

SPEEDING SURVEY TOOLKIT

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO OBSERVE,
DOCUMENT, AND MOUNT A CAMPAIGN
TO STOP SPEEDING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.



TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Life moves fast in New York City. We walk quickly, talk quickly and get impatient when anything slows us down. For the most part, this speed is something New Yorkers thrive on. When it comes to traffic, however, this fast pace can be deadly.

Speeding drivers are the single largest cause of fatal traffic collisions in New York City, causing a third of all traffic fatalities. Traffic collisions killed 274 New Yorkers in 2012, critically injuring many more. Even one traffic death is one too many. It is time for the City to take a stand against dangerous driving, enforce traffic laws and introduce new traffic-calming measures.

Transportation Alternatives designed the *Speeding Survey Toolkit* so that New Yorkers can take action in their own communities. T.A. will lend you a radar gun to measure speeding trends in your neighborhood and help you mobilize local decision-makers to improve traffic safety. By following the steps outlined below, you can help make local streets safer for all New Yorkers.

The likelihood of getting caught for speeding in NYC is less than 1 in 10,000.

Thank you for taking a stand against speeding in New York City. Please keep T.A. updated on your progress. Send in any data you collect and contact T.A. if you need any help.

Contact T.A. with questions or updates:

E-mail: safety@transalt.org

Phone: 212 629-8080



**TRANSPORTATION
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WHY USE THIS TOOLKIT?

If speeding is a problem in your neighborhood, this toolkit will help you prove it. From building community support to conducting your own speeding study, you can take practical steps that will have a real impact.

The Process:

1. Connect with Your Community

Get involved with your community board and reach out to elected officials.

2. Choose a Location

Choose a location for your speeding survey.

3. Conduct Your Speeding Survey

With a clipboard and radar gun in hand, conduct your own speeding survey.

4. Conduct a Passerby Survey (Optional)

Conduct a Passerby Survey to solicit your neighbors' opinions on traffic safety.

5. Assess Your Findings

Look at your data to find out if speeding really is a problem.

6. Take Action!

Contact T.A. to come up with an action plan to use your data to combat speeding in your neighborhood.

The Outcome:

You can direct your speeding study toward a couple of possible outcomes:

Street Engineering

The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) can implement “traffic calming measures” such as the installation of speed bumps or Neighborhood Slow Zones. See the “Additional Resources” section for more information.

Traffic Law Enforcement

Your New York City Police Department (NYPD) precinct can put more traffic patrol officers on your street and issue more speeding tickets. DOT can also install automated speed cameras to catch lawless drivers.



STEP 1: CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

If you think speeding is a problem in your neighborhood, chances are you're not alone. The only way to find out is to become an active member of your community.

Attend your community board meetings:

New York City's 59 community boards address neighborhood-specific needs and work to improve quality of life across the city. Your local community board holds monthly meetings open to all community members. It will also have special committees devoted to traffic, transportation or public safety. Reading committee minutes or talking to the board's district manager is also a great way to see if other have also raised your concern about speeding. Now is the time to get involved!



Find your local community board:
nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/cb.shtml

Attend your precinct community council meetings:

Your NYPD precinct community council also holds monthly meetings where community affairs officers respond to residents' concerns. Perhaps your precinct is already working to reduce speeding in your neighborhood. You won't know unless you show up.



Visit your precinct's website to learn when your community council meets:
nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/precinct_maps/precinct_finder.shtml



STEP 1: CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Reach out to your elected officials:

The DOT or NYPD may be more likely to respond to your requests if you have the support of your elected representatives. Reach out to your representatives and explain that you are concerned about speeding in your neighborhood. If they are receptive to your concerns, ask for a letter of support acknowledging that speeding is a problem.



Find your City Council member
council.nyc.gov/html/members/members.shtml

Find your State Assembly member
assembly.state.ny.us/mem/?sh=search

Find your State Senator
nysenate.gov

Advocacy Tip:

It is important to take these steps first. You may find out that your community board, precinct or elected officials are already planning changes to address speeding on your block.

