



Driving Freedoms

NMA Foundation

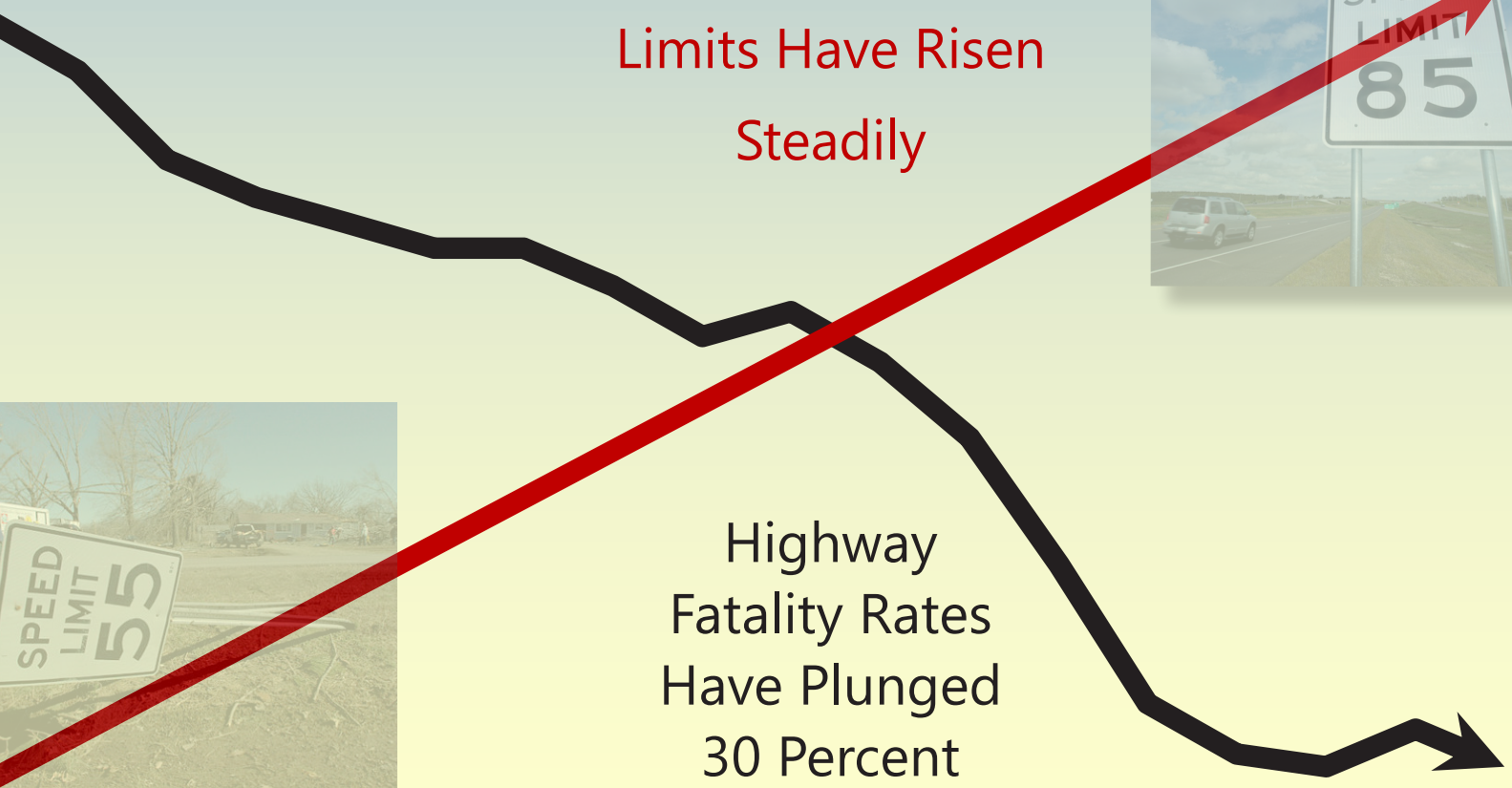
Vol. 26 • Issue 3 • Summer 2015

20 Years After the Repeal of the 55 mph National Maximum Speed Limit

Posted Speed Limits Have Risen Steadily



Highway Fatality Rates Have Plunged 30 Percent



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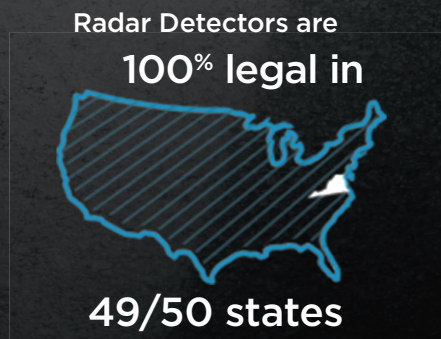
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Driving Freedoms

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The NMA Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding innovative ways to improve and protect the interests of North American motorists.

Renew your NMA membership now to avoid any lapse.

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THE BIGGEST DANGER

BY GARY BILLER, PRESIDENT, NMA

Many of you have been involved in the battle for motorists' rights far longer than I. That said, working at NMA headquarters is a daily immersion in speed limit reform, photo enforcement opposition and various other driver advocacy issues. So with the outlook of a grizzled six-year NMA veteran—the equivalent of perhaps 15 watchdog years—I offer in just one word the biggest danger we face as protectors of driving freedoms: **hives**.

