



Minnesota County Engineers Association



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AFFILIATED WITH



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Rep. Frank Hornstein, Chair

House Transportation Policy and Finance Division

Chair Hornstein and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota County Engineers Association (MCEA) has a long-standing platform position supporting the exclusive role of the Commissioner of Transportation in establishing speed zones on all roadways as provided in statute. Statute also currently authorizes local agencies to establish school zone speed limits on their respective roadways based on a similar engineering study process. The engineering study process is one that has served county and city engineers very well for many years and has ensured statewide consistency of the evaluation process.

Safety on our roadways is the number one priority for county engineers and school zone speed limits are a critically important tool when applied judiciously. School sites across Minnesota have widely varying characteristics, including many rural areas with no pedestrian activity. Currently, the process for implementing speed limits in school zones is determined through MnDOT guidance and follows a consistent, statewide collaborative approach considering the many individual conditions near a given school. There is concern that establishing arbitrary school zone speed limits at all schools will diminish driver respect for school zone speed limits at places where they are truly justified.

The safety of all roadway users, especially near schools, is central to the mission of Minnesota's county engineers. Our association strongly supports the implementation of proven effective strategies to improve the safety of students. Infrastructure programs such as Safe Routes to School allow for the construction of such strategies, including sidewalks, trails, and controlled crosswalks. However, the posting of arbitrary speed limits has never been shown to reduce driver speeds or to reduce crashes.

Last session, statutory changes were implemented that allowed for speed limits on city streets to be changed without an engineering study. During that discussion, we offered our support for a MnDOT stakeholder group to study speed limits statewide. Much has changed since the last stakeholder group of this type back in 2008, and MnDOT is currently in the process of creating a new stakeholder group made up of two advisory groups – the Transportation Users Group and the Technical Advisory Group. While the effective date for HF 3498 is not until August 1, 2021, we think it would be best to let the MnDOT stakeholder group complete its work and determine what changes might be necessary to state speed statutes and processes before making any legislative changes this session.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this legislation.

Sincerely, the MCEA Executive Committee:

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