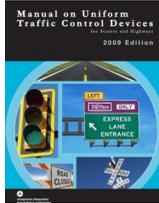


**Traffic Safety** is an ongoing concern in Skagit County. As our communities continue to expand, more traffic is introduced onto our road system. This results in greater potential conflict with pedestrians, bicyclists, animals, and other vehicles.

Skagit County Public Works shares citizens' concerns regarding the safety of our roadways and its users. We carefully evaluate all requests for safety on our road system. Annually, Traffic Engineering processes between 120 to 150 service requests from private citizens or other departments and agencies. Many of these requests involve the following issues:

- Signing & Striping
- Speed Limits
- Speed Bumps/Humps



**WHAT ARE THE OFFICIAL GUIDELINES FOR THESE IMPORTANT SAFETY ISSUES?**

The Traffic Engineering section follows Skagit County policies and Washington State laws in addition to the national standards outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Traffic control devices include traffic signals, signs, and roadway markings. The MUTCD covers all aspects of the placement, construction, and maintenance of every form of approved traffic control. The guidelines prescribe five basic requirements for all devices. They must:

- **Fulfill a need.**
- **Command attention.**
- **Convey a clear, simple meaning.**
- **Command respect of road users.**
- **Give adequate time for proper response.**

The MUTCD emphasizes uniformity of traffic control devices, conforming to regulations for dimensions, color, wording, and graphics. A device should always convey the same meaning. Consistent use of traffic control devices protects the clarity of their messages.

**RADAR TRAILER AVAILABLE**

Traffic Engineering administers the use of a Radar / Speed Display trailer as part of its Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program. Residents or Neighborhood Associations concerned with speeding in their localities may request deployment of the Radar Trailer. The Trailer shows the speed of passing vehicles and is extremely visible to drivers who may be reminded to drive cautiously when their speed is displayed.

It may also be possible for Traffic Engineering to conduct a traffic study of your area to determine vehicle volumes and speeds. These studies may not be available in all areas. If you would like further information regarding the Radar Trailer or traffic studies, please contact Traffic Engineering at:

**(360) 416-1400**  
**traffic@co.skagit.wa.us**

*This brochure is intended to give you, the residents of Skagit County, information regarding these ongoing and important issues.*

**WASHINGTON STATE  
BASIC SPEED LAW**

The Revised Code of Washington states:

*“No person shall drive a vehicle on a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions and having regard to the actual and potential hazards then existing”*

**This law focuses on the responsibility of drivers to modify their driving behavior in response to changes in roadway conditions.**



Skagit County Public Works  
 Traffic Engineering  
 1800 Continental Place  
 Mount Vernon, WA 98273

**Neighborhood  
Traffic  
Safety**



## Would Skagit County lower the speed limit in my neighborhood?

Washington State law allows counties to set their standard speed limit for roads where the limit is not posted. Due to the rural nature of Skagit County, this limit has been set at 35 miles per hour. The county sets the lower limit of 25 mph in most residential neighborhoods and reserves the 20 mph limit for signed school zones – to emphasize safety near our schools. Requests for speed limits of 10 or 15 mph cannot be accepted because posting of such limits by a local government agency is considered a speed trap and therefore makes enforcement of such limits illegal.

In more rural areas of the county, posting lower speed limits appears to be an easy answer to the problem of controlling speeders. Engineering studies, however, show that posted limits are not the most significant factor influencing vehicle speed. Research indicates that a reasonable and prudent driver will drive the speed suggested by roadway and traffic conditions, to the extent of disregarding the posted speed limit. A speed limit that is realistic invites the majority of drivers to comply. Realistic speed limits help preserve uniformity of speed. Uniformity is valuable for the following reasons:

- It enables pedestrians to more accurately judge the speed of traffic.
- It reduces the possibility of conflict between the familiar (*usually faster*) driver and unfamiliar (*slower*) driver.
- It makes unreasonable violators more obvious to law enforcement personnel.

Unreasonably low posted speed limits interfere with the preservation of uniformity of speed which increases the potential for collisions.

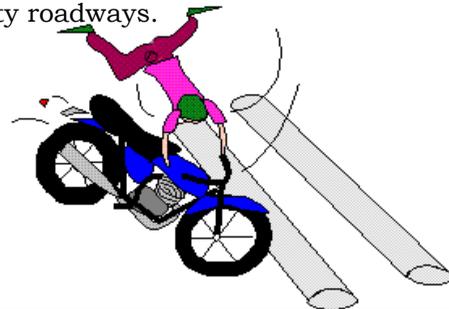
## Would Skagit County install speed bumps in my neighborhood?

This is a very frequent request. It is commonly believed that speed bumps are an easy and acceptable means of speed control. This widespread belief overlooks the hazards and problems associated with speed bumps. Nationwide studies have revealed a number of speed bump disadvantages.

It is not possible to design a speed bump/hump that has the same effect on all vehicles.

- Speed bumps do not consistently decrease speeding – in fact drivers of softly suspended vehicles may increase their speed in an effort to diminish the effects of the bump.
- Additionally, some drivers will speed between bumps to make up for lost time.
- Speed bumps increase noise and air pollution in residential areas. The noise and increased fumes as vehicles slow for, then accelerate past a bump are measurably greater than that created by normal traffic.
- Speed bumps can be hazardous to bicycles, motorcycles and emergency vehicles and may significantly slow emergency response times.

Speed bumps have not been officially accepted as a standard traffic control device. Skagit County has made it a policy not to install speed bumps on county roadways.



## Would Skagit County install “Children at Play” signs in my neighborhood?

This is another common inquiry. However, many concerned parents and citizens do not realize that these signs are deceiving and ineffective. Motorists already expect the presence of children in residential areas, especially at certain times. Studies show that devices attempting to warn drivers of normal conditions, or conditions that are not always present, fail to achieve the desired safety benefits. In fact their use can foster a disregard of all warning signs.



“Children at Play” signs tend to give parents and children a false sense of security. They assume that motorists pay attention to these signs and slow their speeds. However, there is no evidence that these signs prevent accidents or reduce vehicle speeds. Instead, these signs become a direct and open invitation to small children that playing in or beside the roadway is safe and acceptable. Of course, playing in or near the roadway is never safe and should be strongly discouraged.

“Children at Play” and similar signs have not been accepted by Washington State or the Federal Highway Administration as official traffic control devices. Therefore, Skagit County does not install this type of signs on its roadways.

## Would Skagit County install a Marked Crosswalk in my neighborhood?



### Chapter 3 of the WSDOT Traffic Manual states the following:

Marked crosswalks serve to guide pedestrians in the proper paths. Crosswalks should only be marked at locations that are signalized (*and have significant pedestrian volumes*), where crossing guards are provided, or where pedestrian volumes meet the criteria for signal Warrant 3 in Section 4C-5 of the MUTCD.

Crosswalk markings should not be used at remote locations or where the speed limit exceeds 35 miles per hour unless protection is provided by a traffic signal or stop sign. Studies show that marked crosswalks have higher collision rates than unmarked crossings, thus crosswalks should not be considered safety devices.

Illumination of marked crosswalks is normally provided when pedestrian volumes meet the criteria in MUTCD Section 4C-5. When markings are requested by others and volumes do not meet those requirements, funding and power for crosswalk lighting is normally provided by the requestor.