Agenda 21 is a United Nations initiative that has been with us since 1992. It is a plan for sustainable development of communities throughout the world. The idea is to improve the human condition by mitigating social and economic realities, conserving natural resources, limiting human by-products such as waste and pollution, controlling the advance of biotechnology, and generally improving societal conditions.

Twenty-three years later, the efficacy of Agenda 21 still has not been proven. Yet there is a renewed effort in the United States to adopt some of the principles of sustained development, particularly by the anti-car crowd. High-profile plans such as Vision Zero in New York City and Plan Bay Area in San Francisco are examples of attempts to squeeze motorized traffic out of urban centers.

Such programs have the potential to completely restructure society beginning with personal transportation. This really hit home for me when a fellow advo-

cate from Northern California shared her experience of attending a meeting held by proponents of Agenda 21 initiatives. Her words:

"They want us out of our cars. The meeting I attended on sustainable communities laid it all out. Everyone will live in a hive-type community where their employment and shopping and all other needs are met. For travel away from the hive there will be clean public transport."

The idea of regressing to something resembling the company-town structure of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is disturbing, but even more so is the worker-bee analogy and the limits that could be imposed on personal travel options.

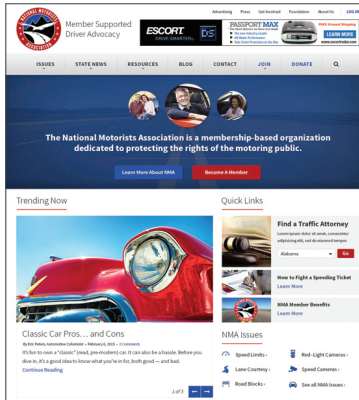
The days of jumping in the car with the family to get away for a few days, or even a few hours, may not totally disappear but would be heavily influenced by societal engineers masquerading as urban planners. The levying of congestion fees, the reduction of car lanes, and even the complete blockage of roads to motorized traffic are potential outcomes if we don't stem the tide of hive-mentality initiatives. Meanwhile our gas taxes would be further diverted from fixing/expanding our highways and bridges to subsidizing mass transit systems.

The bicyclist lobby is particularly aggressive in its effort to make drivers subservient. Pedestrian groups aren't far behind. Both employ tactics we see too often, most notably the making of broad claims that stir emotional

(Continued on Page 3)

The NMA Website Enhancement Project

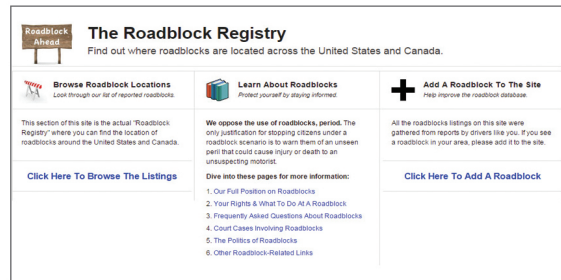
Motorists.org



Speedtrap.org



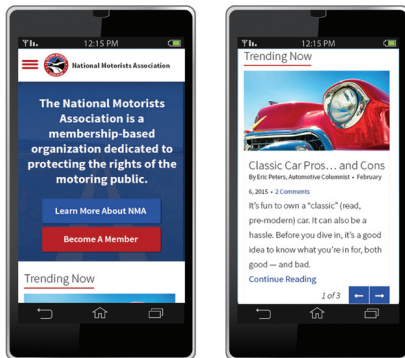
Roadblock.org



The conversion of the three NMA websites to responsive designs is proceeding on schedule. We plan to unveil a completely renovated Motorists.org site later this summer, with the Speedtrap and Roadblock sites to follow.

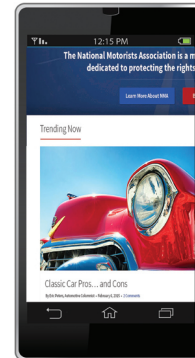
What is a responsive website design?

This and This



These two screens display a web design that automatically adjusts to the screen and the capabilities of the accessing device.

Not This



Graphics and command buttons are clipped making viewing and navigation difficult on a hand-held device.

At the time of this publication, you have helped us raise just under \$20,000. We need \$25,000 to fully finance the responsive design conversion. To each of you who have already donated to our Website Enhancement Project, thank you very much. Your gift is playing a vital role in modernizing the NMA websites.

If you haven't yet sent in a contribution to the NMA or would like to help more, please call us for more information or visit <http://www.motorists.org/other/empowering-drivers/>



NMA WASHINGTON REPORT

BY ROBERT TALLEY, NMA LOBBYIST

Spring and summer are generally busy periods for Congress, and this year is especially hectic. Since Republicans control the House and Senate, agreement on transportation policy should be easy to achieve, and the outlook for many bills passing Congress is favorable. Unfortunately, the president and Congress remain ideologically far apart, meaning that while Congress clearly has the ability to pass bills, the president will likely veto many of them.

On the policy side, transportation leaders continue to struggle with funding for long-term transportation construction authorization bills. Most recently, they agreed to a short-term authorization bill that lasts until the end of June. The problem, as we've written about before, is money. Gas taxes cover about \$35 billion of the \$50 billion in federal transportation spending, leaving Congress with an annual \$15 billion hole to fill. Given that authorization bills are generally long-term, they carry a hefty price tag. In a fiscally conservative Congress, finding that money has been difficult.

Annual spending bills continue to move through the committee process. The current transportation bill, which covers more than just roads, increases spending by \$1.5 billion over last year's level but is far short of the president's request for an additional \$9.7 billion. Areas targeted for additional funding include pipeline and transportation safety spending. However, the president has signaled he will veto the current bill for not spending enough on infrastructure. This leaves resolution of annual transportation funding in limbo until leaders can strike a deal.

