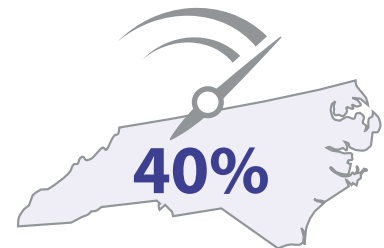




## Partnerships Help North Carolina Manage Speed

In 2015, North Carolina was among the States that reported the highest percentage of speeding related fatalities; 40 percent of traffic fatalities in North Carolina involved a speeding vehicle.<sup>1</sup> To tackle this problem, North Carolina safety stakeholders partnered with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to develop a Speed Management Action Plan (SMAP) for Randolph County.<sup>2</sup> The plan assessed speeding and speed management issues in the county, identified appropriate countermeasures and strategies, and outlined actions steps the State, county, and other partners could take to reduce speeding and prevent speeding-related crashes on Randolph County's roadways.



TRAFFIC FATALITIES INVOLVED  
A SPEEDING VEHICLE IN 2015

Since the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) owns, operates, and maintains approximately 80 percent of roads in North Carolina, including Randolph County's, the State agency led several strategies in the SMAP, many of which were implemented throughout the State.

### Speed Limit Setting Overhaul

During plan development, North Carolina stakeholders identified inconsistencies in speed limit setting practices between rural and urban areas. To address the issue, NCDOT partnered with the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University to develop a research project for North Carolina's speed-setting policies. The project provided guidelines for speed limit studies for various facility types and recommended documentation methods.<sup>3</sup> NCDOT is working to incorporate the project's results into its State's speed limit setting policy and documentation processes. The speed limit setting guidelines will still consider 85th percentile speeds, but also other factors such as land use, road design, pedestrian volume, bicycling activity, and driveways.

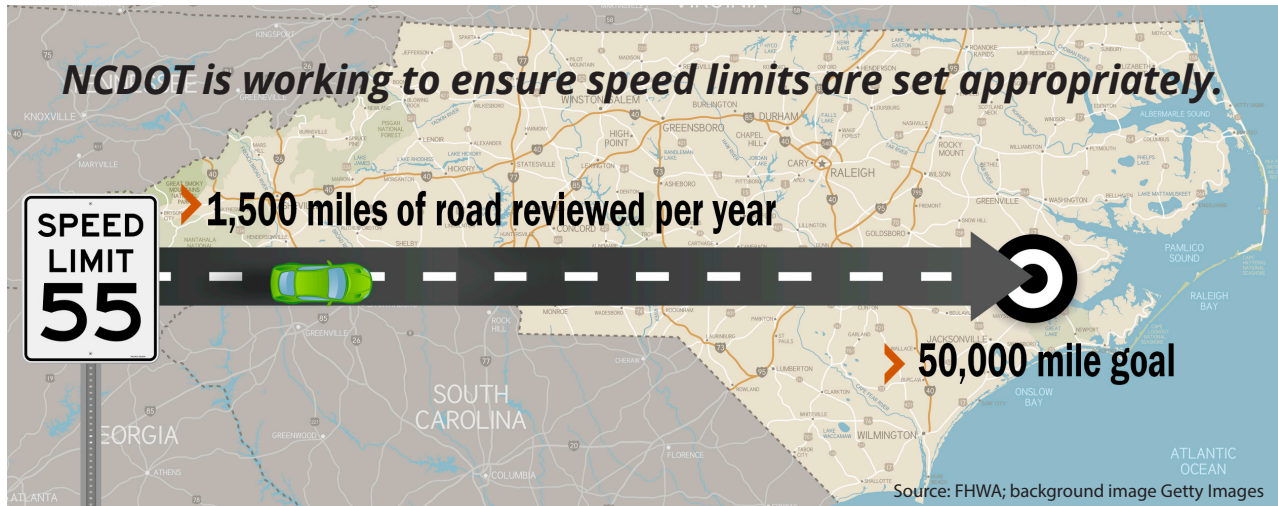


- 1 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts: Speeding—2015 Data*, DOT HS 812 409 (Washington, DC: NHTSA, 2017), <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812409>.
- 2 Federal Highway Administration, *Speed Management Action Plan for Randolph County*, FHWA-SA-15-017 (Washington, DC: FHWA, 2015), [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref\\_mats/docs/randolphco-smap\\_final.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref_mats/docs/randolphco-smap_final.pdf).
- 3 North Carolina Department of Transportation, *Developing Guidelines and Documentation of Engineering Studies for Establishing NC Speed Limits*, research project no. 2017-10 (Raleigh: NCDOT, 2017), <https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/research/Pages/ProjDetails.aspx?ProjectID=2017-10>.

To ensure speed limits are appropriately set for all roads, NCDOT will conduct speed studies for approximately 50,000 miles of rural roads that have a statutory speed limit of 55 miles per hour (mph). To reach the 50,000 mile goal, NCDOT plans to perform speed studies on 1,500 miles of roads per year. The agency will use a proactive, data-driven process to identify and prioritize roads for speed studies.

