

Rhododendron Speed Check

The Oregon Administrative Rule 734-20-015 addresses speed zoning issues such as speed zone criteria, speed zone procedures, speed zone orders and emergency speed zones. The Oregon Vehicle Code covers speed zone authority, Basic Rule, prima facie speed limits, business and residential speed limits, and other topics pertinent to speed zoning in Sections 801, 810 and 811.

Establishing speed zones in Oregon requires an engineering investigation. These investigations are in accordance with nationally accepted traffic engineering standards and procedures, which have been established through years of research and experience.

A major factor in speed zoning is the 85th percentile, the speed at or below which 85 percent of the vehicles are traveling. This is an indication of what most drivers feel is reasonable and safe. The procedure provides Oregon with a consistent and uniform application of techniques to establish safe and proper speed zoning. The use of the 85th percentile, along with other factors, to determine appropriate posted speeds is consistent with national standards and procedures, the most widely referenced of which is the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Other factors taken into consideration are crash history, roadside culture, traffic volumes, and roadway alignment, width and surface.

The concept of the 85th percentile speed is often difficult for members of the public to understand. The 85th percentile speed, which weighs heavily into determining speed zones, often does not reflect the speed at which local citizens desire to have the speed posted. One of the foundations of the principle of 85th percentile speed is the belief that 85 percent of drivers operate their vehicles at speeds that are safe and prudent for the roadway conditions. Another major consideration of speed zoning is the fact that merely posting signs telling drivers what speed to drive will not override what the overall design of the roadway and roadside features indicates to drivers regarding the safe speed for that road. In other words, simply posting a lower speed zone will not slow drivers down if 55-mph feels safe to the majority of drivers.

In Oregon, the decisions regarding speed zones are made jointly by the Department of Transportation and the road authority, for example, a city or county.

The Department of Transportation has the responsibility to investigate roads for establishing new speed zones or changing posted speeds of existing speed zones. These investigations are performed at the request of a city, a county, an agency with a road authority or a private citizen if the request is for a rural state highway. For rural state highways, requests for an investigation should be made in writing to the Region Traffic Engineer.

If the recommended speed is of mutual agreement between the Department and the local road authority, the speed zone is established. If mutual agreement cannot be reached, the speed zone decision is referred to the Speed Zone Review Panel.

The following information is excerpted from the Oregon Department of Transportation Speed Zone Manual For Consultants. It outlines when, where, and under what conditions speed checks should be taken.

Spot speed check operations

- Take checks
 - in normal weather,
 - during regular working hours (8:00 am -5:00 PM) and
 - at free flow rather than rush hour.

- Do not record speeds of passing vehicles.
- Record trucks or other commercial vehicle speeds separately.
- Count at least 75 vehicles in each direction.
- Spend no longer than 3 hours on a spot speed check even if less than 75 vehicles per direction are counted in that time.
 - Observation time on low volume roads (less than 500 Average Daily Traffic) may be limited to one hour providing less than 8 total vehicles are counted in one hour.
- Tally pedestrians and bicycles traveling along the roadside
 - Count separately for each direction.
 - Separate counts by estimated general age of cyclist:
 - Child (up to 12 years)
 - Youth (from 13-20 years)
 - Adult (21 years and older)
- Do not include pedestrian or bicycle cross-traffic.

It is important to note that the manual directs staff to perform these checks on weekdays during off-peak hours. This provides results that best represent average conditions. Taking spot speed checks at other periods when it is perceived that traveling speeds on the highway are higher does not provide justification for lowering the posted speed. Higher highway speeds result in a higher 85th percentile speed. Under the guidelines and practices for determining speed zones, a higher 85th percentile speed would indicate that a higher, not lower, speed zone would be warranted in that location.

Two spot speed checks were taken on US26 near Rhododendron. One spot speed check was taken at approximate milepoint 42.9, just east of East Faubion Loop. The 85th percentile speeds were 57 mph for westbound vehicles and 54 mph for eastbound vehicles, with an average 85th percentile speed of 56 mph. The second spot speed check was taken at milepoint 44.15, east of East Littlebrook Lane. The 85th percentile speeds were 49 and 51 mph for westbound and eastbound vehicles, respectively, with an average 85th percentile speed of 50 mph.

Information with the dates, locations, and results of the spot speed checks are attached below.