Two policy issues have also recently been big topics for transportation policy leaders: the ethanol mandate and driverless cars.

The administration's decision to require nearly a 20 percent increase in consumption of ethanol and bio-based fuels has sparked a debate about whether the current renewable fuels policy still makes sense. Now that oil prices have dropped, the case can be made that ethanol, originally argued to lower the cost of fuel, may actually raise it.

There is also evidence that corn-

based ethanol may not be as environmentally friendly as once thought. Add to this the growing controversy over using corn for fuel instead of food, and the current renewable fuels standards appear out-of-step. This politically charged topic will undoubtedly play out over an extended period.

Also of interest to policymakers is what to do with the advent of self-driving cars. Advanced vehicle safety features like adaptive cruise control and auto steering capabilities are becoming more common. But what happens when we use all this technology to turn complete control of the vehicle over to a computer? Who becomes responsible in case of an accident? What are the boundaries of the car's capabilities? Can an inebriated driver/passenger legally get in the car, input a destination and be driven home? I can think of a time or two when such a technology would have been very useful!

As self-driving cars enter the marketplace, Congress will have to answer these and other questions. If lawmakers fail to do this, the courts will surely do it for them. 🚗

The Biggest Danger

(Continued from Page 1)

support but are light on actual facts.

An example comes from a recent story published by a CBS affiliate in San Francisco: "According to WalkSF, speeding drivers are the number one cause of traffic injuries in the city, and are responsible for ten times the number of pedestrian injuries than drunk drivers."

I'm surprised that WalkSF didn't provide scary numbers for children and elderly that are run down by speeders. Considering the lack of journalistic scrutiny, they would have gotten away with it.

Beware of programs like Agenda 21, Vision Zero, Plan Bay Area, or those described in terms of

"sustainable development," "eco-communities," or "livable cities." Proponents want to reshape society, regardless of the fallout to our personal freedom to travel.

We must oppose at every turn efforts to limit motorized traffic on the public thoroughfares that our taxes finance. 🚗

They Should Call it “Zero Vision”

Arizona Member Tom Beckett responds to NMA E-Newsletter #322 (reprinted on Page 5)

I’m not surprised New York is buying into Vision Zero in a big way. It gives them a way to expand their steady march to a police state that much faster. Public officials there will carry on about safety, blah, blah, blah. That means it’s really about the money. In New York it’s never not about the money. I say that having grown up in Queens, and living there until I was almost 30, and in New York State until I was in my late 40’s. Aside from paying the fine to whatever municipality issues tickets based on the camera’s observations, there is also an \$85 surcharge (as I last remember from when I left there in 2006) to the state. So everyone has a hand out.

You can also bet that the New York cops will be using any stops they make as an excuse to attempt unwarranted vehicle searches. They get really cranky when you tell them “no.”

The notion that human fallibility can be overcome with enough intervention is a fantasy. We can design marvelously safe roads, and, for the most part, we do. The interstate highway system, for all its flaws—most of which are due to lack of maintenance—is

a wonderfully designed system. The fatalities that occur are mostly the result of people not driving on them the way they were intended. The problem with making things idiot-proof is that someone comes along and invents a better idiot. Vision Zero is not going to do much to solve that problem. Traffic calming features are not going to save those who wantonly disregard conditions and physical characteristics. Here’s an example.

I’m sure you saw some of the video from the massive pileup on I-94 in Michigan this winter. One segment of that clip shows a truck running into the pileup of stopped vehicles at a fairly good rate of speed. Most over-the-road (OTR) truck drivers have had some winter driving training, and most have a CB, which can be indispensable in gaining useful information if used correctly. From my own experience driving OTR, I know that such an incident would have garnered non-stop chatter on the radio. You would have to have your radio off not to hear about it. Even if he had his radio off, why would someone with training and experience

in such conditions be going fast enough to skid and hit traffic at what had to be 35 mph? Vision Zero is not going to fix that. You can solve every design problem with engineering. You can’t prevent someone hell-bent on acting unsafely from killing himself or others.

What we really need is better driver education from the outset, although in many cases, any driver education would be progress. When my oldest was looking to take driver’s education in our upstate New York school district, I was told the school didn’t offer it, even for a charge. It makes a lot more sense to teach good driving practices at the beginning so they become good habits, rather than try to change long-term behavior later on. But we don’t do too well at prevention in this country, or, for that matter, thinking things through with an eye toward common sense.

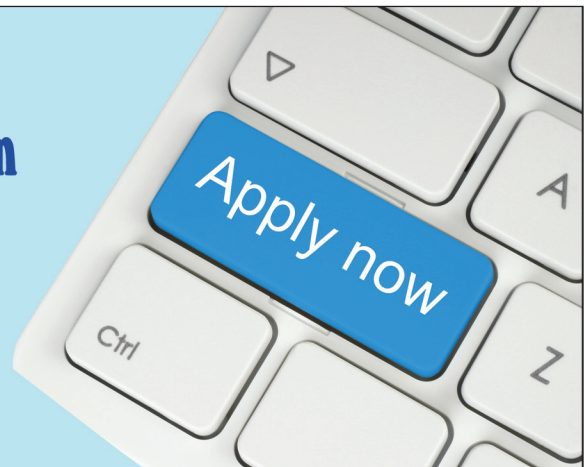
I had to laugh when I read the line about a national 5 mph speed limit. If you’re a fan of Car Talk on NPR, you are undoubtedly aware that Click and Clack have been calling for a national 35 mph speed limit for years.

