

City Council Ordinance No. 2016-280

To reduce the speed limit on Virginia State Route 161, also known as Park Drive, between its intersection with Blanton Avenue and its intersection with Pump House Drive from 35 miles per hour to 25 miles per hour.

Applicable Laws

- **Federal** - Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations 655.603 assigns FHWA as agency to establish Uniform National Standards. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control (MUTCD) is incorporated by reference.
- **Virginia** - Virginia Code Section 46.2-830 directs commissioner of Highways to “provide a uniform system of traffic control devices (MUTCD).... and, as far as possible, conform to the system adopted in other states.”
- **City** - Virginia Code Section 46.2-1300 allows City to change speed after a traffic engineering study is conducted.

85th Percentile Speed

- The speed at or below which 85 percent of a sample of free flowing vehicles is traveling.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control (MUTCD)

- Section 2B.13-01 speed zones (other than statutory speed limits) shall only be established on the basis of an engineering study that has been performed in accordance with traffic engineering practices. The engineering study shall include an analysis of the current speed distribution of free-flowing vehicles.
- Section 2B.13-12 when a speed limit within a speed zone is posted, it should be within 5mph of the 85th percentile speed of free flowing traffic.

Other Considerations

- **Institute of Transportation Engineers ITE Committee 4M-25 Speed Zone Guidelines Recommended Practice**
 - “Where speed limits are artificially low, the enforcement tolerance must be high. Since enforcement action against a large proportion of a traffic stream is not possible, the enforcement tolerance must be increased when the speed limit is set below the 85th percentile speed.”
- **National Motorists Association - Don't higher speed limits cause more accidents and traffic fatalities?**
 - “No, if a speed limit is raised to actually reflect real travel speeds, the new higher limit will make the roads safer. When the majority of traffic is traveling at the same speed, traffic flow improves, and there are fewer accidents. Speed alone is rarely the cause of accidents. Differences in speed are the main problem. Reasonable speed limits help traffic to flow at a safer, more uniform pace.”

Findings of the Traffic Engineering study to establish the speed limit for Park Drive

- 85th percentile speed between Blanton Ave and Shirley Lane
 - Northbound = 43mph
 - Southbound = 42mph
- Cash rate
 - 1.8 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled
 - (Semmes Ave between 22nd and 34th St has a rate of 3.9 and is posted at 30mph via City Council Ordinance No. 2016-097)
 - (River Rd between Huguenot Rd and Three Chopt Rd has a rate of 2.4 and is posted at 35mph)
- Average daily traffic for 2015
 - 10,500 vehicles a day
- Functionally classified as a Principal Arterial
- **DPW recommends retaining the existing 35mph speed limit**