

TRB Speed Management Workshop

Restoring Credibility to Speed Setting: Engineering, Enforcement, and Educational Issues

Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Cotillion North, Washington, DC, January 9, 2000

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Welcome & Opening Remarks

*Dwight Horne, Director,
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA),
Office of Highway Safety Infrastructure*

On behalf of the Federal Highway Administration, I would like to add my welcome to that of Rose McMurray's.

I understand we have good geographic representation at this workshop—

participants represent State DOT and local governments from more than 30 states in the US plus Canada and six other countries.

I want to extend a special welcome to workshop participants from outside the United States.

Your countries often are more advanced than the United States when it comes to applying advanced technologies to solve the thorny problem of speed management.

We want to hear about your experiences and how you addressed speed limit credibility problems in your country.

Today, we will hear an account of the United Kingdom's experience from John Poynton who works for the UK's Highways Agency. He has joined us today Washington, despite a recent bout with the flu.

—I hope it's not a new strain ,John! Flu season is just starting in this country!

He will describe the UK's most recent experience with Variable Speed Limits and automated enforcement—on their M-25 Motorway. Our other foreign visitors will have an opportunity to share their experiences later in the day in the working groups.

A **future** possibility for speed management in the UK was in the news recently, and I think the newspaper article illustrates the complexity of the speed issue facing us in the New Millennium and the need for all in this room to work together.

According to a newspaper account carried by a London newspaper, next month , UK's Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott will receive a final report on a electronic device, that if approved, could automatically stop drivers from speeding and be on all cars in the UK within 10 years.

British researchers are about to submit results from trials sponsored by their Government, carried out by a team at Leeds University, with help from the UK Motor Industry Research Association.

If the sketchy news article (by Patrick Sawyer in a London newspaper) is to be believed:

British researchers have been testing a system that uses:

- * * **satellite navigation** to pinpoint the location of each vehicle,
- ** **an in-car computer loaded with road map and speed limits for each street** in the country,
- * * **and a device to cut off the fuel supply** if the speed limits are exceeded.

Researchers are going to recommend 10-year phase in use of these "*speed restrictors* !" according to the article, the system offers the possibility of slowing down traffic, not just to observe speed limits, but to cope with circumstances such school or work zones, traffic congestion, crashes, or bad weather.

The equipment costs only a few hundred British pounds per car, and many feel it will be accepted, just as seatbelts were, despite 'fierce resistance.'

I'd say the word "fierce" might be an understatement.

Public outcry over interference in "road freedom" and resistance by motor vehicle manufacturers is expected. Article did not mention law enforcement reaction, nor the tolerance level, or margin of error.

I wonder....

Do you have to go 5 mph or 10 mph over the speed limit —or more---before the vehicle's fuel is cut off??

What about outdated street maps and old speed limit information?

And what about crashes caused when the speeding vehicle loses power—and other cars collide with it ? Especially if during a court case, experts can show the posted speed limit which triggered the fuel cutoff was improperly set.....

I see lots of credibility issues.

But it does illustrate the complexity of the speed issue— and how emerging technology only increases the need for researchers, politicians, law enforcement, engineers and the courts --- and members of the motoring public--- to understand and discuss the issues.

That's why I'm pleased that we have been able to attract people to our workshop who normally do not attend the TRB annual meeting —especially members of the law enforcement and legal communities.

The diversity in this room is good because the topic of how best to set speed limits, and how best to restore their credibility in the United States, requires the efforts of all represented here today.

It is a complex task.

And too often, the topic of speed limits has been obscured in rhetoric and over-generalization.

My personal belief is that we need to recast speed setting discussions into the following question:

What is a safe--- and reasonable speed--- for this particular roadway ??---

taking into account the road's design, traffic flow speeds, use, and other factors including crash record.

That's the approach that TRB's Special Study 254- "Managing Speed" took. The TRB report tailored their broad recommendations on speed setting based on the type of roadway.

It's now our charge to take their work once step further.