



Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Craig Thomas
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

DATE: December 13, 2018

SUBJECT: MOTION OF 12/11/18 BY COUNCILOR CIRILLO
REQUEST CITY MANAGER HAVE PROPER DEPARTMENT REVIEW ROADWAYS IN THE
CITY IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE NEW STATE LAW, CHAPTER 90,
SECTION 17C, ALLOWING COMMUNITIES TO LOWER SPEED LIMITS ON BUSIER ROADS

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 Transportation Engineer will review where in the City it would be appropriate to adopt the 25mph speed limit. It may be appropriate City-wide, but is definitely appropriate in the downtown business district and other locations in the City where pedestrian traffic is substantial.

NV/ns

cc: Natasha Vance, Transportation Engineer
John Cooper, Sign Department