

SPEED MANAGEMENT AND SPEED LIMITS

Summary of the response by the Slower Speeds Initiative to the Department for Transport's consultation on updating Circular Roads 1/93
March 2005

The Slower Speeds Initiative was founded in March 1998 by the Children's Play Council, CTC, the Environmental Transport Association, the Pedestrians' Association (now Living Streets), Pedestrian Policy Group, Road Danger Reduction Forum, RoadPeace, Sustrans and Transport 2000. We are working for evidence-based speed limits that reflect the impacts of speed and contribute to increased sustainability of our transport system. Such limits should be sustainably enforced, through appropriate vehicle design.

Our interest in this consultation is fourfold. We welcome the introduction of the evidence-based Speed Assessment Framework which acknowledges earlier work on optimal speed limits by our policy advisers Stephen Plowden and Mayer Hillman in *Speed Control and Transport Policy*. The work of the Initiative's founders depends on lower and better enforced speed limits and greater institutional recognition of the impacts of speed for its success. We represent the main non-governmental organisations with a primary concern for vulnerable road users who account for nearly half of deaths and serious injuries on urban roads. And finally, we are acutely aware of the plight of individuals and community groups who want lower and better enforced speed limits.

Our response to the consultation has two main themes. Speed management must ensure equitable access to the road network. Explicit guidance and information will help to reduce controversy around speed limits and their enforcement. Speed management strategies will then be able to play a full role in reducing the impacts of the transport system and indicate the direction that should be taken by vehicle design.

THE ROLE OF SPEED MANAGEMENT AND SPEED LIMITS

Practically all significant impacts of road traffic, e.g., various cost components and safety, depend on driving speeds. Speed limits should be primary indicators of how the road network is to be used and the desired pattern of impacts of that use.

A CHANGED CONTEXT FOR MANAGING SPEED

The relevance of speed management to the wider policy spectrum including sustainable development, land use, health, social inclusion, community safety and improving the public realm must be highlighted in new guidance.

THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL SPEED MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND NEW LIMITS TO SUPPORT IT

The new context and urgent priorities of reducing CO2 emissions and increasing energy security argue for a national speed management strategy, with new national speed limits. Two new limits, 20mph for settlements and 50mph for single carriageway roads, would provide the basis for a simplified, coherent and consistent approach by Traffic Authorities. The 70mph limit is unnecessarily high if global warming and energy security are taken into account.

THE NEED FOR GUIDANCE

Guidance is needed to reduce conflicts between road functions and road users and to ensure that speed management supports wider policy objectives. Much of the draft guidance assumes that no vulnerable road users should or will be present on most of the road network. The general presumption against speed limit changes in the absence of a casualty problem discriminates against pedestrians and cyclists and underestimates how far responses to intimidation account for the absence of casualties. The police should not be the final arbiters of acceptable speed limits. Communities must have a role. The new Circular should provide up to date advice on research and best practice in speed management

in order to promote consistency, reduce conflicts between road functions and road users, and ensure local transport policy supports wider policy objectives.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles are recommended:

- decisions concerning speed management should be transparent and based on explicitly formulated principles (e.g., equity, precaution and prevention)
- driving speeds should reflect a socially desirable and equitable distribution of all impacts of speed
- authorities involved in managing speed should have compatible ideas on objectives, etc. A public police policy on speed limits is needed to demonstrate compatibility.

CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURES IN SETTING SPEED LIMITS

Procedure for setting speed limits should be based on analysis of road functions and road users and should explicitly address the conflicts between the settled and the mobile and between the slow and the fast.

THE SPEED ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The new Speed Assessment Framework should be used to ensure that speed management and speed limits increase the social, economic and environmental efficiency of network. The Framework should be developed to ensure transparency and full consideration of qualitative impacts.

COSTS AND BENEFITS

Trials are needed to establish how journey times for motorised traffic might change with lower speed limits. The ratio of benefits to costs justifies a major expansion in funding for speed management measures, which could underpin an area wide approach in settlements and a network wide approach on rural roads.

DATA COLLECTION

The new Circular should provide guidance to Traffic Authorities on the appropriate data for evaluating the current state of their networks, carrying out initial assessments of costs and benefits and monitoring the impacts of changes in speed limits. Traffic Authorities should have a duty to monitor speeds across the networks they manage.

TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES, INNOVATION AND REGULATIONS

The new Circular should provide explicit guidance on not endangering cyclists when traffic calming measures are introduced. There should be some discussion of recent innovations in traffic calming and the new Circular should incorporate guidance on relaxation of regulations to encourage innovation. There should also be guidance on dealing with liability.

The Executive Summary and Recommendations and the full response can be downloaded from our website, www.slower-speeds.org.uk, under Publications.

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