Oregon Department of Transportation

Roadway: Mt. Hood Hwy.
#26, US26

Date: September 27, 2006

City:

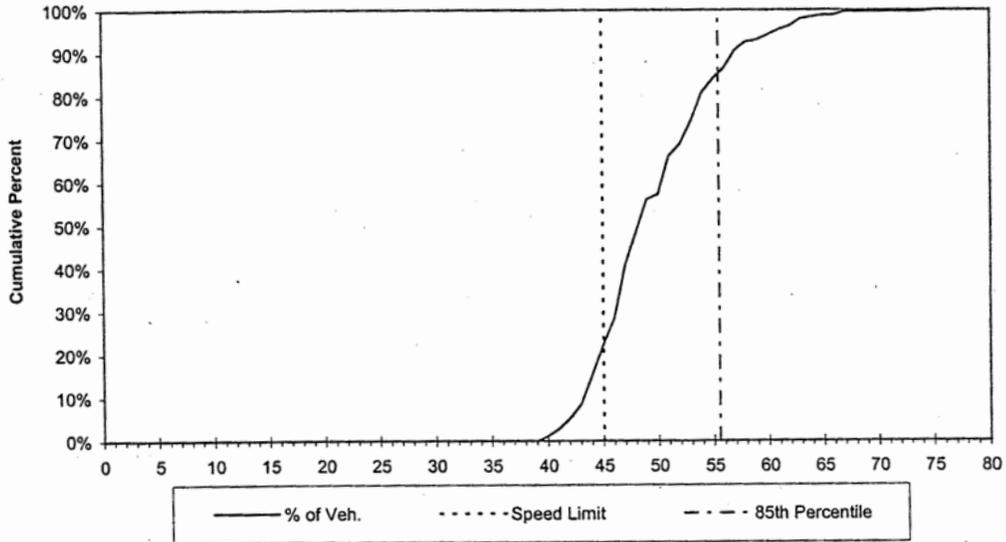
Time: 1315 - 1355

County: Clackamas

Location: 250' E of E Faubion Loop
MP 42.90 (?)

Weather: clr calm 75F

Direction of Travel: WB & EB



	MPH	Averaged	MPH
	WB		EB
# of Vehicles	123	246	123
85th % Speed	57	56	54

Oregon Department of Transportation

Roadway: Mt. Hood Hwy.
#26, US26

Date: September 26, 2006

City:

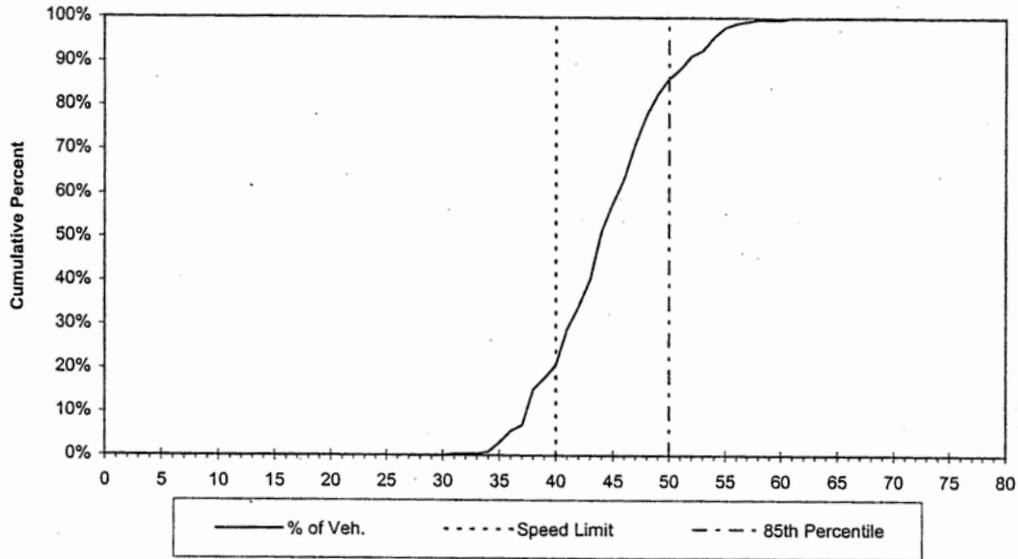
Time: 1230 - 1320

County: Clackamas

Location: 350' E of E Littlebrook Ln
MP 44.15

Weather: clr calm 75F

Direction of Travel: WB & EB



	MPH	Averaged	MPH
# of Vehicles	WB 114	231	EB 117
85th % Speed	49	50	51