

Road Sleuth

Myths & Facts Revealed



Photo by Kim Carr, WV LTAP.

Myth: All-way stop signs slow traffic.

Citizens often complain, “traffic is using my road as a cut-through street.” One common response is to put all-way stop signs at each intersection along the street to slow traffic and make the road less desirable. This approach, however, is flawed for a few reasons.

When a series of all-way stop signs are installed on a road, drivers tend to perceive them as a nuisance, and while they may stop or slow at each of them, they will try to make up time between them. This leads to vehicles traveling faster between intersections than they did before.

Installing an excessive number of stop signs may cause drivers to ignore them, especially at intersections with little traffic on the cross-street. This can lead to tragic consequences if a driver, or pedestrian, from the cross street enters the intersection assuming the approaching driver will stop. Furthermore, **excessive use of stop signs generally reduces driver respect** for stop signs.

Stop signs should only be installed per the requirements listed in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD). The MUTCD, which presents traffic control device standards and guidelines, has been adopted as state law and applies to state and municipal agencies, as well as private entities who maintain roadways open to public travel. Failing to follow the criteria listed in this manual can increase your agency’s liability risk.