




Christine McCall
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Yovani Baez-Rose
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

FROM: Christine McCall, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

CC: Barry Golner, Superintendent, Lowell Police Department

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: June 14, 2022 – C. Rourke – Req. City Manager Have the
DPD and the LPD Look Into Feasibility of a Citywide 25 MPH Speed Limit

The Massachusetts state legislature created an ordinance that can be adopted by a municipality to create a town-wide or business-district 25 mph speed limit. Cities and towns have the option to opt-in to MGL c. 90 § 17C, reducing the statutory speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph in thickly settled or business districts. Statutory speed limits exist in the absence of special speed regulations. MGL c. 90 § 17 dictates that if no official speed postings have been made per MGL c. 90 § 18, then drivers are expected to travel at speeds that are reasonable and proper. In the City of Lowell (roads within thickly settled or business districts), the reasonable and proper rate of speed is 30 mph. This may apply to any or all city or town ways that do not have existing special speed regulations. Notification to MassDOT is required if and when these speed limits are established.

MGL c. 90 § 17C defines a thickly settled or business district as "the territory contiguous to any way which is built up with structures devoted to business, or the territory contiguous to any way where dwelling houses are situated at such distances as will average less than two hundred feet between them for a distance of a quarter of a mile or over." Note that statutory speed limits only exist in the absence of special speed regulations. Where special speed regulations exist in the City of Lowell that posted speed limit will always supersede a statutory speed limit within a thickly settled or business district.

MassDOT recommends that if a municipality opts-in to MGL c. 90 § 17C, that it does so on a city- or town-wide basis to avoid potential confusion for drivers. However, cities and towns do have the option to opt-in on a street-by-street basis. Once a municipality has opted-in to MGL c. 90 § 17C, it is required to notify MassDOT. To notify MassDOT, the City would send a copy of the approved change to the municipal traffic code to the Regulations Engineer at MassDOT Highway Division Traffic and Safety Engineering.

The DPD recommends an adoption of 25mph speed limit, at a minimum, in our downtown business district. The DPD will coordinate with Law to prepare an appropriate vote, depending on what the City Council decides. If adopted, the DPD will coordinate with LPD to remove outdated signage and install new signage, where appropriate.

CMM