Good luck in stopping this idiocy. 🙄

Grants for NMA members

Community Support Program

Financial resources available for local or regional projects that protect or enhance drivers’ rights through the reform of traffic law and public policy



To request a grant or to get more information, please go to <http://www.motorists.org/other/nma-csp-grant-application.pdf/>

NMA E-Newsletter #322: Vision Zero—An Unrealistic, Cynical Vision

Vision Zero came to America last year with the election of New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who campaigned on the promise to eliminate all traffic fatalities in the five boroughs within 10 years. His program for doing so, known as Vision Zero, relies on the usual complement of command-and-control traffic safety interventions, such as:

- ▶ Road “improvements” including narrower streets, wider sidewalks and medians, and more bicycle lanes
- ▶ Reducing the default speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph
- ▶ Quadrupling the number of 20-mph slow zones throughout the city
- ▶ Stepped-up traffic enforcement particularly for speeding and failure to yield
- ▶ Huge expansion of the city’s speed-camera program

The Vision Zero movement started in Sweden as a partnership between the Swedish government and Swedish business interests. With its motto, “In every situation a person might fail. The road system should not,” Vision Zero Swedish edition conveys the belief that human fallibility can be overcome with enough intervention. Here’s more from the website:

Transport systems are traditionally designed for maximum capacity and mobility, not safety. This means road users are held responsible for their own safety. The Vision Zero Initiative takes the opposite approach. We place the main burden for safety on system design because we recognise human weaknesses and low tolerance to mechanical force. Ultimately, no one should die or suffer serious injury in traffic.

No one should die or suffer serious injury in traffic, but this goes beyond anything today’s central planners have envisioned. Shouldn’t drivers bear some responsibility for their own safety and by extension, for their actions on the road? And aren’t the highway safety systems that Vision Zero Swedish edition puts so much faith in designed and implemented by fallible humans?

Domestic traffic “safety” advocates tout Vision Zero as the means to eliminate all traffic fatalities, and a few more cities around the country, notably San Francisco, have begun to implement Vision Zero programs.

More ominously, however, Vision Zero has caught the attention of federal lawmakers. Two leaders of the Congressional Bike Caucus (yes, that’s a real thing) have introduced legislation to speed the adoption of Vision Zero nationwide. If enacted, The Vision Zero Act to End Transportation-Related Fatalities would provide \$30 million of our taxpayer dollars annually to help cities plan and implement their Vision Zero programs. That’s a modest sum, but one can imagine such a program expanding quickly, complete with federal incentives to encourage compliance.

The goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities is of course completely unrealistic, and every stakeholder in the traffic safety community knows it. Why?



Because people are people, and people make mistakes. Safety improvements are always possible, but not through the command-and-control, vehicle-hostile tactics the plan calls for.

Vision Zero is nothing more than a tool to escalate the assault on driving and to encourage heavy-handed, revenue-based enforcement. The federal push has gained support from the likes of AAA as well as several national bicycle rights organizations. In addition, one of the co-sponsors of the bill, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), has previously proposed a national vehicle-miles-traveled tax pilot program. Need we say more?

If we’re truly serious about eliminating all traffic fatalities, we need to establish a maximum speed limit of five miles per hour on any road. Better yet, we should ban people from driving, walking, biking or taking the bus. Oh heck, let’s just keep people locked up in their homes 24/7. That would do it. 🚗

The 20th Anniversary of the Repeal of the 55 mph NMSL

A look at the impact of the NMA's defining achievement in motorists' rights

In his book, *1995: The Year the Future Began*, W. Joseph Campbell argues that seemingly overlooked or isolated events can have significant consequences. Campbell analyzes several such events from the year 1995 that have shaped our world today. For example, he discusses how the O. J. Simpson trial established the importance of DNA evidence in today's criminal justice system. He also makes the case that the Netscape Navigator public offering "brought the Web into popular consciousness" and fundamentally changed the way we live today.

For NMA members, 1995 really was the year the future began. That's the year we saw the full repeal of the odious 55 mph National Maximum Speed Limit (NMSL). To celebrate the 20th anniversary of this achievement, let's take a look at how the world of driving has changed as a result.

In November 1995, President Clinton signed the National Highway System Designation Act into law. In so doing, he ended more than 20 years of federal involvement in the setting of states' speed limits on interstate highways and other roads. Jim Baxter, in the NMA's 30th anniversary issue of *Driving Freedoms*, summed up the aftermath of the repeal this way:

After the full repeal of the NMSL, there was a huge amount of hand wringing and wailing from the bureaucratic and insurance industry-funded safety establishments. Despite the warnings of blood flowing inches deep down the interstates, the states began to raise their speed limits, the most notable being Montana which reverted to reasonable and prudent maximum speed limits. As a result, the national fatality rate went—wait for it—down.

By the end of 1996, 32 states had raised speed limits on various types of roads. By mid-August 1997, three more states had done so. Chart 1 shows the distribution of maximum speed limits at that time. Chart 2 shows the distribution as it stands today. Notice how the number of 65 mph states has dropped dramatically, along with the corresponding increase in the 70-80 mph range.

