

Resolution from the Kitsap County Non-Motorized Citizens' Advisory Committee in Favor of Setting Speed Limits for Safe and Comfortable Non-Motorized Transportation on Kitsap County Roads

Whereas the purpose of the Kitsap County Non-Motorized Citizens' Advisory Committee (NMC) is to provide citizen advice to the Kitsap County Commissioners and Kitsap County staff on ways in which to improve the safety and comfort of non-motorized travel in Kitsap County;

Whereas encouraging Non-Motorized Transportation (NMT) is one of Kitsap County's goals;

Whereas NMT contributes to public health, increases public safety, improves quality of life, increases livability, provides transportation choice, and strengthens community cohesion;

Whereas NMT does not emit carbon dioxide or any other pollution, which advances Kitsap County's goals of preserving the health of our shared air, land, and water resources;

Whereas NMT reduces traffic congestion by reducing the number of single occupancy vehicle trips on Kitsap County roads;

Whereas NMT is an integral part of Kitsap County's goals of increasing the use of public transit (Kitsap Transit buses, Kitsap Transit ferries, and Washington State Ferries);

Whereas the need for NMT will be increasingly important for mobility as the population of Kitsap County increases, especially in areas of Kitsap County that will absorb greater population density;

Whereas the roads of Kitsap County are public rights of way that are open to all members of the public, regardless of whether they are operating a motorized vehicle, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians;

Whereas ensuring that Kitsap County's public rights of way are safe and comfortable for NMT is a critical part of achieving transportation equity, in which all people--regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, income level, age, and/or disability--are free to use the public rights of way for any transportation need;

Whereas the public rights of way of Kitsap County make up the vast majority of Kitsap County's NMT network, and will continue to do so;

Whereas the majority of the public rights of way of Kitsap County do not have paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or adjacent non-motorized Shared Use Paths;

Whereas the majority of the public rights of way of Kitsap County will not receive the installation of paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or adjacent non-motorized Shared Use Paths;

Whereas it takes considerable time for public rights of way to receive paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or adjacent non-motorized Shared Use Paths once they have been selected to receive such improvements;

Whereas improving NMT by installing paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or adjacent non-motorized Shared Use Paths is very expensive, and such improvements have been slow in coming because of lack of funds;

Whereas the setting of speed limits on Kitsap County's rights of way establishes a critical baseline for acceptable norms of behavior for people travelling on those rights of way;

Whereas high motorized vehicle speed discourages NMT by creating an intimidating, unwelcoming, and unsafe environment for NMT, especially on rights of way that lack paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or adjacent Shared Use Paths;

Whereas, by creating an intimidating, unwelcoming, and unsafe environment for NMT, high motorized vehicle speed encourages people to choose motorized means for trips they might otherwise prefer to travel by NMT;

Whereas high motorized vehicle speed causes more frequent and more severe crashes, which leads to greater injuries and deaths to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians;

Whereas crashes involving motorized vehicles are a major cause of traffic delay, and consume critical public safety resources, negatively affect commerce, and prevent people and goods from reaching their destinations in a timely manner;

Whereas the current method used by Kitsap County to set speed limits --USLIMITS2-- sometimes recommends speed limits that are too high;

Whereas the current method used by Kitsap County to set speed limits sometimes does not give adequate consideration to the safety and experiences of people using NMT along Kitsap County's rights of way;

Whereas a key component of the current method used by Kitsap County to set speed limits is the 85th-percentile method, which sets speed limits based on the speed of 85% of motorized drivers along a given right of way segment, rather than on a target speed that is safe for motorists, and which provides a safe and welcoming NMT experience;

Whereas professional transportation organizations such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) have extensively studied the question of speed limit setting, and have written Safe Systems best practice guidance for transportation professionals to use when setting speed limits ([City Limits: Setting Safe Speed Limits on Urban Streets](#));

Whereas NACTO's Safe Systems best practice guidance is context-sensitive, prioritizing the amount and kind of crossing conflicts along a given right of way segment, and puts the safety and comfort of people choosing NMT at the center of setting safe speed limits;

Whereas NACTO's advice on setting speed limits focuses on setting a safe target speed for a given right of way segment that includes NMT safety and comfort as a key factor;

Whereas NACTO's advice is appropriate on urban and suburban rights of way, which are a major part of Kitsap County's right of way network;

Whereas setting safe target speed limits is an effective, low-cost, practical solution that can be implemented sooner than other right of way improvements (such as adding sidewalks) to making Kitsap County's rights of way a safe and welcoming place for NMT, whether or not those rights of way have paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or adjacent Shared Use Paths;

Whereas studies show that setting safe target speed limits can reduce motorists' speed without any other right of way changes (such as installing traffic calming measures like speed humps).

Whereas setting safe target speed limits is a strategy that complements other right of way NMT improvements (such as adding paved shoulders, bike lanes, sidewalks, and/or Shared Use Paths), and is not a substitute for making such improvements;

Whereas the NMC engaged in a months-long process to identify right of way segments for speed limit re-evaluation for how they affect the safety and experience of NMT along them;

Whereas the NMC has identified nine high priority right of way segments whose current speed limits warrant re-evaluation for how they affect the safety and experience of NMT along them;

Whereas a re-evaluation of the speed limits on these nine right of way segments using the Safe Systems approach advocated by NACTO would likely result in lowering the speed limits along those segments;

Whereas there are three right of way segments in each Commissioner's District, South, Central, and North Kitsap;

Whereas slower motorized traffic speed along those right of way segments would result in a safer, more welcoming NMT experience, thereby encouraging more people to choose NMT for transportation needs;

Therefore, be it resolved that the NMC recommends to the County Commissioners and Kitsap County staff that:

1. Kitsap County Public Works staff re-evaluate the appropriateness of the current speed limits on each of the nine right of way segments identified by the NMC;

2. Kitsap County Public Works staff employ a Safe Systems approach, such as the NACTO City Limits guide, to this re-evaluation, giving high priority to the safety and comfort of NMT users;
3. Kitsap County Public Works staff consider implementing the proposed speed limits the NMC has recommended on these nine right of way segments;
4. Kitsap County Public Works staff inform and consult with the NMC on the progress of their re-evaluation of these nine right of way segments;
5. The Kitsap County Commissioners continue to support the goal of increasing the amount of NMT in Kitsap County, improving the safety and comfort of NMT in Kitsap County, and setting policy to implement these goals.