



Smart signs coming to Eastern Oregon

Technology and automation are changing how we drive and plan travel. It wasn't long ago that the only way to figure out how to get around on unfamiliar roads was to look at a map or ask for directions. Now, your smartphone or the GPS navigation device in your car prompts you with turn-by-turn directions, along with that annoying "recalculating" statement when you've taken a wrong turn.

One major benefit of transportation related technology is improved highway safety. A future where vehicles communicate with each other and use sensors to navigate without a driver is just around the corner. Experts forecast automated, driver-assisted vehicles being tested now will be available to consumers by the end of the decade. Other technology-driven safety improvements are happening now, such as ODOT's Variable Speed Limit (VSL) Sign projects in eastern Oregon.

Smart Signs

"The idea behind variable speed limit signs is to warn motorists well ahead of hazardous road conditions and get them to slow down before they enter a potentially dangerous situation," said ODOT Project Leader Ken Patterson.

Two variable speed limit sign projects are planned along Interstate 84 that will install a series of digital speed signs within a given corridor of freeway. The smart signs will use weather and speed sensors, plus other communication devices to automatically lower the speed limit when conditions warrant - such as traffic that has slowed or stopped due to a crash, or when severe weather conditions require everyone to lower their speed.

The first VSL sign project will be constructed between Baker City and North



Powder in 2016. This area has a history of unique weather patterns because of its location between the Elkhorn and Wallowa Mountains. Microclimates create icy conditions along this stretch at times when other parts of the freeway are dry. This hazardous condition can catch motorists off-guard, resulting in hard braking and sliding on icy roads. Construction on this Baker Valley speed limit sign project is expected to begin in time for the new system to be up and running before next winter.

The second VSL sign project will be constructed along I-84 near Meacham between La Grande and Pendleton around 2018. This mountain pass area is known for severe winter weather, dense fog and other challenges identified as contributing factors in crashes when vehicles are traveling too fast for conditions.

"The goal of these projects is to reduce the number and severity of crashes in known trouble spots," said Patterson. "It will save lives and limit the amount of time the freeway is closed due to a crash or severe weather conditions."

Speed limits change March 1 on select Oregon highways

Motorists traveling on some state highways in central and eastern Oregon will see a change next spring due to Oregon House Bill 3402. The bill enacted by the 2015 legislation raises the speed limit on Interstate 84 and some other routes east of the Cascades. The new law takes effect March 1, 2016, and will raise legal speeds to 70 mph for passenger vehicles and 65 mph for commercial trucks on I-84 between the Idaho border and The Dalles. These same speed limits will apply for U.S. 95 that runs through southeast Oregon between the Nevada and Idaho borders.

In addition, sections of eight other highways will have speed limits increased to 65 mph for passenger vehicles and 60 mph for trucks. These include portions of U.S. 20, U.S. 26, U.S. 97, U.S. 197, U.S. 395, OR 31, OR 78, and OR 205.

The new speed limits will more closely match those of neighboring states.

More information, including a map showing the specific highway segments that will see the changes, a copy of HB 3402, update news and information, plus links to related photos and video is available at www.tinyurl.com/OR-speed2016.

[tinyurl.com/OR-speed2016](http://www.tinyurl.com/OR-speed2016).

The current speed limits on I-84 are 65 mph for passenger vehicles and 55 mph for commercial trucks. These limits will not change for the section of interstate west of The Dalles.

The current speed limit for other state and U.S. routes (non-interstate) is typically 55 mph for all vehicles, unless posted otherwise.

Prior to March 1, 2016, travelers may see some highway work needed to support the speed limit change: including modifying passing zones to reflect the higher legal speed; new sign posts installed to accommodate new, larger signs; new or modified curve warning signs; and other minor changes.

The new signs are expected to be installed on I-84 by March 1 and on secondary highways as quickly as possible to accommodate the March 1 effective date. Motorists are reminded to obey all speed limit signs and other traffic control devices, and to adjust travel when weather, road conditions or other situations require extra caution.

ZEIGLER TRANSMISSION & AUTO REPAIR, INC.

Transmission Specialists - Automotive Experts



Ryan Jokinen, Steve Hansell, Max Driskell, Kathy Schmidtgal, Jeremy Hascall, Kris Thieme, Owner

ACDelco



Did you know that we also do:

Computer Diagnostics
Air Conditioning

Fuel Injection
Electrical

Belts
Brakes

Hoses
Tune Ups

Shocks

541-276-8024 Free Estimates

3401 Westgate, Pendleton, OR. 97801 (Across From the Prison)