

House Transportation and Public Safety

Wednesday 10AM Room 017

Chair: Doug Green

To Chair Green and the other members of the Transportation Public Safety Committee:

My name is Jessie. I'd like to start this testimony with a bit of history: In 1985, Columbus hosted the International Motor Sports Association event: Columbus 500. The event was a 2.3-mile auto racing event where cars reached speeds of 165 mph. The course was downtown and used the following streets: Spring St, Long St, Marconi St, Washington St, The Rich Street Bridge, Civic Center Drive, and the worst of them all, Broad St. Six of our downtown streets were designed to accommodate speeds of up to 165 mph. Let that sink in. Fast forward to today, and while safety improvements have been made to many of these streets to acknowledge people using different modes, these surface safety improvements are mere band-aids. We're still not addressing the killing issue: speed

Speed kills. Plain and simple. Since 2013, Ohio pedestrian fatalities have been rising, 2017 claimed 144 human lives on foot. These deaths are preventable, but our urban hierarchy and street design manuals have prioritized wide and fast over safety. Additionally, people don't think of speeding the way they think about other hazardous driving behaviors such as distracted driving or alcohol impairment; in fact, our driving culture pressures us to speed. Speeding has few negative social consequences associated with it, we need to change that. Deaths and serious injuries due to poor roadway safety are painful, but we have lost more to high car speeds than we realize. What about fear of children playing on sidewalks, walking to school, or learning to ride a bike? What about the elderly who need more time when crossing a street? What about those with a disability? What about those who struggle to pay higher transport costs, but don't feel safe riding a bike?

In 2016, the percentage of U.S. crash deaths related to speeding was higher on roads with 35mph or lower speed limits than on roads with higher speeds([1](#)). These are your business districts, these are your neighborhoods, these are your school zones, these are where your playgrounds are, and these are your construction zones. This bill I'm in full support of is about allowing neighborhoods to have the power to make their streets safer. Why? Because they are the ones that know their streets best. In 2017, Oregon passed legislation to allow Portland to reduce speed limits on more than 3,000 miles of residential streets ([2](#)). Boston filed a home rule petition to give the city the power to set its own speed limit, it passed. Boston now has a city-wide 20 mph speed limit. New York passed legislation that allows villages, cities, and towns greater than 50,000 to set their speed limits without first receiving DOT approval ([3](#)). Our current process of petitioning the state is arduous and unnecessarily costly. It makes sense to

provide this relief measure to cities, towns, and villages throughout Ohio to better manage traffic safety.

In 2017, the National Transportation Safety Board released a breakthrough report for the agency, reporting that speed is a deadly problem in our nation's transportation system — one that federal and state officials aren't doing enough to address. The NTSB made 19 recommendations to help prevent speed-related crashes (4). Other national organizations such as Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Governors Highway Safety Program are acknowledging and becoming more vocal about the need to accelerate to implement countermeasures that we know work, such as speed limit reduction.

Slowing speeds doesn't mean an increase in congestion or an increase in travel time. Slowing speeds can mean more uniform speeds and can reduce dangerous midblock accelerations. It may not sound like much but a reduction from 30mph to 25mph can save lives. People make mistakes; humans are fallible. There will still be traffic crashes. But if they do so at a slower speed, it's the difference between walking away with a broken ankle or an injury that is survivable is dramatically greater than not surviving at all.

1. <https://www.iihs.org/iihs/iihs-website-search?q=speeding%20report>
2. Oregon legislation: <https://gov.oregonlive.com/bill/2017/HB2682/>
3. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2017/S389>
4. <https://www.nts.gov/safety/safety-studies/Documents/SS1701.pdf>