

Commonly Asked Questions

Q. There seems to be a speeding problem in my neighborhood. What can I do?

A. Call the Public Works Department and report your concern. With cooperation from the Sheriff's department, we can use speed-reading equipment to study the area and make an assessment.

Q. I have some questions about bike lanes; where can I go for answers?

A. There are many designated bike paths and bike lanes along Benton County roads. No parking or driving is allowed in these bike lanes. The City of Corvallis Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board and the Benton County Bicycle Advisory Committee have assembled a complete map of current and proposed bikeways in this area. To get a copy of this map, call either Benton County or City of Corvallis Public Works Department.

Q. If there is no speed limit posted on a road, does that mean everyone can travel at 55 MPH?

A. Unless otherwise posted, the Basic Rule applies, except in an alley, business district, school area, park,

or residential district. The Basic Rule means that you can drive a reasonable and prudent speed, taking into consideration the current weather, road, and visibility conditions.



Q. Why does it take so long to get regulatory and speed signs approved?

A. These types of signs must be placed after carefully considering the degree of the problem and every other possible solution. This takes time, both from our department and sometimes from other agencies, like the Oregon Department of Transportation. The County Board of Commissioners must also formally approve all regulatory traffic control decisions, based on a detailed analysis of each situation.

Q. Are signs the only solution to reducing speeds?

A. No. Many methods exist such as rumble strips, electronic signs, increased vegetation and various types of striping patterns. Each area needs to be analyzed to determine the most effective solution.

At your service, every day.

BENTON COUNTY
PUBLIC WORKS

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If you have any other questions or concerns, please call,
write to us, or visit our web site at:

www.co.benton.or.us/publicworks

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Traffic Control



Traffic Control Philosophy

Each year the Benton County Public Works Department receives many inquiries about traffic signs and speed zoning and the policies involved in posting them. We hope the following information will explain our policies and give you a better insight into traffic control.

Basic Traffic Control Philosophy

The Benton County Public Works Department is required to follow the policies and regulations contained in the



Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). This manual is used by every state.

There are two main goals of traffic control. The first is to keep traffic controls **uniform** throughout cities, counties, and states. For this reason, the MUTCD regulates all traffic signs, signals, and pavement markings.

(Imagine the confusion during a long trip if each area you drove through had its own version of traffic control devices and rules.)

The second goal is to keep the driving conditions **predictable**. Traffic signs need to show a large or unusual difference in the driving conditions. If they are overused, they become less effective. For example, the old “Not a Through Street” sign and the “Children Playing” sign are no longer being used. Studies have shown putting up “Children Playing” signs is sometimes more dangerous than using no sign at all. Parents place too much reliance on the signs, and drivers pay little attention to them.

Speed Zoning

All speed zones are set by the State Speed Control Board in Salem. Before a speed zone can be established, the area must be investigated by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). (This ensures uniform speed zoning across the state.)

If you are interested in establishing a speed zone on a section of county road, you should submit a letter of petition to the County Engineer. The County Engineer will then submit this and other data to ODOT for investigation. After the investigation, the State Speed Control Board will make a decision. (This process can take several months.)

There are some restrictions on setting speed zones. For example, permanent speed zones on gravel roads are not

permitted. The State Speed Control Board feels that conditions on gravel roads vary too much for a specific speed limit to be set.

Speed bumps along county roads are also not permitted. Again, the MUTCD has not authorized speed bumps as an official traffic control device. They are dangerous to emergency vehicles, bicycles, and motorcycles.

Other Traffic Signs

Many people request regulatory and warning signs. At first, this may seem like the easiest answer to neighborhood speeding or other problems. However, studies have shown that posting signs is often the **least** effective method to handle traffic problems. As mentioned above, the overuse of traffic signs will reduce their effectiveness. Too often, people get frustrated by one inappropriately-placed sign and then disregard other signs. Other solutions are sometimes more effective, like improving visibility near an intersection instead of installing a stop or yield sign.

If you would like to have a sign installed on a county road, call or write the Benton County Public Works Department. The County Engineer will review your request and outline the possible solutions. (Again, this may take several weeks, because of the lengthy approval process.)
