



There is a perception that motorists can ignore speed limits and get away with it on city roads. — Photos: CHAN TAK KONG, AZLINA ABDULLAH and BAVANI M

Paving the way for safe speed on roads in KL

Proposal to go slow at highly pedestrianised areas reduces risks of death or serious injury from accidents, says safety agency

TEN more roads in the heart of Kuala Lumpur may soon have a mandatory speed limit of 30km per hour (kmph) imposed.

This is being proposed by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (Miros), an agency under the Transport Ministry.

The roads being considered will probably be located in and around schools, malls and transport hubs.

While the locations have yet to be identified, newly appointed Miros chairman Prof Dr Wong Shaw Voon said they hoped to introduce it at 10 highly pedestrianised areas.

The locations were also chosen based on accident records involving vulnerable road users as well as the high number of complaints and feedback received from the community.

Prof Wong, who is a lecturer at the Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering Department of Universiti Putra Malaysia, said the authorities would also include speed management interventions like road humps, roundabouts and speed table rumble strips (transverse bars) to help slow down traffic in these areas.

Studies on the feasibility of the initiative are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

"DBKL has already imposed a 30kmph speed limit in some school zones.

"Under the new proposal, several roads with a current speed limit of 40kmph will be reduced to 30kmph while roads with 60kmph speed limit will be reduced to 50kmph," he added.

Prof Wong said by lowering the speed limit, the probability of death or serious injury could be reduced too.



The authorities will also include other speed management interventions like road humps, roundabouts and transverse bars to help slow down traffic in the city.

"People are constantly in a rush to get somewhere.

"If they could just slow down, we can prevent accidents.

"With speed management we can also reduce the number of accidents by adopting the safe system approach incorporating the three Es, namely engineering, education and enforcement.

"The safe system approach utilises the four elements of safer people, safer roads, safer speeds and safer vehicles."

He gave an example of a person driving fast who meets with an accident, but if the car is equipped with anti-braking system, airbags coupled with good road infrastructure, these would reduce the likelihood of fatalities or

serious injuries.

Prof Wong said under the safe system, all aspects needed to be improved, so that if one were to fail, the others would kick in.

"You can't control the accident but you can control the speed, which is essential in reducing accidents," said Prof Wong who was one of Malaysia's participants to the Third High Level Conference of Global Road Safety in Stockholm in February 2020.

Nine recommendations were proposed with a target of 50% reduction in road deaths and serious injuries by 2030.

Malaysia is one of the countries that ratified the "Stockholm Declaration" on road safety and one of the nine recommendations was

mandating a 30kmph speed limit in urban areas.

Prof Wong said that reducing the speed limit to 30kmph was recommended in some urban areas to protect vulnerable road users and accommodate human errors.

Many cities in the world have already adopted the system.

"Take Sydney, Australia, the central business district does not have schools or hospitals yet the speed is set at 30kmph because there are a lot of pedestrians," he said.

It has been reported that 80% of road accidents in Malaysia are caused by human error.

According to police data, in Kuala Lumpur alone, over 200 lives are lost every year in road accidents.

In national statistics, Kuala



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Prof Dr Wong Shaw Voon

Road deaths in Kuala Lumpur (2009-2019)



Lumpur contributed 3% of road deaths. (see chart)

The percentage of fatalities due to speed related crashes was 30%, while serious injuries accounted for 31%.

Speed-related crashes included vehicles that went out-of-control, overturned or hit roadside objects.

"We have an opportunity here to save lives by getting people to slow down," said Prof Wong, adding some residents had put up signs asking people to slow down on their own initiative.

"An area in Kajang put up a sign-board asking people to drive at 30kmph a few years ago.

"It was a neighbourhood with a lot of elderly folk and children.

"They did this although the speed limit was not sanctioned by the authority."

Prof Wong acknowledged there were already areas in the city where a 30kmph speed limit had been imposed but it was being ignored.

"This is where enforcement comes in which is part of the safe system approach.

"Together with engineering and education, we also need enforcement," he added.

Making city roads safer

Transportation planning expert Goh Bok Yen said road safety should be viewed from a broader perspective, not just reducing the speed limit.

"It is timely for DBKL to transform city roads and make them user-friendly to non-motorised vehicles such as bicycles and pedestrians.

"Achieving a more balanced redistribution of road space between vehicles and pedestrians in the central business district is crucial," Goh said.

He added that new road design guidelines to accommodate lower speed must come with wider and safer walkways for non-motorised users.

There must be a shift from traditional car-centric road design and operation to a balanced one which looks into the needs of multiple road users, said Goh.

"Arterial roads such as Jalan Kuching, Jalan Cheras and Jalan Tun Razak would still be vehicle-centric, whereas Jalan Tun HS Lee, Jalan Petaling and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman should prioritise non-motorised vehicles by having wider walkways."

He said vehicle speed could be reduced by providing narrower lane widths for moving vehicles to lower operational speed.

Goh said the next move was to restrict certain categories of vehicles such as trailers in the CBD, only allow motorcycles on dedicated lanes in arterial roads and even having public transport-only roads like Oxford Street in London.

"Lowering the speed limit is the first step, what is more important is a mindset change on the part of motorists, pedestrians and other stakeholders."

Town planner Ihsan Zainal Mokhtar said KL needed to be made more walkable, hence a reduction in the speed limit of major roads was a way forward.

"But the roads, kerbs and walkways need to be redesigned too, otherwise it is just not safe," he said.