



Case study: Hamilton City Council Safer Speed Areas

In 2011/12 Hamilton City Council became one of the first councils to introduce Safer Speed Areas in several residential neighbourhoods.

The introduction of the areas was part of the Council's plan to implement 40km/h speed limit outside all schools in the area.

The Hamilton Safer Speed Areas have a permanent top speed of 40km/h. They are established in areas with an above average crash risk and with a high volume of vulnerable road users e.g. residential areas and schools.

They are identified by road markings, speed limit signage and improvements to pedestrian access within the area – including islands and platforms at key crossing points.

This introduction of Safer Speed Areas informed the development of the Speed Management Guide, and is considered a best practice example for urban speed management.

Engaging collateral

A range of collateral was designed by Hamilton City Council and other partners to support engagement with the communities. This was supported by Road Safety Trust funding. It included:

- **[Community survey](#)** – prior to implementation of the Safer Speed Areas, the council sent a letter and a survey to residents in proposed Safer Speed Areas seeking their views on speed and road safety in their local area.

The Council also used the opportunity to educate the community on how decisions on speed limits are made and the effects of speed-related crashes on vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists.

- **[Monitoring survey](#)** - a second survey following the implementation of the physical works and lowering of speed limits was sent to affected residents. Respondents were asked to consider a number of statements in regard to Safer Speed Areas implementation for example 'Safe Speed Areas help prevent people being injured or killed on local roads'. Respondents were also asked what they knew about the Safer Speed Areas concept and what education materials they had seen.
- Creation of **[Safer Speed Areas website](#)** – which includes information on the Areas and an email address for any enquiries or ideas the user may have. Users could also register their interest in making their own road a Safer Speed Area.

- [Marketing blue print](#) – staged marketing plan
- Public notice in local newspaper
- Information on the [Hamilton City Council website](#)
- Notices at all public libraries
- Information in school newsletters
- Media releases
- Advertisements in Hamilton Press newspaper
- Advertisements during time-saver traffic radio reports
- Advertisements on Stuff
- Bus-back advertisements running around the city
- Brochures were distributed to all libraries and community centres in the areas where the new Safer Speed Areas were being introduced, as well as to businesses in the new areas
- Facebook prompts
- Billboards installed within the areas for a short period to provide additional reminders to motorists travelling in the areas.

Key learnings

Key learnings from this engagement include:

- The use of multiple communication channels prior and during the implementation of the Safer Speed Areas meant that the community felt well informed and prepared for the changes to their community.
- It's important to continue to engage with your community after changes are made. Sustained community engagement ahead and during the changes led to widespread support of the Safer Speed areas, however this intensity was not maintained once the areas were implemented. This led to delays in creating more Safer Speed Areas, as community support was not as strong as it had been initially.
- With local elections every three years, it's important to invest time and resource into briefing incoming councillors on how speed management is implemented in their community to ensure buy-in for initiatives that are currently underway or planned.
- The Community survey was an effective tool to educate the community on speed-related crashes and to gauge interest levels for the implementation of Safer Speed Areas. It also gave the community the opportunity to share their thoughts on speed in their neighbourhood. This is a good example of the first principle '[Lay the groundwork and take your time](#)' of positive engagement included in the Speed Management Guide.
- The monitoring survey gave good insight into how the Safer Speed Areas were being received by the community. The results indicated there was good understanding by the residents towards the Safer Speed Areas concept and that the lower speed limits are not considered to be an inconvenience.

- There is an opportunity to develop more engagement tools for example a Facebook page dedicated to the Safer Speed Areas. Social media channels allow low cost and wide reach into diverse audiences. It can also be an effective platform to generate quality conversations on road safety within the community.
- Ensure you have sufficient resourcing before you start. Hamilton City Council engaged effectively with their community across multiple channels over a sustained period.
- Calls to action on education materials for example “Tell us what you think” need channels in place that are quick and easy for the community to access if they wish to respond. All responses should be acknowledged.
- Ensure that the dates of the changes coming into effect are widely publicised and easily understood.
- Ensure all road safety partners are part of the development of the community engagement plan and agree on the educational and enforcement approach to be taken. Local Police committed to Councillors that the enforcement approach for the Hamilton Safer Speed Areas after the new speed limits were implemented would be no different to the enforcement approach in those areas before the changes. This was important from both an evaluation perspective, and from the community acceptance perspective.

Results

Monitoring surveys show a percentage decrease in traffic speeds in the Safer Speed Areas ranging from one percent to six percent.

Research also shows a decreasing crash rate in Safer Speed Areas, which contrasts with a rising crash rate across the city.

The Council has now increased the number of Safer Speed Areas so that every school in the council area has a 40km/h speed limit (either permanent or variable) in place outside the school gates.

There were some areas where the mean operating speed was still above the required 5km/h above the new posted speed limit. As a result these areas have had additional physical works to meet the requirements of the Rule.

Hamilton City Council are currently using the Speed Management Guide to develop a new speed management plan to be implemented over the next three years. This will include engagement, education, consultation, engineering works and changes to speed limits.