



Agenda Item

City Traffic Commission

Item #: 4.5

8/12/2026

File #: 26-0439

TO: Chair and Members of the City Traffic Commission

FROM: Larry Tay, Deputy Public Works Director/Traffic Engineer

1. SUBJECT

Recommended changes to posted speed limits on various city streets

2. SUMMARY

To be enforceable, posted speed limits must be established in accordance with state law. Assembly Bill 43 provides local agencies with greater flexibility and local control in establishing speed limits. The recommendations resulting from a citywide speed limit study, which considered the provisions of AB 43, are presented below.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Recommend the speed limit changes presented in Table 1 of the staff report.
2. Forward to the City Council for approval.

4. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 5: Improve Infrastructure, Mobility, and Technology

6. DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

Background

Based on state law, specifically the California Vehicle Code ("CVC"), speed limits are established either by:

(1) Statute, or

(2) Speed zones, which require the conduct of Engineering and Traffic Surveys (E&TS).

Common examples of statutory speed limits include the 65-mph maximum speed on many freeways and 25-mph maximum speed in school zones and on certain types of local streets. These speed limits do not need to be supported (established or re-validated) through the conduct of an E&TS.

Notwithstanding certain statutory limits, many speed limits (typically between 30 mph and 60 mph, at 5-mph increments) on city streets do need to be supported by an E&TS and approved by local

ordinance, to be enforceable. This requirement generally applies to city streets that are not classified by the State as a local street. The City of Orange has 186 roadway segments (arterial and collector streets) that are subject to this requirement.

Engineering and Traffic Surveys (E&TS)

Setting, maintaining, and changing speed limits on the 186 street segments requiring E&TS is also governed by procedures set forth by state law. The basis of the procedure is the 85th percentile speed of traffic, determined by conducting speed surveys (using radar gun.) The 85th percentile speed is the speed at which 85 percent of drivers are traveling at or below. For many years, the 85th percentile speed, rounded to the nearest 5-mph increment, would generally determine the posted speed limit. While local agencies would also have the option of exercising a 5-mph speed limit reduction if certain conditions were present, the ability to implement speed limit reductions from the 85th percent was more limited than it is today. In addition, E&TS previously had a maximum re-validation interval of 10 years (between re-surveys,) and all streets had to be resurveyed when their E&TS expired, without exception.

The posted speed limits on all 186 street segments that required E&TS were developed based on the above requirements. Furthermore, the effective and expiration dates of these E&TS were historically staggered, with a batch of surveys expiring every few months. It is staff's belief that this approach, presumably taken because of resource limitations associated with in-house data collection, is less efficient than keeping all E&TS on the same cycle. An added benefit of the below-referenced citywide assessment is the opportunity to get all the E&TS on a single cycle.

AB 43

State Assembly Bill 43 (AB 43), passed in 2021, and fully effective June 30, 2024, provides cities with greater flexibility and local control in setting posted speed limits. While the 85th percentile speed still serves as the basis of the overall process, there are more mechanisms for lowering posted speeds. Among other changes, it allows for rounding the speed survey results downward, to the nearest 5 mph increment below (rather than to the nearest 5 mph increment as in the past.) Moreover, the CVC now recognizes additional characteristics such as safety, land use, bicyclists, transit activity, pedestrians, disabled persons, and vulnerable populations, among other things, as justifications for further speed reduction.

AB 43 also contains other provisions beyond modifying E&TS procedures, including, but not limited to: extending the expiration of E&TS, from 10 to 14 years; allowing for 15 mph limits on certain streets (not being recommended at this time); and allowing agencies to revert back to a previously approved E&TS if certain roadway conditions are satisfied, to avoid the potential of speed limit creep that can occur when streets are resurveyed.

Citywide Assessment

At their February 10, 2026, meeting, City Council approved a professional services agreement with AGA Engineers, Inc. (AGA), to evaluate speed limits citywide, with the goal of applying AB 43's provisions where appropriate. In addition, re-evaluating all of the city's speed limits at once, together with a few of AB 43's "consistency provisions" (that either extend the shelf life of a E&TS or reduce the need for future re-surveys), provides the added benefit of getting all of the city's E&TS on the same cycle. Staff expect doing so to improve operational efficiency moving forward, with fewer resources necessary to manage the city's posted speed limits.