In May the NMA's home state of Wisconsin joined the 70 mph club with the passage of Assembly Bill 27. The NMA worked closely with the bill's author, Rep. Paul Tittl, for nearly two years to finally get posted interstate speed limits closer to actual travel speeds. Frankly, we'd love to see 75 mph, but it's a good start. That



Better late than never. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker enacted the 70 mph speed limit with NMA President Gary Biller (third from left) and Life Member Bruce Harrison (far right) looking on.

leaves Oregon as the only contiguous state west of New York with a maximum speed of 65 mph. All the others have gone to 70-80 mph, and in Texas, 85 mph on a stretch of toll road between Austin and San Antonio.

Of course the Speed Kills crowd has not been idle throughout this sea change. In 1997 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that states that had raised speed limits had experienced 350 more highway deaths in 1996 than would have been expected. Never mind the fact that the total means nothing without accounting for vehicle-miles-traveled.

In that same report, NHTSA warned Congress, "The estimated increase in Interstate fatalities found in this study ... does follow the historical pattern of increases in fatalities being associated with increases in posted speed limits." We're not sure what historical pattern NHTSA was referencing, but over the last 20 years the national highway fatality rate has dropped approximately 30 percent and now sits at all-time lows.

Undeterred by the facts, "safety" advocates and credulous news reporters have endlessly repeated the Speed Kills refrain for the last 20 years. In 2009 a study published in *The American Journal of Public Health* stated, "The primary finding of our study was that over the 10-year period following the repeal of the National Maximum Speed Law, there were approximately 12,500 deaths due to the increased speed limits across the U.S."

A more recent and creative approach comes courtesy of the American Trucking Association, which has been pushing for 65-mph speed limiters on all heavy trucks as well as lower speed limits for all traffic. NHTSA joined the call for speed limiters this year after a study implied a link between truck accidents and tire failure at high speeds. Yet, the actual study

results found no such linkage and attributed the accidents to either under-inflated tires or overloaded vehicles.

No matter. NHTSA is exploiting the issue to perpetuate the Speed Kills myth and has indicated it may target states with speed limits higher than truck tires are designed to handle—presumably the 14 states with truck speed limits above 70 mph. Throughout this debate, NHTSA has chosen to ignore a fact it knows full well: that lower speed limits for trucks will actually increase the potential for accidents due to the greater speed differentials they create.

The NMA has successfully countered the Speed Kills argument by showing what happens in the real world when speed limits rise to their safe and realistic levels. Other stakeholders such as the Michigan State Police (MSP) strongly advocate for speed limit reform as well. Consider Michigan's experience, summarized from testimony before the Illinois Tollway Board by the MSP officer who led the Michigan effort.

Over a 10-year period, Michigan corrected hundreds of artificially low speed limits throughout the state. Many adjustments came on urban interstates where officials increased the 55 mph speed limit to 70 mph. Over that same time, Michigan's highway fatality rate dropped by about a third. In addition to the safety improvements, follow-up analysis revealed the following:

- ▶ Prevailing travel speeds didn't increase by any significant amount, and some decreased.
- ▶ Congestion was dramatically reduced or eliminated.
- ▶ More uniform travel speeds meant fewer conflicts between vehicles and a more enjoyable drive.

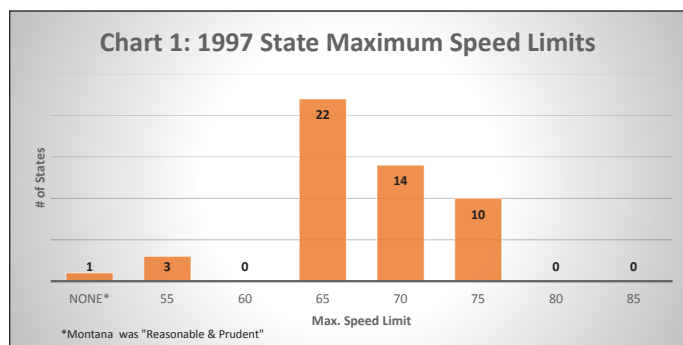
The only thing that did change was compliance with the new speed limits—it went up dramatically! The testimony sums up the results this way:

As you would expect from these results, we never had to roll back any of the speed limit changes we made. With continued after-studies now many years after the changes, the results remain the same.

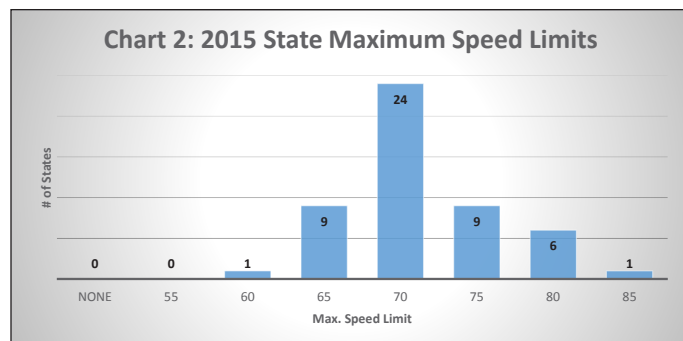
To summarize the dilemma related to speed limit changes, perceptions and expectation simply don't match with the results.

People worry that vehicles/drivers will increase travel speeds by the amount of the speed limit increase. The best research solidly refutes this assertion, and in the hundreds of the road segments where we increased the speed limit up to 15 miles per hour, traffic travel speeds never increased significantly.

Utah experienced similar benefits when it began



Source: Special Report 254-Managing Speed, Transportation Research Board, 1998.



Source: Governors Highway Safety Association.

raising interstate speeds to 80 mph on select stretches in 2008. Today, 36 percent of the state's interstate highway miles have 80 mph limits. Several Utah Department of Transportation studies have found greater compliance with the new limit as well as an 11 to 20 percent drop in speed-related crashes, depending on the road segment.


