



TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION FACT SHEETS

“MAYBE A STOP SIGN WILL SLOW TRAFFIC ON OUR STREET?”

Stop signs installed in the wrong places for the wrong purposes usually create more problems than they solve.

One common misuse of Stop signs is to arbitrarily interrupt traffic, either by causing it to stop or by causing such an inconvenience that motorists are forced to use other routes. Studies conducted in many parts of the country show that there is a high incidence of intentional violations where Stop signs are installed as “nuisances” or “speed breakers”. These studies show that speed was only reduced in the immediate vicinity (about 100 to 150 feet) of the “nuisance” stop signs. But, speeds were actually higher between Stop signs than they would have been if these signs had not been installed. These same studies show that drivers increase their speed between unwarranted Stop signs to make up for lost time. Because of these studies and the increased speeds of drivers on streets with unwarranted Stop signs, the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices clearly states that “Stop signs should not be used for speed control.”

At the right place and under the right conditions, a Stop sign tells drivers and pedestrians who has the right of way. Nationally recognized standards have been established to determine when stop signs should be used. These standards, or “Warrants,” are:

- 1) Intersection of a less important road with a main road where the normal right-of-way rule is unduly hazardous,
- 2) Street entering a through highway or street,
- 3) Unsignalized intersection in a signalized area, or
- 4) Other intersections where a combination of high speed, restricted view, and serious crash record indicates a need for control by the Stop sign.

Before a Stop sign can be installed, a traffic study must be conducted to determine the prevalent speeds of vehicles, sight distance restriction between all approaching vehicles and analysis of crash data.

Prior to the application of these Stop sign Warrants, consideration should be given to less restrictive measures, such as a Yield sign.

Most drivers are reasonable and prudent, but, when confronted with unreasonable restrictions, they frequently violate them and develop a general contempt for all traffic controls – often with tragic results.