



## Purpose

A school zone is a network of designated roads surrounding a school that experience a high concentration of school-generated traffic. School zones are marked with special signage to alert drivers of the presence of people accessing the school and they have lower speed limits than surrounding roads either at arrival/dismissal times or at all times. School zone guidelines are applicable to schools from elementary to high school level, both public and private.

Creating new school zone guidelines for Arlington County is a recommendation from the County’s [Vision Zero Action Plan](#). In the past, school zones have followed the existing guidelines of the Virginia State Code and the Arlington County Code, which leave room for interpretation and sometimes conflict.

Arlington County Division of Transportation, Arlington Public Schools, and the Arlington County Police Department collaborated to develop these guidelines for:

- Establishing school zone boundaries.
- Setting school zone speed limits—ensuring that all school zone speed limits are at or below 25mph—either *dynamically* using beacons at arrival/dismissal times or *statically* using new permanent slow zone signs.
- Specifying typical signs, crosswalks, pavement markings, and other aspects of the school zone.

This document provides basic guidelines for (1) identifying school zone boundaries, (2) determining the school zone speed limit type, and (3) the standard engineering tools applied within school zones to enhance safety and visibility.

## School Zone Boundary

A school zone shall include roadways that are within 600 feet of a school access points or critical school crossing:

1. A school access point is any point along the school property line at which a person could enter school property by foot, bike, vehicle, or other means of transport.
2. A critical school crossing is a pedestrian/bicycle crossing in the immediate vicinity (typically within 1,000 feet of a school access point) of a school that is heavily used by students accessing the school and confirmed by school staff.

Arlington County staff collaborate with the staff at each school to confirm the school zones based on their understanding of school access/egress and their daily experiences with the school community.

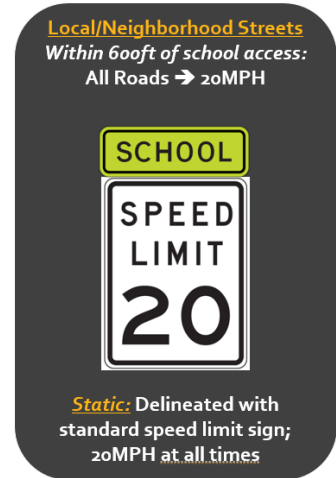


## School Zone Speed Limits

Speed limits in Arlington are either 20 or 25mph. Speed limits may be either (1) dynamic—delineated by flashing beacons at arrival/dismissal times or (2) static—delineated by the new permanent 20mph slow zone speed limit signs.

The school zone speed limit depends on:

1. The roadway classification:
  - a. **Arterial Streets:**  
Major to minor roads with medium-to-high traffic volumes that are owned and managed by VDOT or Arlington County. They have mid-level speed limits (25-45 MPH) and 1-2+ lanes in each direction.
  - b. **Local Streets:** Low volume roads that connect arterial roads and neighborhoods typically owned by Arlington County. They have low level speeds limits (25 MPH) and are 1 lane in each direction.
2. The location of the roadway in relation to the school:
  - a. **Adjacent:** Roadway runs along school property line.
  - b. **Side Immediate:** Roadway intersects with another roadway segment that touches the school property line.
  - c. **Side:** Roadway provides a connection to the school and is within 600 feet of a school access point.
3. The preexisting speed limit at the site.
  - a. Speed limits on arterials can range from 25-40mph.
  - b. Speed limits on local roads will likely be 25mph.



The following matrix guides how to determine the speed limit and signage type for each roadway that falls within the school zone boundary:

Class/Location >>	Arterial			Local		
	Adjacent	Side Immediate	Side	Adjacent	Side Immediate	Side
<b>25mph</b>	20 / Beacon	20 / Beacon	None	20 / Static	20 / Static	Special Case
<b>30mph</b>	20 / Beacon	20 / Beacon	Special Case	20 / Static	20 / Static	Special Case
<b>35mph</b>	25 / Beacon	25 / Beacon	Special Case	NA	NA	NA
<b>40mph</b>	25 / Beacon	25 / Beacon	Special Case	NA	NA	NA

<b>Legend</b>	
<b>25 / Beacon</b>	25mph School Zone Speed Limit Indicated by Flashing Beacons
<b>20 / Beacon</b>	20mph School Zone Speed Limit Indicated by Flashing Beacons
<b>20 / Static</b>	20mph Speed Limit – Slow Zone Indicated by Static Sign
<b>Special Case</b>	Engineering judgement applied. If yes, engineer shall use recommendation in cell to the left.

## Standard School Zone Engineering Treatments

Infrastructure characteristics on streets within the school zone include

- Static school slow zones
  - “Speed Limit 20” (R2-1) sign with a “School” (S4-3P) sign on top
  - “20 MPH” pavement markings to reinforce that the speed limit is constant (used primarily where transitioning from a higher volume/speed road to a lower volume/speed road OR adjacent to school)
  - “End of School Zone” (S-5-2) or speed limit signs where slow zone ends
  - Remove “When Flashing” from school beacon signs in areas with existing beacons that now qualify for static school slow zones; continue to operate school beacons during school arrival/ dismissal until equipment fails – then remove
- Dynamic school zones
  - “School Speed Limit 20 When Flashing” or “School Speed Limit 25 When Flashing” (S5-1)
  - Beacons will flash for thirty minutes preceding regular school hours, for thirty minutes thereafter, and during such other times as the presence of children on such school property or going to and from school reasonably requires a special warning to motorists
  - “SCHOOL” pavement markings in some cases
  - “End of School Zone” (S-5-2) or speed limit signs where school zone ends
- School zone crossings
  - School Crossing (S1-1) signs and high visibility markings at all crosswalks within any dynamic or static school zone
  - “SLOW SCHOOL XING” advanced crosswalk markings at any uncontrolled crossing over an arterial roadway within or adjacent to a school zone