Studies aside, results like Michigan's and Utah's show that the facts are on our side. After *The American Journal of Public Health* study came out in 2009, safety advocates and the media heralded it as proof of what they had been saying for years. They're still saying it six years later, yet there is no public outcry when states raise highway speed limits. This, despite aggressive lobbying and propaganda campaigns from organizations like AAA and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

When it comes to the Speed Kills canard, people don't buy it. Drivers don't see any downside to higher speed limits, and at some level they recognize the benefits.

This may be promoting a healthy skepticism of other so-called highway safety measures. For example, the driving public is rejecting red-light cameras in a big way; their own experience is enough to tell them that cameras are about revenue, not safety. As a result, cities are shedding camera programs right and left.

Repealing the NMSL not only made driving safer and more efficient, it motivated many to critically separate highway safety fact from fiction. From the driver's perspective, that is the true legacy of 1995. 🚗

Update on Cell Phone/Texting While Driving Laws

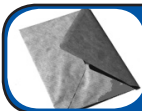
Laws governing cell-phone use and texting-while-driving are evolving rapidly. Currently, 14 states and the District of Columbia prohibit all drivers from using hand-held phones while driving, and 46 states ban texting for all drivers. Keep in mind that many communities have passed their own cell phone and texting bans. However, some states prohibit localities from enacting such laws. Information is current as of May 2015 and comes from the National Conference of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org) 

STATES	HAND-HELD BAN	ALL CELL PHONE BAN	TEXTING BAN
Alabama	No	Drivers age 16 and 17 who have held an intermediate license for less than 6 months.	All drivers
Alaska	No	No	All drivers
Arizona	No	School bus drivers	No
Arkansas	Drivers ages 18 to 20 years of age	School bus drivers, drivers younger than 18	All drivers
California	All drivers	School and transit bus drivers and drivers younger than 18	All drivers
Colorado	No	Drivers younger than 18	All drivers
Connecticut	All drivers	Learner's permit holders, drivers younger than 18, and school bus drivers	All drivers
Delaware	All drivers	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders and school bus drivers	All drivers
District of Columbia	All drivers	School bus drivers and learner's permit holders	All drivers
Florida	No	No	All drivers
Georgia	Drivers younger than 18	School bus drivers. Drivers younger than 18.	All drivers
Hawaii	All Drivers	Drivers younger than 18	All Drivers
Idaho	No	No	All Drivers
Illinois	All Drivers	Learner's permit holders younger than 19, drivers younger than 19, and school bus drivers	All drivers
Indiana	No	Drivers under the age of 18.	All drivers
Iowa	No	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders	All drivers
Kansas	No	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders	All drivers
Kentucky	No	Drivers younger than 18, School Bus Drivers.	All drivers
Louisiana	No	School bus drivers, learner's permit and intermediate license holders, drivers under age 18	All drivers
Maine**	No	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders	All drivers
Maryland	All drivers, School Bus Drivers.	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders under 18. School bus drivers.	All drivers
Massachusetts	Local option	School bus drivers, passenger bus drivers, drivers younger than 18.	All drivers
Michigan	Local option	Level 1 or 2 license holders.	All drivers
Minnesota	No	School bus drivers, learner's permit holders, and provisional license holders during the first 12 months after licensing	All drivers

STATES	HAND-HELD BAN	ALL CELL PHONE BAN	TEXTING BAN
Mississippi	No	School bus drivers.	All drivers
Missouri	No	No	Drivers 21 years or younger.
Montana	No	No	No
Nebraska	No	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders younger than 18	All drivers
Nevada	All drivers	No	All drivers
New Hampshire	No	No	All drivers
New Jersey	All drivers	School bus drivers, and learner's permit and intermediate license holders	All drivers
New Mexico	Local option	Learners permit and intermediate license holders.	All Drivers
New York	All drivers	No	All drivers
North Carolina	No	Drivers younger than 18 and school bus drivers	All drivers
North Dakota	Drivers younger than 18	Drivers younger than 18	All drivers
Ohio	Local option	Drivers younger than 18.	All drivers
Oklahoma	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders, school bus drivers and public transit drivers	School Bus Drivers and Public Transit Drivers	Learner's permit holders, intermediate license holders, school bus drivers and public transit drivers
Oregon	All drivers	Drivers younger than 18	All drivers
Pennsylvania	Local option	No	All drivers
Puerto Rico	All drivers		All drivers
Rhode Island	No	School bus drivers and drivers younger than 18	All drivers
South Carolina	No	No	All drivers
South Dakota	No	Learner's permit and intermediate license holders	All drivers
Tennessee	No	School bus drivers, and learner's permit and intermediate license holders	All drivers
Texas	Drivers in school crossing zones	Bus drivers. Drivers younger than 18	Bus drivers when a passenger 17 and younger is present; intermediate license holders for first 12 months, drivers in school crossing zones
Utah	See footnote*	Drivers younger than 18	All drivers
Vermont	All drivers	Drivers younger than 18 shall not use any portable electronic device while driving.	All drivers
Virgin Islands	Yes		
Virginia	No	Drivers younger than 18 and school bus drivers	All drivers
Washington	All drivers	Learners permit and intermediate license holders.	All drivers
West Virginia	All Drivers	Drivers younger than 18 who hold either a learner's permit or an intermediate license	All drivers
Wisconsin	No	Learner or Intermediate License holder	All drivers
Wyoming	No	No	All drivers

* Utah considers speaking on a cell phone, without a hands-free device, to be an offense only if a driver is also committing some other moving violation (other than speeding).