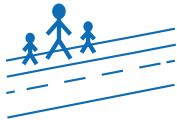


STEP 2: CHOOSE A LOCATION

Before you can conduct your speeding survey, you will want to choose one block to study. This will allow you to focus your efforts and collect more legitimate data.

Choose one block to study:

If you don't already have a specific block in mind, the following questions can help you decide:



- Where do you notice cars speeding in your neighborhood?
- Where is pedestrian or bicyclist traffic particularly high?
- Are there schools, parks, senior centers, religious institutions or community centers nearby where speeding poses a risk to children or senior citizens?
- Try to stay within the boundaries of the community board, precinct and City Council district you live in.
- **Note:** Streets with hospitals, fire stations, bus routes or truck routes may be ineligible for certain traffic calming devices like speed bumps, but you can still push for better traffic law enforcement.

Fill out the Neighborhood Profile worksheet:

Fill out the Neighborhood Profile worksheet on **p. 14**, adding any information you think is relevant. When answering these questions, also consider the neighborhood around your study block. For instance, if there is a school on a nearby side street or a senior center up the road, be sure to make note of it. The DOT and NYPD are more likely to take action in areas with schools, daycare centers, senior centers and parks.

Advocacy Tip:

The neighborhood profile shows the DOT or NYPD why your neighborhood is a high priority area in need of traffic calming measures.



STEP 3: CONDUCT YOUR SPEEDING SURVEY

Now that your study parameters are chosen and your volunteers are trained, you are ready to begin your speeding survey. See the Speeding Study Quick Guide on p. 15-16 for a summary of these instructions that you can bring out in the field.

What materials will you need?

T.A. will provide everything you need to conduct your speed survey. Contact the T.A. office to pick up a bag that will include:



- A copy of the T.A. Speeding Survey Toolkit
- 1 radar gun
- Speeding Survey Tally Sheets
- Passerby Surveys
- 2 clipboards
- Pens

When to survey?

You should conduct a minimum of four two-hour survey sessions. The following schedule is a good model, but feel free to modify it to fit your needs:



- Two weekday afternoons (approximately 1-3 pm, Monday-Friday)
- One weekday evening (approximately 7-9 pm, Monday-Thursday)
- One weekend evening (approximately 7-9 pm, Friday or Saturday)
- **Note:** Conduct your survey on a clear day. Bad weather slows traffic and will skew your results.

How many helpers will you need?



You will need a total of two to three people at each session—one to hold the radar gun, one to record speeds and an optional third person to conduct a passerby survey. Ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community board members, elected officials and anyone else you can think of. If you can't assemble enough volunteers, contact T.A. for help.



STEP 3: CONDUCT YOUR SPEEDING SURVEY

Where to stand?



Stand mid-block so that drivers have enough time and distance to accelerate after the previous traffic signal. If the street has two-way traffic, spend half your time collecting data from vehicles traveling in one direction, then cross the street to capture data from the other direction. For the most accurate results, stay out of sight of approaching motorists by standing behind a parked car or tree.

Which vehicles to measure and how many?

The goal is to measure vehicles traveling at “free-flow” speed, meaning the speed they would go if there were no congestion or other adverse conditions. Follow these guidelines:



- Try to measure at least 150 vehicles per survey session
- Measure any vehicle as long as it is at least 5 seconds behind other vehicles
- Do not include vehicles slowing to execute turns or approaching a stop
- Include ALL vehicles that meet the above criteria, whether or not they appear to be speeding. This allows you to come up with accurate averages and statistics.

How to use a radar gun?



- Stand at least 25 feet away from the vehicles you are measuring. For reference, an average midsize sedan or SUV is just over 15 feet long.
- Aim the radar gun so that vehicles are traveling nearly directly toward or away from the radar gun – toward the radar gun is most accurate. Stand parallel to the lane, not perpendicular.
- Stay out of sight of approaching motorists by standing behind a parked car or tree.
- Stay safe and use common sense. Do not stand in traffic or bicycle lanes.



STEP 3: CONDUCT YOUR SPEEDING SURVEY

What counts as speeding?



