Speed Limit and Advisory Speed Signs

There are several different types of regulatory and advisory speed signs that are posted throughout Massachusetts. The most common types are the following:

Regulatory Speed Limits



Speed limit signage that includes black legend on a white background indicates the presence of a regulatory limit. These are speed limits that have a special speed regulation and has been established in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) c. 90 § 18 and the MassDOT Procedures for Speed Zoning.

(Image source: 2009 MUTCD)

Advisory Speeds



Advisory speed signs have a black legend on a yellow background and are used to supplement other warning signs of a condition that may require a reduction in operating speed, such as an approach to a sharp curve or winding road. Advisory speeds are not enforceable since their intent is to advise motorists of an appropriate speed, not regulate it.

(Image source: 2009 MUTCD)

Reduced Speed Limit Ahead



Reduced speed limit ahead signs are used to inform road users of an impending reduced speed zone where the speed limit is typically being reduced by 10 mph or more. Drivers should take proper care and begin reducing their speeds accordingly.

(Image source: 2009 MUTCD)

Safety Zone Speed Limits



MGL c. 90 § 18B provides cities and towns the ability to establish safety zones at a speed limit of 20 mph in accordance with the MassDOT Procedures for Speed Zoning.

MA-R2-8 Sign Face Drawing

School Zone Speed Limits



School zone speeds, which have been established in accordance with the Massachusetts Amendments to the MUTCD, are set at 20 mph for school zones in Massachusetts. School zone speed limit signs should be supplemented with times of day, a message stating "When Children Are Present," or flashing yellow beacons to indicate when the speed limit is in effect.

(Image source: 2009 MUTCD)

Thickly Settled or Business District Zones



Statutory speed limits exist in the absence of special speed regulations. MGL c. 90 § 17 dictates that if no official speed postings have been made per MGL c. 90 § 18, then drivers are expected to travel at speeds that are reasonable and proper. On roads within thickly settled or business districts, the reasonable and proper rate of speed is 30 mph. In addition, cities and towns that opt-in to MGL c. 90 § 17C may further reduce the reasonable and proper speed within thickly settled or business districts to 25 mph.

MA-W13-4 Sign Face Drawing

Thickly Settled or Business Districts, City- or Town-Wide



Cities or towns that opt-in to MGL c. 90 § 17C may do so on a municipal-wide basis, thus setting the reasonable and proper speed on all city- and town-owned streets within thickly settled or business districts at 25 mph that do not have existing special speed regulations. If opting in, it is recommended that MA-R2-9A or MA-R2-9B signage be posted at all jurisdictional boundaries to make drivers aware of this statutory regulation. Please note that these signs cannot be placed on State Highway without prior approval from MassDOT.

MA-R2-9A and MA-R2-9B Sign Face Drawings

Work Zone Speed Limits



Work zone speed limits are established in accordance with MGL c. 90 § 18. Drivers should be aware that if a work zone speed limit has been established they may encounter construction activity adjacent to their travel lane, slowed or stopped traffic ahead, traffic directed by a police officer or flagger, and/or constrained areas for passing and pulling over. Safety in and around work zones is of the utmost importance in Massachusetts, so speeding fines in work zones may be doubled per MGL c. 90 § 17.

(Image source: 2009 MUTCD)