

Evaluating Speed Limit Policy Impacts in Michigan: Summary of Research Results

Timothy J. Gates, Ph.D., P.E.
Associate Professor
Michigan State University
gatestim@msu.edu

September 28, 2015

Introduction

- Recent legislation introduced to increase speed limits in Michigan
 - Rural Freeway General Speed Limit of 80 mph
 - Urban Freeway General Speed Limit of 70 mph
 - Truck/Bus Freeway Speed Limit of 70 mph
 - Trunk Line General Speed Limit of 65 mph
- MDOT research project to examine speed limit policy impacts
 - Initial Scope (02/13): Increasing truck speed limit
 - Scope Increase (11/13): Increasing maximum speed limit
 - Scope Increase (07/14): Prioritization of non-freeways

Nationwide Policy Debate

Utah set to bump speed freeways to 70 mph

Here's why Ohio lawmakers scrapped plans for 75-mph speed limits, new left-lane restrictions

Recent Policy Changes Nationwide

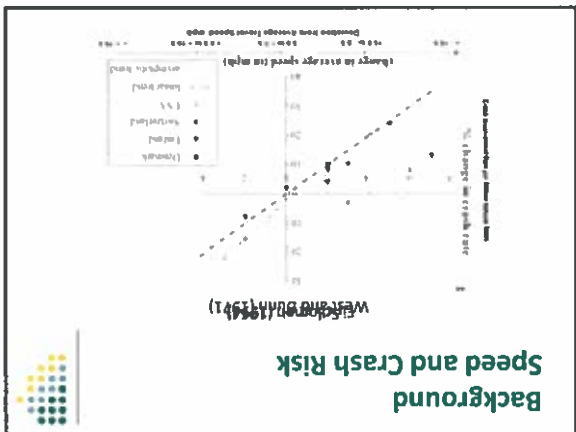
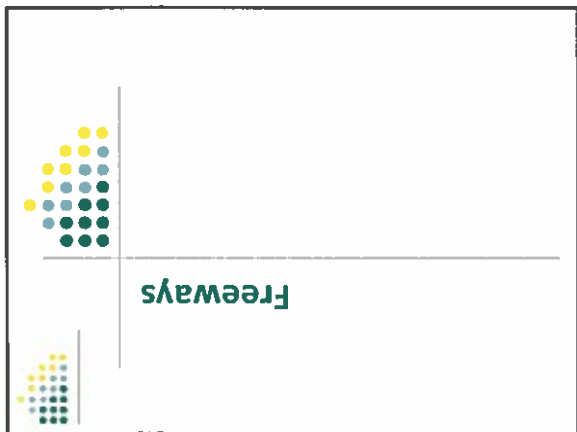
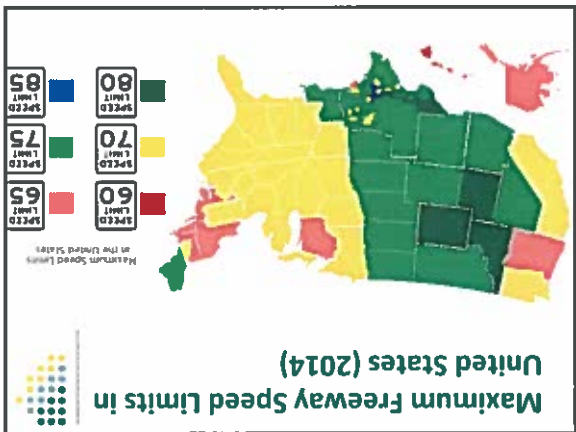
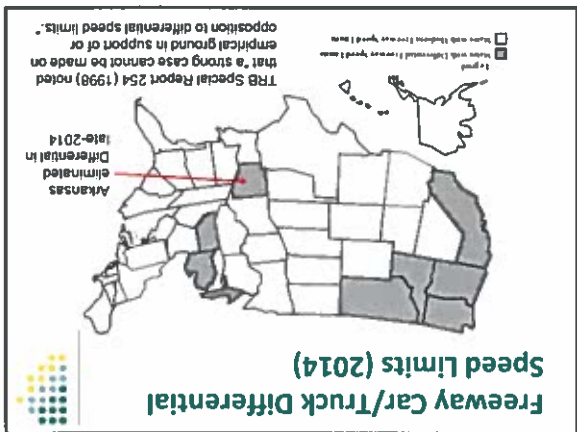
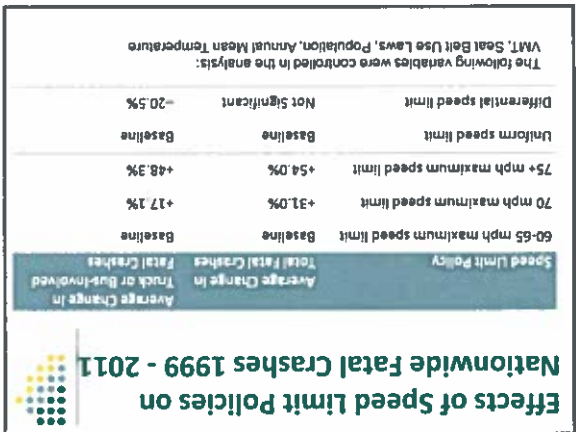
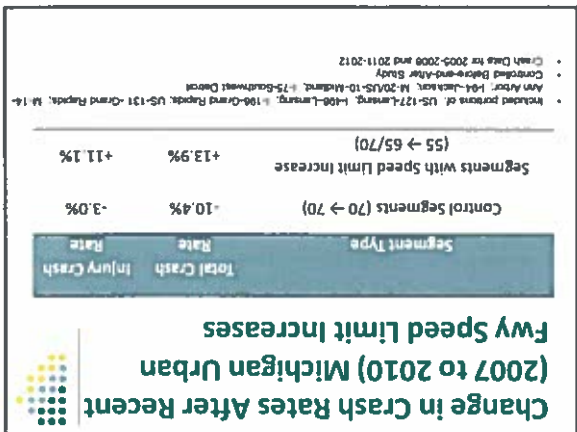
State	Type of Roadway	Prior Limit	New Limit	Year
Ohio	Ohio Turnpike	65	70	2011
Louisiana	Select Rural Freeways	70	75	2011
Kansas	Rural Freeways	70	75	2011
Indiana	Tollway	55	70	2012
Arkansas	Select Rural Highway	55	60, 65	2012
Texas	Rural Freeways; Tollway	75; 80	80; 85	2012
Kentucky	Select US Highway	55	65	2012
Ohio	Select Rural Freeways	65	70	2013
North Carolina	Select Rural Freeways	65	70	2013
Utah	Select Rural Freeways	75	80	2013
Alaska	State Highway	55	65	2013
Georgia	Select Interstates	55	65	2013
Illinois	Tollway; Select Freeways	55; 65	70	2014
New Hampshire	Select Interstates	65	70	2014
South Carolina	Select State Highways	55	60	2014
Pennsylvania	Rural Freeways	65	70	2014
Maine	Select Interstates	55; 65	60; 70	2014
Wyoming	Select Interstates	75	80	2014