The speed limit on all New York City streets is 30 mph unless otherwise posted. On many streets, you will find that 30 mph still feels too fast for pedestrian and bicyclist safety. If that's the case, be sure to make note of it and consider making the case for a lower speed limit.



Tally your results:

Record speeds on the Speeding Survey Tally Sheet (**see p. 17**). After completing all of your survey sessions, input your data into the Speeding Survey Statistics worksheet. A sample version is included on **p. 19**. Contact T.A. to get a blank electronic

worksheet.

Contact T.A. with questions or updates:

E-mail: safety@transalt.org

Phone: 212 629-8080



STEP 4: CONDUCT A PASSERBY SURVEY (OPTIONAL)

The Passerby Survey is an opportunity to get your neighbors' opinions on traffic safety. While the numbers often speak for themselves, personal stories provide a more complete picture of the issue and make a more compelling argument. If you can prove that a large number of your neighbors think speeding is a concern, your local decision makers are more likely to respond.

The Passerby Survey can be found on **p. 18**.

A few tips:

- A good opening line is “Hi. I am working to improve traffic safety in our neighborhood. Would you be willing to answer a few quick questions about your experience? It will take less than a minute.”
- Ask everyone who passes by to answer the survey. The more data you collect, the better.
- If someone turns you down, simply smile and thank them anyway



STEP 5: ASSESS YOUR FINDINGS

Once you have collected your data, it's time to confirm if your hunch was correct. Look at your Speeding Survey Statistics data. Is the average driving speed above 30 miles per hour? Are a large percentage of drivers exceeding the limit? Would your data make a convincing argument on the need for traffic calming initiatives in your neighborhood?

According to your results, is speeding a problem in your neighborhood? If you're unsure, talk to T.A.

If speeding is a problem . . .

Discuss your results with T.A. to come up with an action plan (see "Step 6").

If speeding is not a problem . . .

Sometimes what seems like a speeding problem is really caused by other dangerous traffic violations such as cars running red lights or making unsafe turns. Turn to the T.A. *Traffic Monitoring Toolkit* to record those violations.

Take action using the Traffic Monitoring Toolkit!
transalt.org/trafficmonitoring

Contact T.A. with questions or updates:

E-mail: safety@transalt.org
Phone: 212 629-8080



STEP 6: TAKE ACTION!

The final step is to contact T.A. to discuss your progress thus far and figure out where to go from here. T.A. will help you devise an action plan to tackle the speeding problem in your community.

Possible next steps:



- Present your data to your community board or precinct community council
- Get signed letters of support from your local representatives
- Request traffic calming measures from the DOT
- Request increased speeding enforcement by your NYPD precinct

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Traffic calming solutions:

T.A. Streets for People
transalt.org/resources/streets4people

DOT Traffic Calming Guidelines
nyc.gov/html/dot/html/safety/traffic-calming.shtml

DOT Neighborhood Slow Zones
nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/slowzones.shtml

T.A. speeding studies:

Elmhurst Speedway: A Study of Lawbreaking in Elmhurst
transalt.org/files/newsroom/reports/2012/Speeding_in_East_Elmhurst.pdf

Slow Down: A Study of Speeding on McGuinness Boulevard
transalt.org/files/newsroom/reports/2012/A_Study_of_Speeding_on_McGuinness_Boulevard_Report_Final.pdf

Terminal Velocity: New York City's Speeding Epidemic
transalt.org/files/newsroom/reports/2009/terminal_velocity.pdf

Browse T.A. reports for more information and inspiration:

Transportation Alternatives Reports
transalt.org/newsroom/reports



SPEEDING SURVEY NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

Surveyor Name: _____ Date: _____

Survey location: _____ between _____ & _____
(Street name) (Cross streets at either end of survey block)

Borough: _____ Community Board #: _____ NYPD Precinct #: _____

Street & Neighborhood Uses:

- What attracts pedestrians and bicyclists to your neighborhood? List any shops, businesses, schools, parks, senior centers, religious institutions or community organizations in the neighborhood. Also list any subway stations or bus stops.
- Why do you think speeding is particularly bad in your neighborhood? Is there a highway entrance or exit nearby? Are the traffic lights timed so that cars are encouraged to speed? Is the road too wide?



