

Fact Sheet

Speed Limits On Local Roads In Urban Districts and in School Zones H.3604 An Act Relative to Speed Limits

The problem: Pedestrian safety requires lower speed limits

- Fatalities from pedestrian-automobile crashes are directly related to speed: 90% of pedestrians hit by cars die when struck at 40 mph compared to 5% at 20 mph.
- Drivers drive faster than posted limits, even in densely populated areas.
- More people walk in densely populated areas than in more rural areas.
- School children and elderly people are among those who walk more.

Need for legislation in Massachusetts

- Speed limits on local roads are too high for densely populated areas.
- Speed limits on local roads are too high for school zones.
- Reducing prevailing speeds on local roads to 25 mph in urban districts, and to 15 mph in school zones, in all Massachusetts communities is important for education and enforcement.

Bill summary

- Establishes speed limit of 25 mph in urban districts on local roads and 15 mph in school zones.
- Defines “urban district” as “the territory contiguous to local roads built up with structures devoted to business or where the dwelling houses average less than 100 feet between them for a distance of 1/8 mile or over.”
- Retains methods by which speed limits are set in collaboration with the Massachusetts Highway Department.

Other States' Speed Limits

- Maximum of 25 mph in business or residential districts: Arizona, California, Delaware, Georgia, Maine, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Virginia.
- Maximum of 25 mph on city or town streets – Wisconsin, Washington.
- Maximum of 20 mph in business district, 25 mph in residential district – Oregon.
- Maximum of 25 mph in urban districts: Montana, Utah.
- Maximum of 15 mph at school crossing and/or school zones – Arizona, Tennessee, Delaware, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah.
- Maximum of 15 mph for vehicles passing school during recess or when students are going to or leaving school – Maine, Wisconsin.

H.3604: Bill as currently filed:

AN ACT RELATIVE TO SPEED LIMITS.

In Chapter 90 Section 17, amend the second sentence, in part (3), by striking the word “thirty” and inserting in place thereof the figure 25.

And amend said section in the second sentence, in part (4), by striking the word “twenty” and inserting in place thereof the figure 15.

H.3604: Proposed revised language:

Section 1. Section 1 of chapter 90 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the definition of “transporter” the following definition:-

“Urban district”, the territory contiguous to any functionally classified local road which is built up with structures devoted to business, or the territory contiguous to any functionally classified local road where the dwelling houses are situated at such distances as will average less than one hundred feet between them for a distance of an eighth of a mile or over.

Section 2. Section 17 of chapter 90 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the word “(4)” in line 13, and inserting in place thereof the following:-

(4) inside an urban district at a rate of speed exceeding 25 miles per hour for a distance of one-eighth of a mile, or (5)

Section 3. Section 17 of chapter 90 the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the word “twenty” in line 15, and inserting in place thereof the figure 15.