**COLLABORATION IS KING**

*NCDOT collaborates with law enforcement, legislators, magistrates, and district attorneys to implement speed management countermeasures such as lowering speed limits, enforcing penalties, and designating safety corridors based on law enforcement data.*



**Speed Corridors**

Corridor safety was a significant theme during this SMAP’s development and corridor-based data analysis approaches and improvement strategies were incorporated throughout the plan. As part of the National Governors Association (NGA) Rural Roads Initiative, NCDOT is partnering with the Governor’s Highway Safety Program and local stakeholders from nine counties, including Randolph County, to identify potential corridors that could benefit from safety countermeasures, including speed management countermeasures. The county stakeholders typically include the local administration and elected officials (such as county manager or county commissioner) and representatives from law enforcement, emergency medical services, the public health department, the school system, and the district attorney’s office.

This process has encouraged the community and stakeholders to work together to brainstorm ideas and solutions to improve corridor safety. Along the way, NCDOT provides support and guides the task group to ensure success. The ultimate goal is to transition stakeholders into a county-level safety stakeholder task group to guide implementation and select corridors for improvement.

**WORKING SMARTER, NOT HARDER**

*NCDOT has found that focusing on a specific corridor is a beneficial way to generate stakeholder participation and excitement.*



## Involving the Judicial Branch

The SMAP not only targets improving speed setting practices and corridor safety, but also public information and education. Public education is partly completed through the court system by upholding speeding citations and providing continued driver education classes. When designating speeding corridors, the county involves law enforcement and the court system. On these designated corridors, officers issue tickets that are routed through the general court rather than traffic court. Although it takes up regular court time, judges know these speeding tickets are a priority and should not be pleaded down.

Through the NGA Rural Roads Initiative, NCDOT has also built a relationship with district attorneys and includes them in traffic safety discussions. One result of this partnership is the StreetSafe Driving Program in Johnston County. The district attorney developed a 4.5-hour class for younger drivers who have received traffic or speeding citations. If the student is a minor, a parent must attend for the first hour of class. The class is taught by law enforcement and fire personnel who share their first-hand experiences responding to crashes that involved speeding, aggressive, distracted, intoxicated, and unbelted drivers.<sup>4</sup>

### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

*The StreetSafe Driving Program offered by the Johnston County District Attorney's office engages young drivers and their parents to create and nurture healthy driving habits.*

## Moving Forward

These initial steps are starting to have an effect. In 2018, speeding-related fatalities dropped to 23 percent of all fatalities, 17% lower than when the SMAP was developed in 2015.<sup>5</sup> North Carolina stakeholders recognize more steps must be taken to eliminate speeding fatalities. More recently, NCDOT designated speeding as one of its Vision Zero focus areas<sup>6</sup> and included speed management as an emphasis area in its 2019 Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP).<sup>7</sup> Its latest SHSP outlines strategies and action steps for improving speed management and reducing speeding related crashes. For example, NCDOT, including the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and its leadership, are considering programs and strategies to establish safety corridors where additional countermeasures and strategies can be deployed with a focus on speeding. NCDOT is also considering adjusting statutory speed limits, including adjusting the rural road statutory speed limit from 55 to 45 mph.

## Additional Resources

If your agency is interested in learning more about SMAPs, visit FHWA's [Speed Management Safety web page](#), which contains many resources including a [SMAP template](#),<sup>8</sup> [Randolph County's SMAP](#),<sup>9</sup> examples of other SMAPs, noteworthy practices, speed management countermeasures, and more.

For additional information about the practices discussed in this flyer, please contact:

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4 Johnston Community College, "StreetSafe Driving Program" web page, accessed November 2019, <http://www.johnstoncc.edu/continuing-education/driving/street-safe.aspx>.

5 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts: Speeding—2018 Data*, report no. DOT HS 812 932 (Washington, DC: NHTSA, 2020), <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812932>

6 North Carolina Department of Transportation, "NC Vision Zero: Safety Focus Areas" web page, accessed May 2020. <https://ncvisionzero.org/safety-focus/>.

7 North Carolina Department of Transportation. *2019 Strategic Highway Safety Plan*.

8 Federal Highway Administration, *Speed Management Action Plan Template*, FHWA-SA-15-017 (Washington, DC: FHWA, 2015), [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref\\_mats/docs/fhwa\\_speedmanagactionplantemplate\\_final.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref_mats/docs/fhwa_speedmanagactionplantemplate_final.pdf).

9 Federal Highway Administration, *Speed Management Action Plan for Randolph County*, FHWA-SA-15-017 (Washington, DC: FHWA, 2015), [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref\\_mats/docs/randolphco-smap\\_final.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/ref_mats/docs/randolphco-smap_final.pdf).