

Speed limits on the Dallas North Tollway and President George Bush Turnpike will be changing, following the approval by NTTA's Board of Directors on Aug. 19. The new speed limits go into effect as new signs are installed. Signage installation begins Aug. 20 and will be complete by Sept. 1.

What are the new speed limits?

Speed limits along the Dallas North Tollway and the President George Bush Turnpike will change 5-10 mph with some areas increasing to state maximum of 70 mph and others decreasing to 50-55 mph. (See also the map at the end of this document.)

On the Dallas North Tollway (both directions):

- At the southern end between Ivan Street and Oak Lawn Avenue in Dallas: Decrease from 55 mph to 50 mph
- From south of Oak Lawn Avenue in Dallas to the Dallas/Collin County Line, south of Trinity Mills Road in Dallas: Increase from 55 mph to 65 mph
- From Dallas/Collin County Line, south of Trinity Mills Road in Dallas to south of County Road 26 in Frisco: Increase from 60 or 65 mph to 70 mph
- Between south of County Road 26 in Frisco and U.S. 380: No Change - 55 mph

On the Bush Turnpike (both directions):

- From Belt Line Road in Irving to west of SH 78 in Garland: Increase from 60 mph to 70 mph
- A .2-mile section west of SH 78: Increase from 50 mph to 55 mph

Lower advisory speed limits will be posted at locations requiring reduced speeds, such as along the curve near Trinity Mills Road on the Dallas North Tollway.

When will the new speed limits go into effect?

The new speed limits will become effective as signs are posted. NTTA staff began replacing speed limit signs immediately after the Board of Directors' approval on Aug. 19, and all signs are expected to be in place by Sept. 1. Drivers are encouraged to follow the posted speed limits and should continue to use caution when driving the speed limit.

Why are the speed limits at far ends of the toll roads only 50-55 mph?

These are called transitional speed limits. The speed limits at the ends of the Dallas North Tollway and the east end of the Bush Turnpike drop to 50 or 55 mph as a transition to the slower speeds on the city streets. State law requires the speed limit at the end of a toll road or highway to be no more than 15 mph over speed limit on the city street.

How were the new speed limits set?

NTTA sets speed limits in accordance with applicable law (Section 545.354 of the Transportation Code). In some cases, speed limits also are influenced by environmental law factors implemented at the request of the region. Although not required, a speed study also may be conducted.

In this case, the recommended speed limits are based on speed studies (conducted in accordance with Texas Administrative Code Rule 25.21). The study evaluated current speeds traveled by motorists, horizontal and vertical geometries, crash records and environmental impacts along these corridors. The study identified the "85th percentile speed," or the speed at or below which 85 percent of the vehicles are traveling.

Why is the “85th percentile speed” used to set speed limits?

Research on speed indicates that when traffic flows at a safe limit, anything under or over is considered less safe. The 85th percentile speed has been shown to produce the most consistent speed among vehicles and therefore is considered the most characteristic representation of speed limits that are safe and reasonable. Both the national Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the Texas Department of Transportation Procedures for Establishing Speed Zones both state that when a speed limit is to be posted, it should be within 5 mph of the 85th percentile of the free-flowing traffic, unless other factors apply. This methodology is used nationwide to set speed limits.

How is the “85th percentile speed” determined?

Speed studies measure speeds of free-flowing vehicles during weekday off-peak hours under favorable weather conditions over an eight-week period. The speed checks are conducted for a maximum of 125 vehicles at each location or for a two-hour period, whichever comes first.

Why are the speed limits being raised?

NTTA initiated a speed study to determine the appropriate speed limits in conjunction with the implementation of all-electronic toll collection along the Dallas North Tollway and the Bush Turnpike. Results of the study indicated that speed limits along these toll roads should be modified to better represent the speeds currently traveled by motorists. Lower advisory speed limits also were recommended where warranted.

Is this the safest method to determine speed limits?

Safety is NTTA’s primary concern when considering speed limits on its roadways, and in every instance NTTA sets speed limits in accordance with applicable law (Section 545.354 of the Texas Transportation Code). Speed limits that mirror the free flow of traffic are considered the safest. Traffic naturally slows down when there are curves in the road or other configuration changes, and it naturally slows down when there are accidents or other obstructions. NTTA staff and traffic engineers also recommended posting advisory speed limits at locations requiring reduced speeds.

Won’t the higher speed limits create more pollution?

