

What does that solution look like in St. Louis?

The Missouri Department of Transportation is starting variable speed limits along I-270. When congestion starts building along stretches of I-270, MoDOT will use changeable speed limit signs to vary the speed limit on the road. Speed limits along I-270 could range from 60 mph during extremely light traffic, to as low as 40 mph during extreme congestion. Speed limits could be lowered further if there is a significant crash on I-270.

How does MoDOT determine when to lower or raise the speed limit?

MoDOT bases decisions on increasing or decreasing the speed limit by viewing the occupancy of the lanes – or the percentage of how long a vehicle uses a section of highway compared to how long it should be there. If occupancy rates are increasing, that is a good determination that cars are bunching up. The engineer also takes into consideration the volume of the highway (how many vehicles are currently on that stretch of highway). Finally, they consider how fast those vehicles are going. MoDOT will consider changing the speed limits when the occupancy, volume and speed increase or decrease significantly.

Can these limits be enforced?

Yes. The Missouri Department of Transportation has the ability to raise and lower speed limits on interstate roads. The Missouri Highway Patrol has the responsibility of enforcing those speed limits.

Where else are variable speed limits used?

Variable speed limits are used in Europe; Tennessee, Washington, Delaware, and New Jersey have some form of variable speed limits.

What other options are there to ease traffic flow?

- **Ramp metering:** Smooths highway merging to avoid traffic slowdowns – can back up onto arterial streets during increased congestion or incidents. Expensive to implement.
- **Pricing highways with variable tolls:** Paces demand for traffic through supply-price-demand “process” to achieve steady peak capacity conditions. Would require legislative changes to enable tolling.
- **New construction in congestion areas:** Construction in some areas of congestion would require major redesign of the roadway, might require purchasing extensive right of way, or could be limited by existing roadway structures. Very expensive to implement.
- **Incident response:** Clears blocking conditions, reduces secondary accidents, restores traffic flow. Used in St. Louis.
- **Information systems:** Helps drivers anticipate conditions along the route to help make better decisions on alternate routes. Used in St. Louis.



Variable Speed Limits in St. Louis

Slow and steady means everyone gets there quicker