While one of the expected outcomes of this assessment (and the legislative intent of AB 43) was the reduction of posted speed limits on some city streets, it is important to keep in mind that there remain limitations, both legal and practical, to such reductions. This includes the locations where reductions are recommended as well as the magnitude of such reductions. Specifically:

- The basis of any posted speed limit is still the 85th percentile speed, as defined above; and the maximum speed differential between the posted speed limit and the observed 85th percentile speed cannot exceed 12.4 mph (sometimes less, depending on road conditions).
- While the list of allowable justifications for reducing posted speed limits has expanded, engineering judgement and standards must still be applied.
- Continuity (minimizing fluctuations in the posted speed limit); citywide mobility; expected driver compliance (reasonableness); and enforceability play a substantial role in the recommendations.

Recommendations

Based on the revised E&TS prepared by AGA, and the objectives and constraints discussed above, the recommended speed limit changes are delineated in the table below.

Of the 186 roadway segments surveyed, 46 are recommended for a 5-mph speed limit reduction. One segment, Esplanade Street between Fairhaven and La Veta avenues, is recommended for a 10-mph reduction. No speed limit increases are recommended at this time. In general, streets affected by the proposed changes are in residential areas, downtown and high pedestrian areas; near schools and parks; and/or on high-accident corridors. The recommendations were developed in consultation with the Orange Police Department (enforcement) and Orange County Public Works Department (shared streets).

Table 1: Recommended Speed Limit Changes

Street	Segment	Posted Speed Limit (MPH)	Recommended Speed Limit (MPH)
Almond Avenue	Flower Street to Main Street	30	25
Batavia Street	La Veta Avenue to Chapman Avenue	30	25
	Chapman Avenue to AT&SF Railroad	35	30
	Katella Avenue to Taft Avenue	40	35
Cambridge Street	Katella Avenue to Taft Avenue	35	30
	Taft Avenue to Meats Avenue	35	30
Chapman Avenue	Main Street to Batavia Street	40	35
	Batavia Street to Lemon Street	35	30
	Center Street to Cambridge Street	35	30
	Cambridge Street to Tustin Street	40	35
Collins Avenue	Batavia Street to Glassell Street	40	35
Esplanade Street	Fairhaven Avenue to La Veta Avenue	45	35
Fletcher Avenue	Batavia Street to Glassell Street	35	30
Glassell Street	South City Limits to La Veta Avenue	35	30
	Maple Avenue to Walnut Avenue	30	25
	Walnut Avenue to Collins Avenue	35	30
	Collins Avenue to Katella Avenue	40	35
Grove Avenue	Batavia Street to Main Street	35	30
Hewes Street	Walnut Avenue to Bond Avenue	40	35
Katella Avenue	Tustin Street to Sacramento Street	40	35
	Sacramento Street to Handy Street	40	35
La Veta Avenue	West City Limits to Main Street	45	40
	Glassell Street to Shaffer Street	30	25
	Yorba Street to Chipwood Street	40	35
Lincoln Avenue	West City Limits to Glassell Street	45	40
	Glassell Street to Orange-Olive Road	45	40
	Orange-Olive Road to Tustin Street	45	40
Main Street	South City Limits to Chapman Avenue	40	35
Parker Street	Town & Country Road to La Veta Avenue	40	35
Prospect Street	Fairhaven Avenue to La Veta Avenue	40	35
	La Veta Avenue to Palmyra Avenue	40	35
	Palmyra Avenue to Chapman Avenue	40	35
Rancho Santiago Boulevard	Chapman Avenue to Walnut Avenue	35	30
	Walnut Avenue to Bond Avenue	35	30
	Bond Avenue to Hewes Street	35	30
Santa Ana Canyon Road	Orange-Olive Road to Tustin Street	35	30

Spring Street	Prospect Street to Esplanade Street	35	30
	Esplanade Street to East City Limits	35	30
Taft Avenue	West City Limits to Glassell Street	45	40
	Glassell Street to Cambridge Street	45	40
Via Escola	Meats Avenue to Cannon Street	40	35
Walnut Avenue	Main Street to Batavia Street	35	30
	Batavia Street to Glassell Street	35	30
	Glassell Street to Cambridge Street	35	30
	Cambridge Street to Tustin Street	35	30
	Gravier Street to Hewes Street	35	30
White Oak Ridge	Newport Boulevard to Canyon View Avenue	35	30

City Council Action

In accordance with the City's municipal code and CVC, changes in posted speed limits must be approved by ordinance. Accordingly, the recommendations in this report, together with any significant public comments or commission discussion, will be presented to City Council for potential action. Approved speed limit changes would take effect 30 days after the second reading of the associated ordinance and any replacement signs and corresponding pavement markings being installed.

7. ATTACHMENTS

- February 10, 2026, City Council Staff Report (no attachments)
- AGA Report (no appendices)
- Map (Existing Speed Limits)
- Map (Proposed Speed Limits)
- Map (Speed Limit Changes)