The NTTA incorporated environmental speed limits (ESLs) on portions of the Dallas North Tollway and Bush Turnpike to help offset vehicle emissions and improve overall air quality in the DFW Metroplex. The basic concept, introduced by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, suggests that reducing the speed limits on existing highways by 5 mph results in lower emissions of pollutants.

Since then, the NTTA has implemented a number of projects and initiatives that improve air quality as well as safety and efficiency on our roads. For example, transitioning our toll roads to all-electronic toll collection improves air quality by reducing the stop-and-go traffic at toll booths to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

MAP OF NEW SPEED LIMITS:

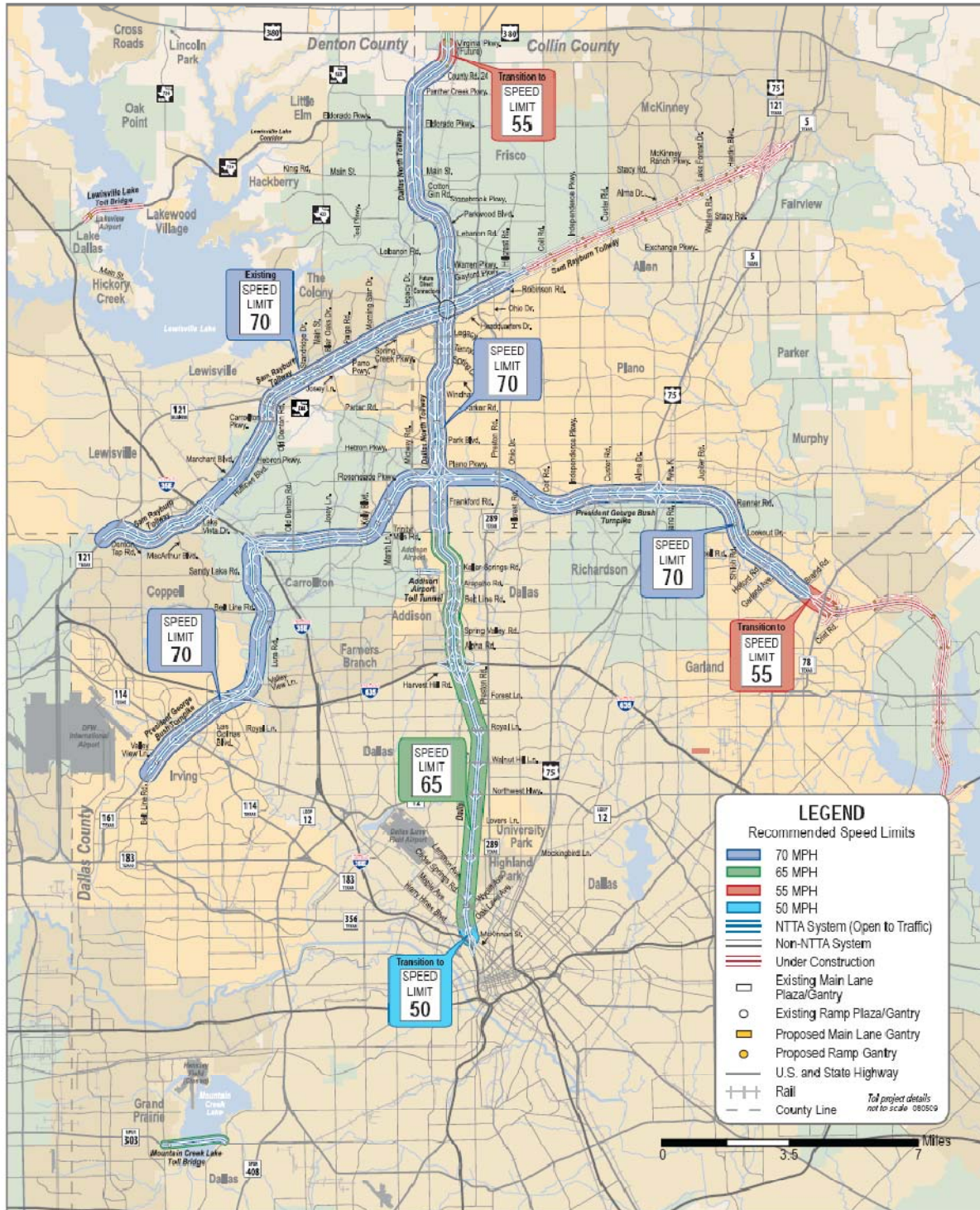


Figure 2
Recommended Speed Limits along the DNT and PGBT
based on Speed Study Results

