

SAFER STREETS AND ROADS THROUGH LOCAL CONTROL OF SPEED LIMITS



BIKE-WALK ALLIANCE
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

A call for legislation to allow municipalities to control speeds



Deaths and injuries to people on foot and on bikes are at epidemic levels, increasing at rates far faster than overall traffic fatalities. Pedestrian deaths rose a staggering 80% nationwide 2009-2023.

Lower speeds save lives

- Lower speeds = fewer crashes
- Lower speeds = increased chance of surviving a crash. The average risk of death for a pedestrian reaches 10% at an impact speed of 23 mph, 25% at 32 mph, 50% at 42 mph.

How to reduce speed of traffic

– all three together are most effective

- Road design: number and width of lanes, parking, curves, roundabouts, raised crosswalks, speed humps
- Context: weather, congestion, roadside features such as trees, open space
- Speed limit

Lower speed limits alone reduce speeds, crashes, injuries

40 European cities with city-wide 19 mph limits studied in 2024	average reductions of 23% in crashes, 37% in fatalities, and 38% in injuries.
Boston - 2017 Default limit lowered from 30 to 25 mph	2.9%, 8.5 % and 29.3% reductions in the odds of vehicles exceeding 25 mph, 30 mph and 35 mph.
Seattle - 2016 Default limit lowered from 25 to 20 mph on non arterial streets and from 30 to 25 mph on arterial streets	17.2% reduction in odds of a crash involving fatal, disabling, or evident injury among all crashes and a 19.9% reduction for crashes on arterials.
Toronto - 2015–2016 Default limit lowered from 25 to 19 mph	Declines in the rate of [pedestrian motor vehicles collisions] on roads with posted speed limit reductions, but not statistically different than reductions on comparator streets.
Edmonton, Alberta - 2010 Lowered posted limit from 31 to 25 mph	Though absolute compliance of the reduced PSL was low, compliance to a [9.3 mph] threshold above the PSL was significantly high. Moreover, the analysis showed that effectiveness of the reduced PSL improved with time.
Montreal - 2009 Lowered limit from 31 to 25 mph	Effective with respect to speeds of 25 mph and 31 mph, its effectiveness was not significant with respect to excessive speeding (over 31 mph).

BWANH'S GOAL:
Safer roads for all

SAFER STREETS AND ROADS THROUGH LOCAL CONTROL OF SPEED LIMITS

States removing statutory limitations on local control of speed limits

- **Maryland:** HB 0193 authorizes Anne Arundel County and municipalities to decrease the speed limit to **15 miles per hour** on highways after performing an engineering and traffic investigation.
- **Virginia:** HB 1071 allows the governing body of any county, city, or town to reduce speed limits to less than 25 mph but not less than **15 mph**, including state highways for which the existing posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour.
- **New York:** Passed in 2024, "Sammy's Law" gives the City of New York the authority to reduce speed limits to **20 mph on individual streets, and to 10 mph on select streets** undergoing safety-related redesigns.
- **California:** AB43, enacted in 2023 allows cities to reduce speed limits on multiple streets by ordinance. **On state highways**, local agencies can reduce speed limits to as low as **15 mph**, after establishing the 85th percentile of driver speed through an Engineering and Traffic Survey, but must round down rather than up, and may reduce by another 5 mph.

State law should not be an obstacle to safety

Current statutory limits to municipal authority in NH

- **RSA 265:60** sets default speed limit to 30 mph in a business or urban residence district.
- **RSA 265:63**
 - lets towns alter that speed limit, but no lower than 25 mph.
 - requires the town to do an engineering or traffic study first, typically costing \$3,500 per intersection involved.
- **RSA 265:62** (since 2024) allows one annual seasonal reduction of a speed limit to no less than 20 mph in areas seasonally congested, for up to 4 months.



BWANH Proposal: "Safer Streets" legislation allowing municipalities to control speed limits

- In NH **RSA 265:63**
 1. Lower the minimum speed limit for a business or urban residence district from 25 mph to 20 mph.
 2. Remove the logistical and financial burden on towns to schedule, perform, and pay for an engineering or traffic study before lowering a speed limit.
- These steps have ZERO cost to drivers. The impact on trip time is negligible.
- They merely ALLOW localities, IF THEY CHOOSE, to lower their speed limits on specific streets & roads to as low as 20 mph.

Next steps toward NH's Safer Streets Law

- Let BWANH know if you're interested in joining a working group to shape a "Safer Streets" bill, or if you just want to support such legislation.
- Spread the word to other municipal officials.
- BWANH will identify potential sponsors of legislation.
- BWANH working group will work with sponsors to craft legislation in the fall of 2025.
- Together, let's enable municipalities to make streets and roads safer NOW.