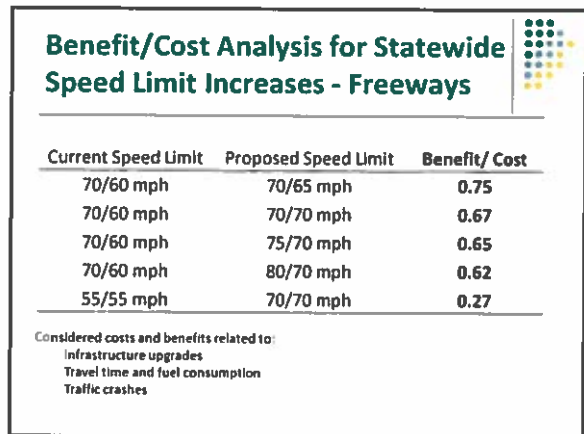
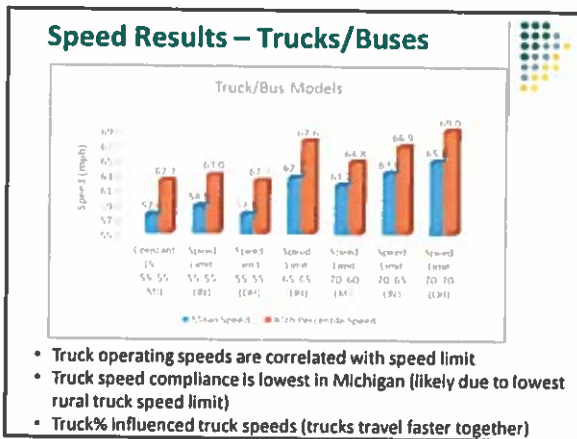
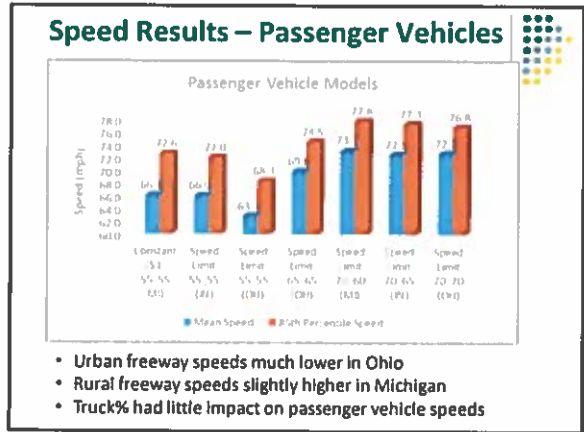
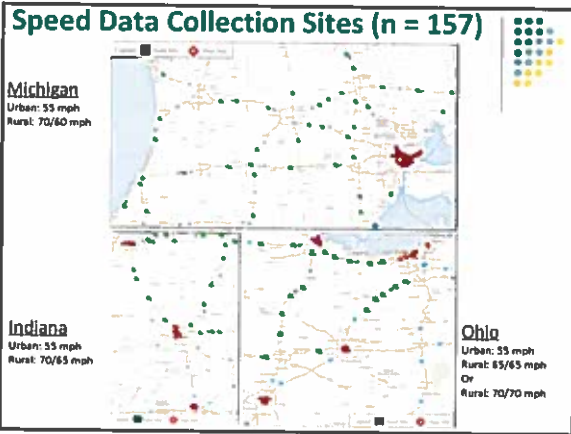
Recent Speed Limit Increases - Nationwide Findings

- Increases have generally occurred on select segments (i.e., not system-wide)
- Feasibility determined based on engineering studies, evidence, and data
 - 85th percentile speeds
 - Realistic, reasonable, and appropriate speed limits
- Too soon for safety analysis
- Unknown economic impacts

Background Impacts of Policy on Safety

- Safety impacts of important Federal actions
 - 1974 – 1987
 - 55 mph maximum speed limit on all U.S. roadways
 - Traffic fatalities decreased by ~7,500 annually
 - 1987 – 1995
 - 65 mph allowed on rural interstates
 - Traffic fatalities increased by 29 percent
 - 1995 – present
 - Maximum speed limits controlled by states
 - More than 12,500 total additional fatalities (through 2005)





Non-Freeways

