



Policy Memo: Speed Limit & Traffic Violations Enforcement

To protect Syracuse residents—pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike—the City should lower speed limits to 25 mph in downtown corridors and implement automated enforcement for traffic violations such as speeding and running red lights. These measures will improve public safety, reduce accidents, and create a more livable urban environment.

Overview

According to the City's [Vision Zero Initiative](#), an average of 130 severe accidents involving cars occur every year in Syracuse. Around 10 people are killed each year in such incidents. This is tragic for the people involved and costly for the community as a whole. Syracuse must explore all evidence-based solutions to this problem, including a modest 5mph reduction of speeds which has been proven effective elsewhere (see [this study](#) from Seattle, for example).

Above all, traffic safety comes down to speeds driven by motorists. Slower speeds reduce both the likelihood and severity of accidents, significantly decreasing injuries and fatalities. The current default speed limit across Syracuse is 30 mph, including through residential neighborhoods and downtown. However, actual speeds often exceed this due to inconsistent street design and lack of enforcement. Setting a 25 mph speed limit in downtown corridors would align with best practices in urban traffic safety and promote pedestrian-friendly streets.

Lowering the official speed limit is just the first piece of the puzzle. But without better enforcement, there is little reason for drivers to change their behavior.

- **Speed cameras** are efficient in slowing down traffic without straining police capacity.
- **Red light cameras** slow speeds by discouraging the risky maneuver of speeding up to get through an intersection when the light is yellow or even already red. Yet this increased speed lingers even after the driver passes the intersection, and may continue as the driver attempts to catch the next light. Red light cameras help break the chain early – before the first light has been run.

These can be considered short-term fixes to a long-lasting problem, which will only be solved by designing better streets that emphasize pedestrian safety and lend themselves to mixed modes of transit.

Syracuse must prioritize traffic safety by lowering the citywide speed limit – beginning with downtown – and deploying automated enforcement cameras citywide. These proven strategies will create a safer and more pedestrian-friendly Syracuse.