SPEEDING SURVEY QUICK GUIDE

Who should conduct a speeding survey?

If speeding is a problem in your neighborhood and you want to do something about it, this toolkit is for you. The data you collect can help mobilize your local representatives to take action against speeding.

Where to survey?

You'll want to narrow your survey location to just one block. Choose a location where speeding motorists feel particularly intimidating to pedestrians or bicyclists.

When to survey?

Ideally your survey should consist of a minimum of four two-hour sessions. If you have observed that speeding is worse at certain times of day, schedule your survey during that time. Otherwise, the following schedule is a good model:

- Two weekday afternoons (approximately 1-3 pm, Monday-Friday)
- One weekday evening (approximately 7-9 pm, Monday-Thursday)
- One weekend evening (approximately 7-9 pm, Friday or Saturday)
- **Note:** Conduct your survey on a clear day. Bad weather slows traffic and will skew your results.

Where to stand?

- Stand mid-block so that drivers have enough time and distance to accelerate after the previous traffic signal.
- If the street has two-way traffic, spend half your time collecting data from vehicles traveling in one direction, then cross the street to capture data from the other direction.
- For the most accurate results, stay out of sight of approaching motorists by standing behind a parked car or tree.

Which vehicles to measure, and how many?

The goal is to measure vehicles traveling at “free-flow” speed. Free-flow speed refers to the average speed that a motorist would travel if there were no congestion or other adverse conditions, such as bad weather.

Follow these guidelines:

- Try to measure at least 150 vehicles per survey session.
- Measure any vehicle as long as it is five seconds or more behind other vehicles.
- Do not include vehicles slowing to execute turns or approaching a stop.
- Include ALL vehicles that meet the above criteria, whether or not they appear to be speeding.



SPEEDING SURVEY QUICK GUIDE (CONTINUED)

How to use a radar gun?

Follow these steps to get the most accurate reading from your radar gun:

- Stand at least 25 feet away from the vehicles you are measuring. Remember: An average midsize sedan is just over 15 feet long.
- Aim the radar gun so that vehicles are traveling nearly directly toward or away from the radar gun – toward the radar gun is most accurate. (Parallel to vehicle lane, not perpendicular.)
- Stay out of sight of approaching motorists by standing behind a parked car or tree.
- Stay safe and use common sense. Do not stand in traffic or bicycle lanes.
- Aim at the license plate.

What counts as speeding?

The speed limit on all New York City streets is 30 mph unless otherwise posted. Any car traveling over 30 mph is speeding. On many streets, 30 mph is still faster than many pedestrians and bicyclists feel comfortable with. If that's the case, be sure to make note of it on your tally sheet. It is possible to request that the speed limit be lowered to improve safety.

Tally your results:

Record speeds on the Speeding Survey Tally Sheet. After completing all of your survey sessions, input your data into the Speeding Survey Statistics worksheet. It is pre-formatted to calculate averages and percentiles. Contact T.A. to get a blank electronic worksheet.

Contact T.A. with questions or updates:

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SPEEDING SURVEY TALLY SHEET (SAMPLE)

**Print at least 4 sheets for every session you have planned*

Name:		Date:
Location:		Direction of Travel:
Start Time:	End Time:	Weather:

Car	Time	Speed	Car	Time	Speed
1			26		
2			27		
3			28		
4			29		
5			30		
6			31		
7			32		
8			33		
9			34		
10			35		
11			36		
12			37		
13			38		
14			39		
15			40		
16			41		
17			42		
18			43		
19			44		
20			45		
21			46		
22			47		
23			48		
24			49		
25			50		



PASSERBY SURVEY

1. Do you live or work in this neighborhood? Live Yes/No, Work Yes/No
2. Have you observed drivers speeding in this neighborhood? Yes/No
3. If yes, how often have you observed this behavior? (Circle one)
Once Per Month Once a Week Once Per Day Several Times Per Day
4. Have you ever felt endangered by traffic while walking/biking in this area? Yes/No If so, where?
5. Range of ages _____
6. Additional comments regarding speeding or traffic safety in this neighborhood?