

Appendix G

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE 65 MPH SPEED LIMIT

As many comments and concerns were sent from various constituencies throughout the state to both the Governor and the Transportation Commissioner's offices during the study period, reflecting varying views on the 65 MPH Speed Limit, the following section attempts to address several of the most common.

How are Speed Limits determined?

In order to determine the proper numerical value for a speed zone on the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation, the following factors are considered: 85th-percentile speed and pace speed of traffic, road surface characteristics, shoulder conditions, grade, alignment and sight distance, roadside development and friction, specific hazardous locations, lane drops, significant merging maneuvers, volumes, percentage truck traffic, weaving patterns, and reported accident experience.

Should the Speed Limit be the same for all segments of all similar limited access-controlled highways (Interstates, freeways, toll roads)?

Although these roads do have some common characteristics, roadway segments do have differences too. As noted in the previous answer, roadway characteristics can vary greatly, especially in more urban areas. This practice of different Speed Limits on similar roadway segments is common in all other States of the Union. It is believed that no other contiguous state practices a uniform speed limit. In fact, New Jersey's application of 475 miles of the 65 MPH Speed Limit is much more liberal than any of its neighboring states.

Are not all of these highways designed for 70 MPH or faster?

This may be a desired goal for highways of interstate standards; however, circumstances exist in some areas that create design limitations, making this difficult to achieve. This is most common in very urban areas, and areas with older infrastructures. If speed limits are set too high in these areas, a potentially hazardous situation exists.

Do higher Speed Limits adversely affect safety?

Many advocates for a lower speed limit use the argument that the faster a vehicle is traveling, the greater its potential for an accident, as the distance required to stop is greater. This is only looking at safety from a microscopic view. Highway safety must be viewed from the entire stream of traffic flow. The ultimate goal is to achieve more uniform speed in the traffic stream, which reduces the need for passing and tendency to follow another vehicle too closely. Therefore, a "reasonable" speed limit, which has credibility with the motoring public leads to a "smoother" traffic flow and benefits safety most, provided enforcement is present.