appear in the *Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices 2004*

visible means able to be seen from a **safe stopping distance**

safe stopping distance means the minimum distance required for a driver of **normal vision** travelling at a safe operating speed for the road to recognise a hazard and decelerate with **normal braking** to stop completely before reaching the hazard

normal vision means the visual acuity required of a person to obtain and hold a driver licence, in accordance with the *Land Transport (Driver Licensing) Rule 1999*

normal braking means the level of braking applied to a vehicle that does not lock any of the vehicle's wheels and permits the vehicle to decelerate without adverse directional control.

² Sign W10-3, Schedule 1, *Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices 2004*