



## ADVOCACY

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SLOW ME DOWN

Background & Statistics

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# BACKGROUND & STATISTICS

It's simple: Driving slower is safer for all road users. The slower cars are moving, the less likely it is for a crash to result in a serious injury or fatality. Driving slowly widens a driver's field of vision, allows for more time when reacting to unexpected changes on the road, and creates roadways that are safe for all users rather than strictly motorists.

In order to encourage drivers to slow down, we will request road designs that create safer environments for all users, encourage and support off-road bicycle and pedestrian facilities wherever possible, advocate for reduced speed limits in areas with a greater concentration of pedestrians and people on bikes, and work to normalize the choice to drive at or below the posted speed limit.

Why Slowing Down Matters:

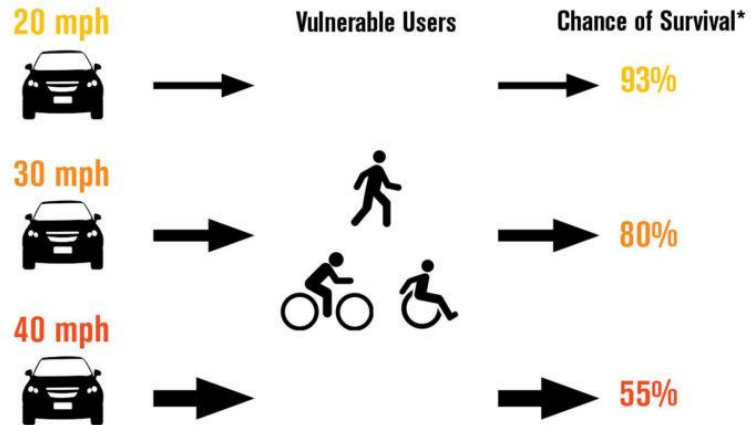
## THE PROBLEM

Maine's roads are largely designed for motor vehicles.

- It is not uncommon for neighborhood roads to have a 12-foot travel lane. 12-foot travel lanes are the standard width of highway travel lanes, which are designed for motorists to travel comfortably at high speeds. Outside of a highway context, roadways of this width allow drivers to feel safe driving fast. Speeding endangers and discourages the use of roads by non-motorists. These road conditions have resulted in a "speeding road culture" in Maine.

Motorists forget speeding is deadly.

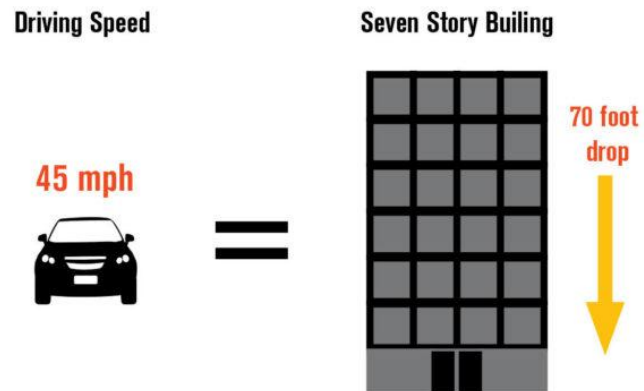
- Speeding was a factor in 26% of all [traffic fatalities in 2018](#), killing 9,378 people, or an average of more than 25 deaths per day.
- The faster a motorist is driving, the greater the likelihood of a crash fatality.



Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (2011).

\* Survival rates vary depending on age, these are averages.

- Crash impact at 45 mph is roughly equivalent to falling from a seven-story building.



Source: NHTSA.gov (2020).

## SPEEDING IN MAINE

- In Maine, about 36% of the bike/ped fatalities on local roads were directly attributable to speed, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).
- The [2019 National Safety Council Report](#) showed that nationally, car-crash fatalities went down 2%; however, in Maine, crash

fatalities went up 35%—the highest fatality increase in the country.

- [A study completed in January 2019](#) by Quote Wizard, an online insurance advisor, claimed Maine had the worst drivers in the country because of an increase of more than 1,500 car crashes from 2016 to 2017.
- [A 2020 automobile analysis](#) completed by QuoteWizard ranks Mainers No. 1 for the most accident-prone drivers in the nation.
- For the first eight years (2003-2010) of [MaineDOT tracking](#), the second-highest factor for crashes was “exceeded posted speed limit.” Today, it remains one of the top reasons for crashes, along with “drove too fast for conditions.”

## COMPOUNDING FACTORS

### Reduced Field of Vision

As driving speed increases, the driver’s field of vision decreases. The faster a person drives, the more information they need to process in a shorter period of time. While speeding, drivers are less capable of noticing changes along the side of the road because their focus is further up, causing tunnel vision. The field of vision of a driver moving at 30 mph is about five times smaller than what is seen at 15 mph. This makes the road dangerous for vulnerable users who travel on the edge of roadways.

### Reduced Reaction Time

As driving speed increases, the amount of time a driver has to react is shortened. No matter how attentive you may be, the faster your vehicle is traveling, the greater the distance you will travel before you can react to changes in the road, and the longer it will take you to stop your vehicle. A vehicle traveling at 30 mph takes 75 ft to come to a stop when accounting for reaction and braking time.

### Distracted Driving

In 2018, [distracted driving claimed 2,841 lives](#). Among those killed: 1,730 drivers, 605 passengers, 400 pedestrians, and 77 bicyclists. Studies show that taking your eyes off the road—to text, make a phone call, or

otherwise interact with a device—increases the likelihood of collisions. When combined with speeding, distracted driving compounds the dangers of reduced field of vision and reaction time, and increasing the likelihood of a deadly crash. In 2019, Maine passed a law prohibiting the use of handheld devices while driving.

## SOLUTIONS

### Reduce Speed Limits

Speed limits should be set with greater emphasis on crash reduction and should limit the use of the 85th percentile. Over-reliance on the 85th percentile—a method of setting a speed limit according to the speed most motor vehicles travel on a road—can often result in a speed limit that does not adequately take into consideration a roadway’s context or the concentration of other users.

### Improve Road Design

Roads should be designed considering all road users. Changing road geometry is an effective way to slow traffic and create an environment that is safe and comfortable for all users. For example, narrowing travel lanes provides more space for vulnerable users. Additionally, creating visual friction using gateway treatments, curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and the installation of public art also serve to slow traffic.

### Develop More Off-road Routes

Encourage the development of bike/ped-specific facilities wherever possible. It is safest to separate vulnerable users from motorists, and municipalities should always consider the possibility of separate travel lanes. While painted bike lanes are typically better than no delineation at all, bike/ped routes that provide protective barriers from motorists are more approachable for all users, and most effective in improving safety.

### Normalize Driving at or Below the Speed Limit

Support a shift in Maine’s driving culture. We frequently hear from Mainers who are concerned about speeding in their neighborhoods and on routes to school or to work. Currently, many short trips are made by car.

More people would choose to walk or bike if they felt safer on the roads. We are collecting signatures of individuals, municipalities, and organizations to amplify the desire for change and ensure that the safety needs of vulnerable users are met. Encourage more biking and walking by driving slower. Lower speeds make vulnerable road users more comfortable on the roads.

[Join the Slow ME Down campaign](#)



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