

Frequently Asked Questions about Speed Control Devices

October 2024

1. Why have speed control devices been installed on Lighthouse?

Many residents have complained about speeding in the Village of Saltaire. E-bikes have been the main offenders, but other vehicles, including trucks, golf carts and even regular bicycles, have been caught speeding on the walk. Speed control devices are one potential response to the concerns over speeding. The speed control devices installed on Lighthouse are a test to determine (1) if they are indeed effective in slowing speeding e-bikes and other types of vehicular traffic; (2) if they present a safety concern for bike riders and/or pedestrians; and (3) if they impede emergency vehicles.

2. What kinds of devices have been installed?

Two types of speed control devices have been installed – a **speed hump**, which is approximately 7 feet in length, located between Surf and Beach walks; and a **speed table**, which is approximately 10.5 feet in length, located between Anchor and Pennant walks. The “lips” on each device are approximately 1 inch above walk level. Warning signs facing both ways (and illuminated at night) have been posted at the approach to each device, and ground-level cameras will be installed along the side of the devices to help gauge their effects on vehicular and pedestrian traffic. (The cameras will record only the wheels of passing vehicles and pedestrians’ feet, to measure speed; they are not mounted high enough to photograph faces.)

3. Why were the devices placed at these particular locations?

After assessing several possible sites for each device, the Village decided it would be best to install them near (but not at) the eastern and western entrances to the community, in hopes of getting vehicles to slow down before they’d gone too far or picked up speed along Lighthouse. The devices were not placed at East and West walks themselves because vehicles entering at these points are already going slowly (due to the nature of the roads immediately outside Saltaire).

4. Can these devices be moved to other locations along Lighthouse?

Yes. Each speed control device is bolted into the boards on Lighthouse Promenade and can be removed. But while the devices can be relocated to

other sections of the walk, the bolts create holes in the deck boards, which would have to be filled or replaced if the devices are removed. However, assessing whether the devices are located at optimal parts of Lighthouse is a factor to be determined during this trial period.

5. How long will the trial period last?

The devices will remain throughout the off-season so their impact on speeding by all types of vehicles can be judged during the most heavily trafficked part of the year. Although this will help minimize the impact on pedestrians (since most people aren't in residence during the winter), there will still be enough pedestrian traffic to get a reasonable idea of the devices' effects on individuals, bikers, wagons, and so on.

6. Will additional devices be installed on Lighthouse or on other walks?

Whether additional speed devices will be installed on Lighthouse Prom, and which type of device works best, are questions that will be discussed with the community once the effectiveness of the two types of devices has been evaluated. There is no plan or intent to install such devices on any other walk in the Village.

7. Have speed bumps been tried before?

Speed bumps of various materials, types and designs have been tried on Lighthouse Prom several times in the past (long before e-bikes were a thing). The findings from those tests concluded that these speed bumps were not all that effective and caused a number of problems, including:

- Many pedestrians, bike riders and people pulling wagons found them to be a trip hazard or had difficulty navigating over them.
- The bumps were not always clearly visible at night, increasing the risk of an accident.
- The passage of emergency vehicles was impeded, and in the case of an ambulance en route to the hospital, adversely affected the comfort and safety of the patients being transported.
- Drivers of larger vehicles frequently sped up over the bumps because they found that this minimized the impact of the bump. Some bike riders even sped up when crossing the bumps, for sport.
- Many drivers and bike riders drove onto the shoulders to eliminate or at least reduce the number of wheels going over the bump, which caused rutting on the shoulders.

- The design and materials of the various types of bumps tried out were sometimes prone to cause damages or injuries.

Unlike traditional speed bumps, the speed hump and speed table we're currently testing have lower profiles and are made of softer recycled rubber. The hope is they'll help slow down e-bikes, golf carts and other vehicles while addressing the adverse issues the Village experienced in the past with earlier speed bumps of different designs.

8. What other means is the Village using to control speeding on Lighthouse?

The Village has undertaken, and will continue to pursue, other means besides speed control devices to address speeding on Lighthouse Prom.

- Public Safety has increased its presence at the eastern and western entrances to the Village – especially in the morning and late afternoon when traffic, particularly e-bikes, is heaviest. (Public Safety officers are stationed at West Walk during the morning, when traffic is mainly coming onto the island, and at East Walk later in the day, when most traffic is headed off.) Because Fire Island's roads are a closed system, our officers quickly get to recognize most operators of e-bikes, trucks and other vehicles, especially those with a permit to operate in Saltaire.
- The Village has long had and enforced an 8-mile-per-hour speed limit for all vehicles operating within Saltaire, and has always had signs posted indicating this limit. More recently, electronic speed clocks have been installed that indicate a vehicle's speed and remind drivers to keep their speed in check.
- The Board of Trustees passed a law governing e-bike use within the Village. Its provisions include:
 - Residents and contractors doing work in the Village must register their e-bikes. However, many of the people who use e-bikes are passing through the Village, and therefore are not required to register.
 - E-bikes may not be ridden under power either during the summer months, or at night at any time. (Signs to this effect have been posted at either end of Lighthouse Prom.)
- The Village is also working with other governmental authorities having jurisdiction over Fire Island (including FINS, the Town of

Islip, and Suffolk County) to better regulate the type, number and permitting conditions of all vehicles operating on Fire Island, in order to minimize the potential hazards of driving on the island.

However, in discussing the problems of speeding on Lighthouse Promenade, some things must be kept in mind:

- First, Lighthouse Prom is an integral part of the lone east-west road that links most of the island's communities. This road (often called "the Burma Road"), which in various places is a boardwalk, a concrete walk, or just sand tracks, is the sole interior access onto and off of Fire Island and is a particularly critical route during emergencies, including evacuations. Although Saltaire as an incorporated Village has some control over the walk, any vehicle with a permit has the right to transit Saltaire along Lighthouse, depending on their type of permit and beach driving conditions. Although drivers must of course obey the law, the Village has limited if any power to ban or regulate such traffic.
- Second, Lighthouse Prom is by far the longest, straightest stretch of the "Burma Road" anywhere on the island, which unfortunately makes it conducive to speeding, even inadvertently.
- Third, while they generally have a cooperative relationship with most drivers, Public Safety officers are not peace officers and do not have the legal authority to stop, pursue or detain anyone who refuses to stop. Much of their effectiveness depends on voluntary compliance with their directions. Also, Saltaire is physically a very large community and it's not always possible for Public Safety officers to be present on Lighthouse when they have other duties to perform or areas to patrol, especially in the off-season when staffing is limited.

9. How can I provide my opinion or ask questions about the speed control devices now being tested?

The Board is interested in getting as much feedback as possible from residents (and drivers) during this test period. Please email the Village at comments@saltaire.org to give us your opinions or get additional information.