Construction/Work Area Speed Limit Signing

Construction Engineering Services Bureau
Revised April 23, 2018

The purpose of this guidance is to provide MDT field crews and Transportation Management Plan (TMP) teams will help in construction zone speed limit signing.

Traffic control reviews have found some confusion and non-uniformity with construction zone speed limit signing. The areas are:

- Speed limit step down signing when entering a construction or work zone.
- Speed limit signing between work areas.

Speed Limit Step Down Signing

Many of the MDT Detailed Drawings, beginning with 618-08, illustrates the use of the W3-5 at 3000 feet from the construction/work zone and the W3-5 with the W16-2 placed 2000 feet from the construction/work zone.



W3-5
48" x 48"
(USE WHEN STEP
DOWN IS 30 M.P.H.
OR GREATER)



W3-5
48" x 48"



W16-2
30" x 24"

The purpose of the advanced warning speed limit sign is to draw driver's attention to a major change in speed limits. The single W3-5 is required **only** when the step down is **30 mph or greater** as noted. The need for this sign is at those locations where the incoming speed limit is high, such as at the beginning of projects or between work zones within the project when resuming to normal posted speed limits. At issue is the placement of these signs when the posted permanent speed limit is within 30 mph and already at or even below the construction/work area speed limit, especially on urban projects.

The W3-5 with the W16-2 is always installed 2000 feet from the location where the reduced speed limit takes effect. Insure that the posted speed limits correspond to Table 618-5 in the Standard Specifications or have been approved by the Engineering project manager.



Permanent Posted Sign at 25 mph with Construction Step Down Signs

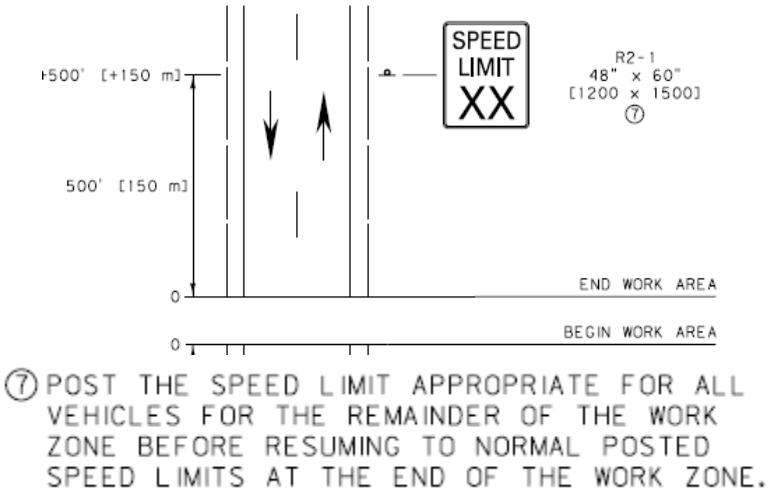
The photo above shows a typical placement of the step down signs series even though the permanent speed limit sign is 25 mph. The Detailed Drawings call out these signs however, traffic control contractors and MDT construction crews must be aware of the existing project circumstances before implementing the step down signs.

The W3-5 and the W3-5/W16-5 signs are not required for the following situations:

- The current posted permanent speed limit is at or within 30 mph of the speed limit when entering the construction zone.
- The current posted permanent speed limit is equal to the construction/work zone speed limit.

End of Work Area Speed Limit Signing

Detailed Drawing 618-08, placement of the R2-1 is required 500 feet past the end of the work area. Posting the R2-1 will reduce driver confusion and uncertainty with the speed limit between work areas.



Without the R2-1, drivers may not be aware they can resume the pre-work area speed limit. Some drivers may think the speed limit remains the same as the work area; other may think the speed limit increases to the pre-work area limit. This, combined with speed limit step down signs when approaching the next work area, can lead to speed differentials between work areas and frustrated drivers. The speed differentials can be especially conflicting if the work areas are relatively close together.

Speed Limit Signing Between Work Areas

Posting speed limit signs between work areas will also help reduce driver confusion and speed differentials. Table 618-5, Traffic Control Speed Limits in Construction Zones in the Standard Specifications, is a useful guide to setting appropriate speed limits. The distance between speed limit signs in the construction zone will depend on the distance between work area and other construction zones specifics. The Project manager will determine sign spacing as needed.