

Summit planned on speed management guidelines

THE WISCONSIN Department of Transportation will introduce speed management guidelines in 2009 that promote a uniform approach to setting and changing speed limits on local and state roads. The guideline authors plan a statewide Speed Management Summit in mid-April to gather feedback on the proposed guidelines from local officials and others responsible for managing speed limit issues in Wisconsin.

WisDOT State Traffic Safety Engineer and Guidelines Project Manager Rebecca Yao says the initiative responds in part to provisions in Wisconsin's 2006-2008 *Strategic Highway Safety Plan* addressing road safety issues throughout the state.

"We looked for efforts at safety-improvement that would have a real impact in Wisconsin," Yao explains. "Exploring and imple-

menting effective strategies to **reduce** speed-related crashes meets the criteria."

The fact Wisconsin does not have a single document outlining an orderly process for managing speed limits persuaded Yao, working with Derek Hungness, Project Manager and Transportation Planner with SRF Consulting Group, to launch the speed management guidelines project.

Yao says the department frequently fields calls from local agencies asking how to conduct a speed study and what factors to measure when considering a change. "It was time to create something consistent and complete to offer as a resource."

Setting rational speed zones

Researching the guidelines, Yao and Hungness surveyed a group of local officials last year to learn how counties, cities and towns in Wisconsin handle speed management. Some officials collect speed data; some do not. And constituent complaints often overrule clear evidence for setting rational roadway speeds, like how officials expect a section of road to function in the road system, crash record, road geometry or traffic volume.

Hungness says they recognize that local officials look to WisDOT for guidance on policies to sell back home. "On the topic of

speed limits, the conversation goes quickly from engineering to a range of local issues that end up influencing the decision—for better or worse," he notes. "Our goal with these guidelines was to offer a step-by-step process for establishing rational speed zones."

The group also studied efforts in other states for ideas that applied in Wisconsin. Based on their findings, Yao says WisDOT agreed it made sense to develop a comprehensive overview of speed management that captures all useful information in one place.

The preliminary guidelines define the value of a speed study and describe various methods for conducting a study. They cover how to analyze study data and other factors that affect speed, including access points, crash statistics, land use and enforcement resources.

WisDOT plans to finalize the guidelines after getting input from the April 16 Summit, a forum Hungness says is central to producing speed management guidelines that give decision makers a reasonable, evidence-based approach to setting and changing speed limits. Yao adds, "We want this to be a Wisconsin document, not a DOT document, a resource local officials find truly helpful."

Participants will receive a draft of the guidelines to review several weeks before the Summit, which takes place April 16 in Stevens Point.

Guidelines outreach continues later this year when WisDOT conducts training programs about the speed management guidelines in conjunction with the Transportation Information Center (TIC). See adjacent article and the *Crossroads* calendar for more information. ■



Speed Management Summit

Thursday
April 16, 2009

Holiday Inn
Stevens Point

For more information:
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Workshops planned on speed guidelines

Local governments that want to modify a statutory speed limit or change an existing speed zone must conduct an engineering and traffic study. The Wisconsin Speed Management Guidelines give local officials a handbook to follow as they prepare their proposals. TIC is conducting a May workshop series about the new guidelines and encourages all local officials involved in speed zoning—including engineers, street supervisors, law enforcement officers and elected officials—to attend one of the five sessions.

May 19 in DePere

May 20 in Waukesha

May 21 in Barneveld

May 27 in Eau Claire

May 28 in Weston



Enforcing limits is critical to speed management.

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Resource

Traffic Guidelines Manual, Chapter 13, Sec. 5, Subject 1, "Traffic Regulations, Speed Limits, Statutory Authority and the Approval Process," Wisconsin Department of Transportation, July 2008.