

STAFF REPORTS

CITY COUNCIL
January 28, 2003

To: Mayor and City Council

From: George J. Rodericks, City Manager

SUBJECT: SPEED SURVEY TRAILER UPDATE

BACKGROUND

In accordance with California Law, the City conducts Traffic Survey studies for selected streets in the City as the basis for the establishment and enforcement of speed limits. Every five (5) years, California Law requires that speed surveys be performed with the use of radar or other approved electronic devices. If such a survey is not performed within five (5) years of the date of the preceding survey, then the new data and its use will constitute a speed trap. All fifty states base their speed regulations on the Basic Speed Law. The California Vehicle Code defines basic speed law as:

“No person shall drive a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent having due regard for weather, visibility, the traffic on, and the surface and width of the highway, and in no event at a speed which endangers the safety of persons or property.”

Certain other speed limits, called “prima facie limits” are automatically established by law, including a 15 mph limit in alleys, blind intersections, blind railroad crossing, and the 25 mph limit in business and residence districts. There is also a part time 25 mph limit in school zones when children are present in route to or from school. These speed limits do not need to be posted to be enforced.

Certain local streets are exempt from the requirement for radar speed surveys and engineering studies. A local street provides access to abutting residential property and meets three conditions:

- a) Roadway width of not more than 40 feet;
- b) Not more than one half mile of uninterrupted length; and
- c) Not more than one traffic lane in each direction.

With the exception of local streets, speed surveys and engineering studies make recommendations on acceptable speeds based on the 85th percentile rule. The 85th percentile is that speed at or below which 85 percent of the traffic is moving. The 85th percentile is often referred to as the critical speed. Therefore, the accepted practice is to set the speed limit at or within 5 mph below the critical speed. This recognizes that other factors could be present where the above may not be appropriate. When this procedure is used, it not only confirms to that required by the State, but it also provides a strong base for law enforcement personnel to properly enforce speed limits.

The establishment of a speed limit of more than five miles per hour below the 85th percentile (critical) speed should be done with great care as this may make violators of a disproportionate number of the reasonable majority of drivers.

In addition to the five (5) year Traffic Survey Study, the City uses a mobile speed survey trailer with an onboard computer to track and monitor speeds at various locations throughout the City. The trailer is placed in a conspicuous location and tracks traffic volume and speeds. Because the trailer is a visible deterrent, it cannot be used as a device for validation of speed limits for the Traffic Survey Study. A properly conducted Survey must still be completed.

For those streets identified as collectors and arterials. The streets so identified are: Collector Streets – Cerro Villa Drive, Valley Drive, Mesa Drive, Taft Avenue, Santiago Boulevard, Lincoln Street, Lemon Street, and Center Drive; Arterials – Villa Park Road, Wanda Road, Santiago Boulevard, and Collins Avenue. Collector streets may be redefined as residential and removed from the Functional Use Maps maintained by the Federal Highway Administration. However, removal of these streets places funding for infrastructure repair and maintenance in jeopardy.

FINDINGS

The City has been using the Trailer continuously for a period of 10 months. The data collected has been provided to the City Council, Public Safety, Public Works, and Engineering staff upon its collection on a routine basis.

The majority of the data conformed to the 85th Percentile guidelines. The exceptions are noted below:

Location	Posted	85th %	Comment
Center – Northbound at Windsor	30	36	Needs Enforcement
Fitschen Ranch – Southbound at Tacoma	25	31	Needs Enforcement
Fitschen Ranch Road – Northbound	25	33	Needs Enforcement
Fitschen Ranch Road – Southbound	25	31	Needs Enforcement
<i>Serrano – Eastbound between Center & Lemon</i>	35	34	<i>85th % lower than posted</i>
Serrano – Westbound bet. Santiago & Nichols	30	36	Needs Enforcement
<i>Serrano – Westbound between Center & Nichols</i>	35	34	<i>85th % lower than posted</i>

Location	Posted	85th %	Comment
Sycamore – Southbound bet. Taft & Santiago	25	34	Needs Enforcement
Valley – Eastbound between Villa & lemon	30	37	Needs Enforcement
Valley – Westbound at Brewer Way	30	36	Needs Enforcement
Valley – Westbound at Lemon	30	37	Needs Enforcement
Valley – Westbound at Lemon	30	37	Needs Enforcement

Based on the data collected and with the exception of portions of Serrano Avenue, the areas noted above need continuous enforcement to maintain proper speed compliance. In April 2000, the City designated Serrano Avenue as a residential local street. Therefore, it is exempt from the speed survey requirements and may have a prima facie speed limit established at 25 mph. However, Ordinance No. 2001-479 established the speed limit for this street at 30 and 35 mph.

If the City Council desires to reduce the speed limit on Serrano Avenue to its prima facie limit of 25 mph, an Ordinance would be necessary to modify Article 19-4, Section 19-4.1 of the Villa Park Municipal Code.

Based on the information from the speed survey trailer, staff does not recommend adjustments to any other street speed limit.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and discuss.