



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 6, 2016

Agenda Item #: 8b

TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Joe Smith, Assistant Chief of Police
THRU: Susan Parker, Town Administrator
TITLE: Island Speed Limit

When raising or lowering speed limits upon streets which are part of the State highway system, the NCDOT is required by statute to perform an engineering and traffic investigation. Although there are no statutory requirements that I could find that would hold a municipality to the same requirements for streets which are not part of the State highway system, I feel as though great thought should be placed on such a decision. Utilizing some of the elements that would be used in a state investigation, I have looked thoroughly at the percentage, type and proximity of roadside development, the width of the roads, number of driveways, lack of sidewalks and road surfaces. Having considered all of this information, I do not feel comfortable recommending an increase of the speed limit on the streets that currently have a 20 mph speed limit.

Sunset Boulevard and Main Street are streets that are suitable for a 25mph speed limit. They both have 60 foot right of ways which include a much wider street, bike paths and sidewalks. Nearly all of the other streets have a 30 foot right of way at best. This creates streets that are much narrower with no bike paths or sidewalks. When walking, jogging, biking and such, our residents and visitors are forced to share the vehicular travel lanes on these streets. Increasing the speed limit from 20mph to 25mph is a 25% increase, which creates a 34% increase in stopping distance from 64 feet to 86 feet when calculated, based on a 1.5 second reaction time. This increase will also create an adverse effect on the unpaved streets on the island as well. An extra 5mph will create more dust and debris in the air and will speed up the formation of holes and ruts that commonly form on unpaved streets.

NCGS 20-141 (e) does however state, "Local authorities, in their respective jurisdictions, may authorize by ordinance higher speeds or lower speeds than those set out in subsection (b) upon all streets which are not part of the State highway system; but no speed so fixed shall authorize a speed in excess of 55 miles per hour. Speed limits set pursuant to this subsection shall be effective when appropriate signs giving notice thereof are erected upon the part of the streets affected."

If reducing the number of speed limit signs is the ultimate goal, and the decision is made to increase the speed limits that are currently 20mph, the last sentence of section (e) as quoted above, would be the governing language for signs. My interpretation is that a single sign on Sunset Boulevard making notification of an island wide 25mph speed limit would suffice. This sign could be placed near the current 25mph speed limit sign, or if allowed, on the same pole. I would recommend further interpretation and advice from another source before doing so though.