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Public Works Department
MEMORANDUM

150 Courthouse Drive
Driggs, ID 83422

DATE December 23, 2024

TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Teton County Public Works Director – Darryl Johnson, PE, PLS
SUBJECT: Ski Hill Road Speed Limit Summary

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an evaluation of the posted 45 mile per hour County speed limit on Ski Hill Road.

EXISTING CONDITIOINS

The Ski Hill Road posted speed limit within the City of Driggs as it approaches City/County limits is 35 mph. The posted speed limit then increases to 45 mph once in Teton County, ID. The speed limit remains 45 mph for approximately 2.8 miles to the Idaho/Wyoming state line. The posted speed limit then changes to 35 mph once in Teton County, WY. The posted speed limit traveling through Alta, WY is 25 mph and changes back to 35 mph in Teton County, WY east of Alta.

Idaho State Statute 49-654 addresses posted speed limits. Statute states that the posted speed limit should be 55 mph on non-highway or non-interstate roads where no special hazard or condition exists that requires lower speed. The State recognizes the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_11th_Edition.htm). Section 2B.21, paragraph 7 addresses speed zones other than statutory speed limits. Speed zones shall only be established on the basis of an engineering study. Engineering studies rely heavily on the 85th percentile speed. The 85th percentile speed is the speed that 85% of drivers travel at or under. This is considered the speed that drivers feel safe and comfortable driving.

A quick and dirty evaluation of Ski Hill Road was conducted within Teton County, ID using recorded speeds from the County's variable message boards (VMB) the week of 11/25. Findings generated from the VMB data produced an 85th percentile speed of 48 mph for northeast bound traffic just past Cemetery Road and 50 mph for southwest bound traffic just past the Idaho/Wyoming state line.

USLIMITS2 is a web-based expert system tool designed to help with establishing reasonable, safe and consistent speed limits. A recommended speed limit of 45 mph was determined using the USLIMITS2 software and data collected from the VMB's,

At the request of the City of Driggs, Teton County collected data on Ski Hill Road just northeast of the ID/WY state line the week of August 12th. The posted speed limit in WY is 35 mph. Speed statistics based on these traffic counts produced an 85th percentile speed of 43 mph.

PROPOSED SPEED LIMIT POSTING

Idaho State Statute 49-654.2.a.i states speed limits within residential, business or urban districts should be posted at 35mph. Statute 49-654 allows for a speed limit reduction when special hazards or conditions exist that require a lower speed limit.

Based on all evaluations investigated, an engineering and traffic study would likely suggest the speed limit within the Ski Hill Road corridor be posted at 45 mph as a result of the 85th percentile speed determinations. However, Public Works is suggesting that, due to special hazards, the speed limit on Ski Hill Road in Teton County, ID be posted at 35 mph. Special hazards considered are as follows;

1. Ski Hill Road from the City of Driggs to the Idaho State Line has many characteristics of an urban district. State Statute states that the maximum speed limit within urban districts shall be 35 mph. This corridor is densely populated with numerous intersections and private driveways.
2. The Ski Hill Road section includes bike lanes that are heavily used. This corridor is one of the highest used bike lanes in Teton County.
3. Over the past five years (2019-2024) there have been 44 RECORDED vehicle/wildlife collisions. Wildlife is abundant through this corridor and congregates close to the road, especially during winter months.
4. There have been five vehicle damage accidents recorded in the past five years.
5. The road corridor follows Teton Creek and the majority of the road section is shaded by cottonwood and aspen trees. The combination of heavy traffic early in the day, which causes melting, and shady afternoons creates icy and dangerous late afternoon/evening road conditions. In 2017, a fatality occurred caused by slick, icy evening road conditions.

“Residential District” and “Urban District” are defined in State Statute Title 49 to assist in understanding what altering speed limits in those areas should consider. A “Residential District” is “The territory contiguous to and including a highway not comprising a business district when the property on the highway for a distance of three hundred (300) feet or more is in the main improved with residences, or residences and buildings in use for business, and a “Urban District” is “The territory contiguous to and including any highway which is built up with structures devoted to business, industry or dwelling houses.”

CONCLUSION

Based on the urban corridor characteristics and special road conditions listed above, Public Works is recommending that the County approve a 35 mph posted speed limit on Ski Hill Road.