

Road Sleuth

Myths & Facts Revealed



Photo taken by Andrew Morgan, WV LTAP.



Speed Bump

Photo taken by Kim Carr, WV LTAP.

Myth: Speed bumps and speed humps are the same.

The majority of citizens believe there is no difference between speed humps and speed bumps, when in fact, the two are very different.

The **speed bump** was first developed over a century ago as a way to slow traffic. The speed bump was seen as a success because drivers did not like the sharp bounce they experienced as they drove across it, causing them to slow down. Over time, more and more road agencies started using the speed bumps in residential areas to slow traffic, making the roadway safer for children and pedestrians. Business owners also started using bumps between their parking areas and storefronts for the same reason.

Speed bumps, though, were never engineered to ensure they worked effectively. They are usually six inches to three feet wide and three to six inches high. This design can slow drivers, but with the advancements in vehicle shocks, some have found the faster you drive over them the less jolt the driver experiences. There have also been reports of vehicle damage and personal injuries caused by speed bumps, and without an approved engineering design, road agencies have been found liable for such damages. Speed bumps are also a potential tripping hazard for pedestrians. Additionally, plow trucks cannot properly work around their rounded design causing the speed bumps to be frequently damaged during winter maintenance.

The **speed hump** is a designed response to these concerns. Speed humps are typically twelve to fifteen feet wide and only three to four inches high. Humps have contoured approaches that allow the vehicle to cross over them, giving the driver more of a swaying motion than a jolt. Most speed humps are designed and constructed for an operating speed of eighteen to twenty miles per hour. If a driver tries to pass over the speed hump at a faster speed, they experience a very discomforting feeling, making the humps self-enforcing. The speed hump design is also more conducive to plow trucks, bicycles, and pedestrians.