County Road Traffic Controls
Obligation & Authority

Michigan Public Act 300 of 1949 gives the Road Commission the oversight of the installation and maintenance of traffic control devices on all county roads.

The Road Commission adheres to the regulations and guidelines provided by the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD) with a goal of providing safe and efficient movement of vehicle and pedestrian traffic on all county roads.

Traffic control devices include signs, pavement markings and traffic signals.

County Road Traffic Control Breakdown

Guide Signs = 4,760
Regulatory Signs = 6,870
Pavement Markings = 5,000,000 ft.
School = 689
Traffic Signals = 435
Warning Signs = 4,890

Traffic Control Placement Responsibility

The Road Commission is responsible for the placement or approval of traffic control devices on county roads.

The MMUTCD specifies the size, shape and color of all signs and signals.

To be effective, traffic controls should meet five basic requirements:

1. Fulfill a need
2. Command attention
3. Convey a clear, simple meaning
4. Command the respect of road users
5. Give adequate time for proper response.

Establishing Speed Limits

Currently, regulatory speed limits are set by state statue at a maximum 55 mph on county roads or 25 mph for business and residential districts. These speed limits are generally not posted on county roads.

The primary basis for establishing a proper, realistic speed limit is the nationally recognized method of using the 85th percentile speed. This is the speed at or below which 85% of the traffic moves. Posting unrealistically low speed limits may create a false sense of security, and studies have shown that the driving environment, not the posted speed limit, is the main influence on motorists’ speeds.

Regulatory speed limits can be modified based on a unanimous recommendation from a traffic survey team consisting of representatives from the Michigan State Police, Road Commission, and local township.

The recommendation is based primarily on results of a traffic engineering study that includes the collection of speed data, review of the crash history, and roadway characteristics.

The State Police has to accept the recommendation of the survey team in order to establish a modified speed limit.
Pedestrian Safety
Township Collaboration

Pedestrian signals, crosswalks, and street lighting are safety devices for both pedestrians and motorists.

At a township’s request and expense, pedestrian signals can be installed at crosswalk locations on traffic signalized intersections.

Once installed, the Road Commission will maintain the signals.

Painted crosswalks (non-school related) are maintained at controlled intersections at the townships’ expense.

Street lighting is the system of lights used to illuminate roads. It does not include traffic signals.

The township oversees the installation and maintenance of this utility.

Traffic Signals

A traffic engineer makes a determination of whether a signal is or is not “warranted” based on standards of MMUTCD. This manual identifies 9 warrants that may be reviewed in determining whether a signal should be installed.

The warrants that receive the closest review are:

Minimum vehicular volume — The first relates to whether there is sufficient traffic coming out of the side street in question to consider stopping traffic on the main road.

Interruption of Continuous Traffic — The second relates to whether or not the traffic is too heavy on the main road for motorists from the side street to pull out.

Accident experience — The last is an indication that traffic on the side street is having difficulty getting out, causing right-angle accidents to occur.

The Road Commission continuously reviews intersections for all types of traffic control devices.

School Zones
Establishment Overview

Public Act 446 limits speed limit reductions to 20 mph below posted speed limits, and limits the times of those reductions to maximum of 30 minutes before or after the regularly scheduled school hours.

No speed limits can be reduced below 25 mph. State and local road agencies can designate a necessary school children crossing on a road with speed limit of 35 mph or more as a school zone, on the request of a school superintendent who has completed a school route plan. It also allows installation of louvered signs, digital message signs and flashing lights to supplement or replace required signs for school zones.

Stop Signs

Stop signs installed at the wrong place for the wrong purpose usually create more problems than they solve. One common misuse of stop signs is to arbitrarily interrupt traffic, either by causing it to stop or by causing such an inconvenience that motorists are forced to use other routes.

Traffic studies indicate that there is a high incidence of intentional violations where stop signs are installed as “nuisances” or “speed breakers.” The studies also show that drivers increase their speeds between unwarranted stop signs to make up for the lost time.

Based on these studies and the increased speeds of drivers on streets with unwarranted stop signs, the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD) clearly states that “Stop signs shall not be used for speed control.”

A stop sign placed at the right place and under the right conditions, tells drivers and pedestrians who has the right of way.

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