

## Slowing down traffic

One of the main reasons parents report not allowing their child to walk or bike to school is because of concerns about fast moving traffic. Indeed, there's a strong relationship between speed and serious traffic crashes. There are many strategies available such as changing the design of the roadway (reducing the number of traffic lanes has been shown to reduce speeds and decrease crashes, improving safety for drivers and passengers as well as pedestrians and bicyclists), to reducing the speed limit, enforcing the speed limit and conducting public education campaigns. In North Carolina, speeds in school zones can be set as low as 20 mph (NC General Statute 20-141.1, [https://www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter\\_20/gs\\_20-141.1.html](https://www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_20/gs_20-141.1.html)).

Parents are often the drivers who are speeding near a school so warning the school community and surrounding residents and/or businesses about upcoming enforcement and issuing warnings before citations can help prevent negative reactions.

To understand whether changes to the roadway might be helpful, consult with city or town transportation or public works personnel. See the introduction to *Changes to the physical environment* for tips that can help these conversations be productive.

This section provides resources on why speed is important to address, examples of how communities have slowed traffic on school walking and biking routes and specific changes to the roadway that can have an impact.

### Snapshot: Calming traffic by changing the roadway in Davidson

In the town of Davidson, the local elementary school is at the bottom of a long hill on a street as straight as an arrow. Davidson Elementary School and McEver Park across the street are destinations for hundreds of children each day; and the town had to find ways to calm traffic, slowing down vehicle speeds and making it safer for the students and park users.

The Davidson Public Works Department and the North Carolina Department of Transportation worked together with the school district to install three elements that do just that: a wide speed table at the upper end of the designated school zone; a second speed table—painted and used as a raised crosswalk (and used as a designated crossing guard location)—at the upper entrance to the school property where most students and park users cross the street; and a crosswalk with a median pedestrian refuge island at the lower end of the school property, allowing students and other residents to safely access a local greenway connection and the park.