** Maine has a law that makes driving while distracted a traffic infraction. 29-A M.R.S.A. Sec. 2117.



MEMBERS WRITE

The views expressed below do not necessarily represent those of the NMA. Letters are welcomed and should not exceed 300 words. They may be edited for length or clarity. Full-length articles will also be considered and should not exceed 600 words. Send to nma@motorists.org or mail to NMA, 402 W 2nd St., Waunakee, WI 53597

In E-Newsletter #331, you said: “The bottom line on driverless cars comes down to control. Many people will gladly give up that control in exchange for convenience, added safety and cost savings. As we said in *Driving Freedoms*, we only hope there’s still an open lane for those of us who enjoy driving and wish to maintain some sense of freedom, privacy and personal responsibility.”

It’s not nearly enough to “only hope that there’s still an open lane.” It is inevitable that the giant car/software/insurance companies, for business reasons, and the government, for paternalistic regulatory and data-collection reasons, will combine to try to force all drivers to go passive in their cars. It is by no means too early to begin the formulation of a grand strategy to defend the right to pilot one’s own car. Probably the only group that can do that is NMA. The pushback will be hard work. It must begin now.

*Stephen Adams
Enterprise, OR*

Will there be any place for people like me on the roads of the future? The automated driving crew needs to understand that there are a large number of people who are dedicated to wrenching on, detailing and manually driving an automobile. It’s just plain fun.

Does our art disappear? And when I say on the road, I’m not talking about a track set aside for manual driving; I’m talking about the streets and highways of the good old USA. From driving to meet up with some friends, to a 1,000

mile road trip to see some cool part of the USA and everything in between.

Now before you brand me an old foggy, understand that I have a degree in computer science and have been an IT industry professional for 30 years. I love the internet and laugh out loud when I hear people talk about intentionally turning off their screen for a week. Why/how would anybody want to do that? And while I never text and drive and only very rarely talk and drive, my HTC Android is always with me, and I’m checking it almost as soon as I park the car. Also, I am in no way recommending that research into automated vehicles be stopped. That would be impossible and probably not desirable.

But I love to drive. I’m probably one of the most aware people on the road. Unless I’m checking the instrument panel, my eyes are outside the car. Driving is not a chore for me.

We make a space in our society for many non-high tech items. Will there be a space on the roads in the future for the car guys?

*Ed Swaneck
Columbus, OH*

Recently the NMA published a blog titled “Solar Roadways May Pave the Way to the Future” by guest blogger Robert Corbray.

This gee-whiz, pie-in-the-sky article was a huge disappointment to me. It seemed as though the NMA’s usual fact-based analysis and scrutiny had somehow been suspended and

that members were being misled.

Aside from real-world technical problems inherent in the concept of solar roadways, these two sentences alone are classic hype, which should have set off alarms at the NMA: “Needless to say, a project like this would create a massive employment boom.” Right, so would digging holes and filling them up again. Rule of thumb: Beware of anything/ anyone that promises to “create jobs.”

Here’s another: “For now it’s undeniable that the notion of solar roads is becoming more and more popular, and this is certain to change the future in several ways.” What? Of course the “notion” is deniable. As for “changing the future,” it would seem that the solar roadways promoters’ futures have definitely changed. They have managed to raise over \$2 million from the gullible via crowdfunding site Indiegogo.

One insurmountable technical problem is the fact that glass is totally unsuited for roadway material. Another insurmountable problem is that solar energy production is meaningless if there is no way to store it, especially when all lane and parking lot markings use solar-powered LED lighting shining up through the glass. What happens at night?

Solar powered LED illumination does not stand up to scrutiny. Aside from not being very visible in full sunlight, a YouTube channel devoted to debunking the solar roadway scam has calculated that it will take more power to run the LEDs than will be generated by the road. And that’s not including the cost of building the infrastructure, or the fact that the LEDs probably will need to be replaced about every five years.

Readers interested in more information should visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=H901KdXgHs4. In no uncertain terms, the videos there dissect every aspect of the solar roadway scam.

*Warren Woodward
Sedona, AZ*





DRIVING NEWS

This information is current at time of printing. Get daily driving news updates from across the country through the “NMA Driving News” area of our website. For even more in-depth coverage of motorists’ issues from some of the country’s leading commentators, visit the NMA Blog at blog.motorists.org.

National

U.S. drivers traveled 3.03 trillion miles in 2014, the second-highest year on record, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. There were 93.5 million drivers over age 50, up 22 percent compared to 2013. Over the next 30 years the number of drivers over age 65 is expected to rise by 77 percent with the fastest growth coming from drivers over age 85.

Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Pat Toomey (R-PA) have proposed to further limit the amount of corn-based ethanol that can be used in the national fuel blend. The two say enforcing a cap would force further research and development of biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol, which don’t use food crops. In February, a group of lawmakers proposed a bill ending the ethanol-blending mandate and proposed to reform the Renewable Fuel Standards by putting a cap on ethanol blends at 10 percent.

Arizona

After less than two years on the job, James Saunders, CEO of Redflex Traffic Systems, announced he was leaving the company to “pursue other opportunities,” according to a statement distributed by the company. Redflex has struggled financially as cities across the United States have shed automated traffic enforcement programs. Saunders took over in July 2013 amid a restructuring

that resulted from allegations the company had bribed Chicago officials to win \$124 million in contracts.

