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2/10/15 calendar item #26, Speed limit issue in Coloma

1 message

Larry Weitzman <weitzman@directcon.net>

Tue, Feb 10, 2015 at 4:41 PM

To: edc.cob@edcgov.us, Pamela Knorr <pamela.knorr@edcgov.us>, bosone@edcgov.us, bosthree@edcgov.us, bosfour@edcgov.us, bosfive@edcgov.us

Dear BOS, The reason why speed limits are set at the 85th percentile.

I have written about speed limits and even had an economics class during my undergraduate study in transportation economics. I have also more recently consulted with the foremost transportation economist, Dr. Charles Lave at UCI. The bottom line is that speed limits are set at the 85th percentile as that ascertained speed creates the safest highways. The reason is that the 85th percentile creates the smallest speed variance (cars traveling at different speeds). This fact is why speed limits are set at what they are, whether they are 30 mph or 75 or 80 mph. It just so happens when I last checked the average speeds on the interstate (85th percentile) are about 70 mph. Higher speeds are not dangerous. Just like planes fly at 600 mph in formations only a few feet apart because they are all going the same speed and it is safe to do. Speed does not kill, it is speed variance that kills and that is why the 85th percentile is used as that percentile creates the smallest speed variance and the safest highways.

A statistical fact with respect to this idea is that during the time of the 55/65 mph speed limits on our highways some years ago the data clearly showed that the 55 mph highways had a higher death rate than the 65 mph limited highways. The reason was the 55mph highways did not use the 85th percentile to set the speed limits but were arbitrarily set thus creating a higher speed variance. That is why there is such a state law. There are other lesser reasons for the 85th percentile use but I don't want to write a book here.

Thank you for your consideration,

Larry Weitzman

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