

?Did you notice? Speed limits in Austin changed for a reason

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? Speed limits on State Road 256 and U.S. Highway 31 in Austin were recently changed by workers with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT).

The changes were necessary, according to INDOT, to "...conform to minimum standards set up by INDOT." Changes on U.S. 31 affect a zone from VanCampen Road to the Jackson County line north of Austin. On S.R. 256, which serves as Main Street in the community, the area affected includes from the Jackson County line west of town to one mile east of its junction with U.S. 31.

Last year, officials with the now defunct Austin Rural Enterprise Community (AREC) pushed for the change so that a warning beacon could be installed in the school zone on U.S. 31 South. The beacon could not be installed, however, until the speed limits were changed, officials learned, because the speed limit in a school zone is set ten miles lower than the area leading to it. Since Austin's zones were marked for 30 mph, that would mean the school zone speed would have been set at 20 mph, and that was too low, INDOT advised AREC.

Mayor Doug Campbell and the City Council which took office this past January continued to campaign for a change in speed zones. In June, Mayor Campbell signed a traffic control agreement with INDOT, setting the new speed zone limits. Signs were changed about three weeks ago, thus finally making the changes effective.

On S.R. 256, speed are now regulated to:

- 45 mph from a point 340 feet west of Thomastown Road to Seventh Street;

- 35 mph from Seventh to Second Streets.

- 25 mph from Second St. to the intersection of S.R. 256 and U.S. 31.

- 35 mph from a point 350 feet east of U.S. 31 eastward 1,235 feet. This zone changes to 25 mph when school is in session.

- 45 mph 2,925 feet east of U.S. 31 eastward 1,170 feet.

On U.S. 31, changes include:

- 45 mph from a point 4,580 feet south of its intersection with S.R. 256 to a point 3,300 feet south of the intersection, a distance of some 1,280 feet.

- 35 mph from a point 3,300 feet south of its intersection with S.R. 256 to a point 3,900 feet north of the intersection, a distance of some 7,200 feet.

- 25 mph when the new flasher device is activated, 250 feet south of the intersection to 2,700 feet south of the intersection, a distance of some 2,450 feet. This takes in that stretch of U.S. Highway 31 South where school entrances and exits and pedestrian crosswalks are located.

- 45 mph from a point 3,900 feet north of the intersection with S.R. 256 to approximately 6,500 feet north of the intersection, some 2,600 feet.

Motorists are always expected to be very cautious during school hours in those sections of highway. The new device is expected to be installed soon and should help remind everyone to slow down and be careful.