



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

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1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

In Reply Refer To:
HOTO-1

Lee E. Billingsley, P.E.
National Committee on Uniform Traffic
Control Devices
12615 West Keystone Drive
Sun City West, AZ 85375

Dear Mr. Billingsley:

Thank you for your letter of July 22 regarding the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD). You have requested clarification on a number of items and offered constructive suggestions on how to improve processes related to the adoption of new traffic control devices.

Your letter expresses concern over a number of external resources that promote various practices related to design and traffic control, some of which might conflict with the provisions of the MUTCD. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) knows about these external resources and, as indicated in our August 20, 2013, memorandum on design flexibility, believes that they can provide a broader, more informed perspective on traffic control device and design needs when considered in the context of the primary requirements, including those of the MUTCD. However, our acknowledgment of or reference to these resources should not be misinterpreted as an endorsement of traffic control devices or treatments that do not comply with the provisions of the MUTCD. In fact, we have taken a number of steps to clarify the status of compliance of various treatments.

For example, many treatments related to bicycle facilities are discussed at the FHWA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Web page. Each treatment, along with its status as compliant, experimental, or interim approval, is listed. In addition, the same Web page provides information on certain treatments that are disallowed. You can access the Web page at the following address: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design_guidance/mutcd/. The Web page is also linked from the Frequently Asked Questions for Part 9 of the MUTCD. We will continue to seek opportunities to reaffirm our position whenever related topics are discussed in public forums, including webinars and presentations.

While it might be true that some jurisdictions are willing to assume more risk by implementing devices or treatments that do not comply with the MUTCD, the FHWA does not endorse nor support such practices. Due to potential safety and operational concerns, it is essential that new traffic control devices undergo a deliberative process of evaluation before they are incorporated into the MUTCD or subject to provisional use through interim approval. As you state in your letter, these processes take time. However, we are interested in your recommendations on how to expedite or streamline these processes. One such suggestion was to allow for joint

experimentation across multiple jurisdictions. Joint experimentation is not precluded and was approved in the past under certain circumstances.

The FHWA is committed to advancing innovative practices, but also recognizes the need to balance that advancement with the safety of the road user by adhering to the established protocols for considering new devices. Our actions over the last few years on traffic control device treatments related to bicycle facilities, for example, reflect this balanced approach. Since the release of the 2009 edition of the MUTCD, a number of traffic control devices were approved for use under the official experimentation or Interim Approval processes. These decisions took into consideration human factors data and in-service performance of the various devices.

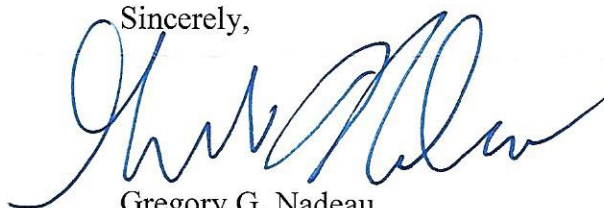
Your letter suggests a dedicated source of funding to accelerate experimentation with novel devices or applications. While the FHWA does not have the authority to establish new funding sources, it is important to note that existing sources of Federal transportation funds, including Surface Transportation Program and State Planning and Research funds, can be used for activities related to traffic control device evaluation.

We are pleased to know that the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NCUTCD) has taken ownership of the Uniform Vehicle Code. We would welcome the opportunity to review any product that the NCUTCD wishes to share with us for consideration.

As the national organization whose fundamental purpose is to advance the state of the practice and uniformity in traffic control devices, we believe that the NCUTCD is in a unique position to initiate forms of outreach that would be very effective, especially in light of its varied representation by the State and local transportation departments, professional organizations, safety advocates, researchers, and industry.

We appreciate your thoughtful recommendations. While we are already pursuing some as outlined above, I have asked the MUTCD team to reach out to the NCUTCD to have further dialogue on your other recommendations.

Sincerely,



Gregory G. Nadeau
Administrator