



Office of the Town Manager

Tommy Cureton

# STAFF REPORT

## Warrenton Town Council

Carter Nevill, Mayor

Heather Sutphin, Ward 1

William Semple, Ward 2

Brett Hamby, Ward 3

James Hartman, Ward 4 Vice Mayor

Jay Heroux, Ward 5

Paul Mooney, At Large

David McGuire, At Large

<b>Council Meeting Date:</b>	April 11, 2023
<b>Agenda Title:</b>	Speed limits of 15 mph streets within the town limits study review
<b>Requested Action:</b>	Council direction moving forward
<b>Department / Agency Lead:</b>	Timothy M. Carter, Chief of Police
<b>Staff Lead:</b>	Timothy M. Carter, Chief of Police

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2040 Warrenton Comprehensive Plan identified the need to Improve multi-modal capacity and safety that encourages trips by walking, bicycling, and transit. Furthermore, the plan encourages the enhancement of traveling experiences by creating great streets.

Currently there are 15 streets within the Town of Warrenton where the maximum speed limit is posted as 15 mph. Virginia State Code 46.2-874 states "*The maximum speed limit shall be 35 miles per hour on highways in any city or town, except on interstate or other limited access highways with divided roadways and in business or residence districts. However, municipalities that maintain their own roads may increase or decrease speed limits on highways over which they have jurisdiction following appropriate traffic engineering investigation.*"

Up until recently, 14 of the 15 streets within the town of Warrenton with a posted speed limit of 15 mph had not had an appropriate traffic engineering study completed prior to the speed limit being changed to 15 mph.

## BACKGROUND

12 streets within the Town of Warrenton are currently posted as 15 Mph. Most of these were changed from 25 Mph prior to 2019. Two streets are adjacent to a 15-mph street or residents have inquired about changing the speed limit to 15 mph on that street. A prior search of traffic engineering investigations produced one result for Main St. An appropriate engineering investigation was never conducted on the remaining 14 streets.

According to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), a traffic engineering investigation includes the following:

1. Functional class (type of road)
2. Existing speed
3. Origin and nature of the request

4. Speed data collection and analysis by a traffic engineer
5. Road characteristics
6. Crash data analysis by a traffic engineer

The following streets are currently posted 15 mph:

1. Foxcroft Rd.
2. Piedmont St.
3. Sycamore St.
4. Blue Ridge St.
5. Rappahannock St.
6. Norfolk Dr.
7. Dover Rd.
8. Gay Rd.
9. Fauquier Road
10. Main St. (Appropriate Engineering investigation on file)
11. Gold Cup Drive
12. Meadowview Lane

The following streets are currently not posted and by VA Code are 25 mph:

1. Plain Rd.
2. Beacon Rd.
3. Short St.

While attending community meetings throughout the Town of Warrenton, requests are often made to reduce the speed limits on side streets. Many of these streets do not have sidewalks and were designed many years ago with the intent of being residential streets as opposed to cut-through streets. While enforcement on these roads have been robust, the volume of cut-through traffic continues to increase.

The Walkability Audit Report conducted in 2017 made many recommendations but did not address what is defined as “neighborhood streets.” The Complete Streets Recommendations report, which was also completed in 2017 examined neighborhood streets. The report states *“Neighborhood Streets are typically narrow residential streets carrying local traffic on two-way, unmarked roadways (i.e. there is no striped centerline). Traversing residential neighborhoods, these streets shall have well connected sidewalks to encourage more walking trip origins from residences. Neighborhood Streets that currently lack sidewalk access may be considered walkable due to low motor vehicle speeds and volumes, as well as a design that incorporates” green”, no curb and gutter, stormwater management techniques. Where sidewalk installation is not feasible, traffic calming applications help create a more inviting pedestrian experience as a shared street condition. Bike lanes may not be necessary as general traffic calming applications equalize speed between motor vehicles and bicycles creating low-stress conditions. Narrow public right-of-way limit landscaping opportunities, but can be applied at intersections or neighborhood gateways. Design speeds for Neighborhood streets shall not exceed 20 mph.”*

On page 25 of the complete streets report samples of traffic calming measures are illustrated, which include bicycle lanes and the narrowing of the street by utilizing flower beds and other designs.

In the months of January and February 2023, Kittelson and Associates conducted a traffic engineering study on the aforementioned 15 mph streets that had not previously had one done. Of those 14 streets, 10 of them had 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds greater than the posted speed limit. Nine of those 10 streets do not have sidewalks. Five of the nine streets have average daily traffic counts of more than 300 vehicles, in both the northbound and southbound directions. The frequency and severity of traffic crashes on the 14 streets was of minimal impact.

The study concluded that the existing speed limits on the 10 streets that experienced 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds greater than the posted speed may be appropriate when taken in context with other factors related specifically to those streets (see study for details).

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Staff seeks direction on the will of the Council regarding the current posted speed limits on each of the 14 streets evaluated in Kittelson's study.

### **Service Level/Policy Impact**

Any requested changes by Council will require staff to determine what policy, procedural, and/or physical changes will need to be made for future speed enforcement to occur on the 14 streets affected.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Speed limit signs cost \$75 each including supplies. Labor to erect is \$32 per sign.

### **Legal Impact**

Any requested changes by Council will require staff to determine what policy, procedural, and/or physical changes will need to be made for future speed enforcement to occur on the 14 streets affected.

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

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1. Complete Streets Recommendations report, September 2017
2. Kittelson & Associates Technical Memorandum: Speed Study-Warrenton, Virginia (Task Order #23)
3. Speed Limit Presentation Post-Study