Colorado

City leaders voted to end Littleton’s red-light camera program this summer, claiming the system has done little to reduce accidents in the city. The vote came shortly after a House committee in the state legislature approved banning red-light cameras. A study done by the city revealed that while injury accidents decreased slightly at three of the five intersections where the cameras are used, non-injury accidents actually increased at four of those intersections.

Connecticut

The Traffic Enforcement Division of the New Haven Police Department announced it will double the number of motor officers and also purchase new motorcycles. Official said the goal of the expansion is to not only enforce penalties on those who violate motor vehicle laws, but also to raise awareness of traffic safety procedures and call attention to the risks traffic poses in the city.

Florida

A majority of cities and counties with red-light cameras reported crashes at monitored intersections have either held steady or increased since installing the cameras. The Department of Highway Safety

& Motor Vehicles compiled the data in late 2014 but chose not to include it in its annual review of Florida’s red-light camera program. Meanwhile, most cities and counties reported that crashes at their intersections not monitored by cameras have dropped in recent years.

More than 24,000 red-light camera ticket cases were dismissed in Broward County after two judges ruled that the program violates state law. The cases were on hold for more than a year over controversy regarding how many cities in the county use a third-party company to operate the red-light camera program.

The Florida Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal in a potentially far-reaching case about the way local governments administer red-light camera programs. The City of Hollywood asked justices to hear the case after the 4th District Court of Appeal ruled in October that the city violated state law by relying on a private company to issue traffic citations to drivers. The Supreme Court, as is common, did not give reasons for declining to consider the appeal by Hollywood.

Illinois

Data used in selecting city red-light camera locations seem to show Chicago’s traffic signals have yellow-light times that are too short, according to *The Chicago Tribune*. Chicago’s yellow-light times are set at a flat three seconds at nearly all signalized intersections. Experts say this is a bad policy because yellow-light times should be based on factors such as the approach speed of 85 percent of the vehicles in free-flowing traffic.

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Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's motorcade was once again caught running a red light by a city red-light camera. This time around, there were two separate incidents both with pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists in view of the camera. In one case, the SUV in question drove down a street the wrong way after running the red. The mayor's motorcade has been caught over 40 times breaking the law, even though the mayor is a strong supporter of red-light and speed cameras.

Massachusetts

A Hingham driver filed a class-action lawsuit over a speeding ticket he claimed was illegal under Massachusetts law. The ticket drove up his insurance premium and later cost him his job as a delivery truck driver when it appeared on his record. Massachusetts law says that before placing speed limit signs on roadways, municipalities need to first conduct a traffic engineering study. After the study, a speed regulation is approved by local government officials, along with the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Transportation.

Massachusetts became the 18th state to require that drivers turn on their headlights and taillights when their windshield wipers are in use. The law also says headlights must be used from 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise or when visibility is less than 500 feet. The fine for violating the law is \$5, but it is a surchargeable offense.

Missouri

Due to a change in Missouri law, Progressive Insurance can now extract higher fees from users of

its Snapshot mileage-based insurance program. Up until now, Snapshot only awarded discounts to good drivers instead of penalizing more aggressive drivers. A Progressive spokesperson said the revised Snapshot program will likely be introduced to other states as well. Progressive also said the annual surcharge will offset the discounts given to safer drivers and won't be more than 10 percent above the normal annual premium.

Nevada

Police around the state are writing fewer traffic tickets, which may be a boon to motorists, but it is creating a financial crisis for the Nevada Supreme Court. Chief Justice James Hardesty recently told a panel of state lawmakers the court will go broke soon if the legislature does not provide emergency funding to keep it functioning. The court receives millions of dollars each year from assessments on traffic and parking tickets that range from \$30 to \$120 per citation.

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled that feeding a stranger's parking meter is legal and protected free speech. A small group of activists began feeding meters to save drivers from parking tickets in 2009. The group's efforts so frustrated the city it filed a lawsuit to force them to stop, claiming it was "tortious interference" and that the activists were harassing ticket writers. Ultimately, the lawsuit made it to the state's high court.

New York

Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano said he opposes a bill that would block the county from ever reviving school zone speed

cameras in the future, saying that the legislature should allow more conversation on the issue. Nassau County lawmakers announced their decision to repeal school speed zone cameras in December.

Ohio

A proposal to increase the speed limit to 75 mph on some state highways was pulled from the two-year transportation budget. If the proposal had passed, it would have made Ohio the second state east of the Mississippi to have a 75 mph speed limit on rural roads. Ohio lawmakers said they scrapped recent proposals to raise highway speed limits and restrict left-lane use because of concerns about safety and possible lawsuits.

South Dakota

Gov. Dugaard agreed to a provision raising the speed limit on two interstates from 75 mph to 80 mph. It will be the highest speed limit in the region, with North Dakota's limit at 75 mph, Minnesota at 70 mph and Montana at 75 mph. The bill also included a six-cent-per gallon gas and ethyl alcohol tax increase. South Dakotans will also face a one percent increase in the motor vehicle excise tax and a 20 percent increase in license plate fees.

Wisconsin

Gov. Walker signed a bill allowing state transportation officials to raise the speed limit to 70 mph on some Wisconsin roads. Under the law, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation can raise the speed limit to 70 mph only on four-lane roads that have entrance and exit ramps. A similar measure failed in 2013, but supporters, including the NMA, redoubled their efforts to achieve success in 2015. 🚗