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|  Northern Region<br>Traffic Engineering Practice | No. 701.1        |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>School Zone Speed Limits<br/>and Signs</b></p>  | January 30, 2014 |

The purpose of this document is to establish a consistent methodology for determining school zone speed limits and establishing signing requirements that are in alignment with the intent of the Code of Virginia, the MUTCD and the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD.

**This practice shall apply to all permit applications for new blinking signs (Wink-O-Matic signs) and modifications to speed limits at school crossing zones.**

Existing school zone speed limits and corresponding signs are not required to be changed to comply with this document.

**DEFINITIONS**

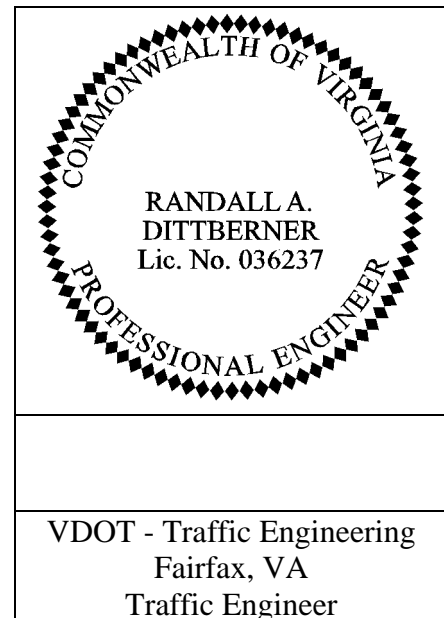
“Speed limit” is the posted or un-posted maximum speed limit for a section of road, whether established by resolution or code (statutory).

“School crossing zone” is defined in the Code of Virginia as “an area located within the vicinity of a school at or near a highway where the presence of children on such school property or going to and from school reasonably requires a special warning to motorists.”<sup>1</sup>

“School zone speed limit” is a speed limit established to temporarily lower or reinforce the speed limit for up to two hours per day at a school crossing zone.

**DETERMINATION OF SCHOOL ZONE SPEED LIMITS**

The Code of Virginia<sup>2</sup> generally establishes school zone speed limits as 25 miles per hour, but it gives the Commissioner of Highways permission to increase or decrease the speed limit after a traffic engineering investigation and when indicated on the highway by signs.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Code of Virginia, [§ 46.2-873](#)

<sup>2</sup> Code of Virginia, [§ 46.2-873](#)

<sup>3</sup> Code of Virginia, [§ 46.2-878](#)

To comply with the intent of the Code, deviations from the 25 mph school zone speed limit should be minimized. However, where the speed limit is 50 mph or above, a 25 mph school zone speed limit would result in a speed transition of 25 mph or more, a potentially undesirable condition.

As such, school zone speed limits should be determined according to the following table:

| <i>Speed Limit Type</i>   | <i>Speed Limit</i> | <i>School Zone Speed Limit</i>       |
|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Established by resolution | 25 mph or below    | Same as the posted speed limit       |
|                           | 30 to 45 mph       | 25 mph                               |
|                           | 50 mph or above    | 20 mph below the posted speed limit* |
| Statutory                 | Any                | 25 mph                               |

\* An appropriateness check should be conducted to ensure that the school zone speed limit is suitable for conditions.

Further engineering study and engineering judgment may be necessary to identify the appropriate school zone speed limit where conditions are unusual.

## **SIGNS**

**All signs shall be designed and installed in accordance with the MUTCD, superseded by the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD where applicable.** Part 7, Traffic Control for School Areas, provides standards, guidance and options.

**Reduced School Speed Limit Ahead (S4-5) signs shall be used to inform road users where the speed limit is being reduced by more than 10 miles per hour.**

**The sign sizes in the Oversized column of Table 7B-1 of the Virginia Supplement shall be used on roadways that have four or more lanes with posted speed limits of 40 mph or higher for all signs associated with the school crossing zone, unless there is a physical or right of way constraint that would prevent the use of oversized signs.**