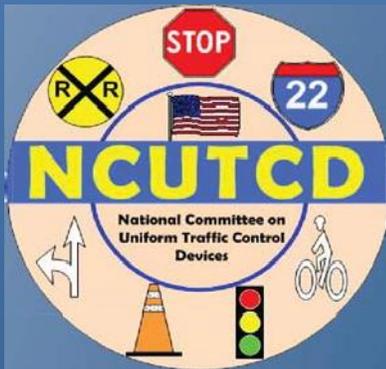


History of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NCUTCD)



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Background



In 2008, a special task force was appointed by the NCUTCD Chair, Lee Billingsley, to review and report on the history of the present NCUTCD and its predecessor organizations. This report was to compile to the extent possible a list of all previous National Committee organizations as well as Technical Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs. Richard Luettich was appointed to serve as chair of the task force, with all present Honorary Members to serve as members. This included: Carlton Robinson, James Pline, David Kuemmel, and George Butzer. Subsequently, Richard Luettich asked several long-time NCUTCD members: Tom Hicks, Ken Kobetsky, John Logan, Gene Hawkins, and the Executive Secretary of the NCUTCD Bob Garrett to provide the task force with historical input and to help edit the report drafts. In addition, a number of present and past Committee Chairs as well as several long-time members have offered additional information. The January 2012 updates to the history were provided by Bob Garrett and Ken Kobetsky. A series of articles on the “Evolution of the MUTCD” as written by Gene Hawkins, Texas A&M University, for the *ITE Journal* were invaluable and used extensively for historical information.

Brief History of Predecessor Organizations

- In 1924, the then Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, convened the First National Conference on Street and Highway Safety.
- In 1925, the Secretary of Agriculture published the *Report of Joint Board on Interstate Highways* that defined a system of interstate highways (the U.S. Highway network) and recommended a uniform system of highway signing.
- In 1927, the American Association of State Highway Officials—AASHO (now the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials—AASHTO) using the 1925 report as background material published a *Manual and Specifications for the Manufacture, Display, and Erection of U.S. Standard Road Markers and Signs for Rural Highways*.

- In 1929, the *AASHO Manual and Specifications for the Manufacture, Display, and Erection of U.S. Standard Road Markers* was revised and updated as the second edition.
- In 1929, the National Conference on Streets and Highway Safety (an association of groups and individuals representing interests other than State Highway Departments) published a draft of a *Manual on Street Traffic Signs, Signals, and Markings* for use on city streets. This association was chaired by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce and included technical representatives from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Safety Council, the Committee on Municipal Traffic Ordinances, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and engineers from a variety of local agencies.
- In 1930, this draft *Manual on Street Traffic Signs, Signals, and Markings* was revised and updated and published based on a survey of best practices in more than 100 cities.
- In 1931, the second edition of the *AASHO Manual and Specifications for the Manufacture, Display, and Erection of U.S. Standard Road Markers* was revised.
- In 1932, the Joint Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (JC) was formed to develop national practices for traffic control devices. This committee was comprised of 15 members, 7 from AASHO, and 8 from the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety (NCSHS). These members represented numerous organizations, including: BPR, AASHO, Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., American Automobile Association, Pennsylvania Railroad, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Safety Council, as well as traffic consultants and State Motor Vehicle personnel.
- In 1935, the JC published the first *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for Streets and Highways*.
- In 1942, the JC was joined by the Institute of Traffic Engineers (now Institute of Transportation Engineers—ITE). The Joint Committee now consisted of seven members from AASHO, seven from ITE, seven from NCSHS, one from the War Department, and one from the Office of Civilian Defense.
- In 1942, the JC published the War Emergency Edition of the MUTCD to address traffic control situations related to the war.
- Near the end of the war, the JC began working on a new edition of the MUTCD. A new edition of the MUTCD was published by the Public Roads Administration in 1948.
- Shortly after the publication of the 1948 MUTCD, the NCSHS was dissolved and replaced by on the JC by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances (NCUTLO).
- In 1958, a separate manual for standard signing on the Interstate Highway System was developed and published by AASHO. This manual was updated in 1961, 1962, and 1970.
- In 1960, the joint committee was again reorganized by adding the National Association of County Officials (NACO) and the American Municipal Association (AMA) to ensure representation by all levels of government. During this time, it began to be known as the National Joint Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NJ CUTCD or NJC).

- In 1961, the Bureau of Public Roads published the 1961 MUTCD, which was adopted by the Secretary of Commerce as the standard for all Federal-Aid highways, under 23 U.S.C. 109(d).
- From 1961 to 1971, the NJC grew in numbers and stature under the leadership of the BPR and FHWA.
- In 1971, a major revision to the MUTCD was completed by the NJC acting through subcommittees and work groups consisting of the representative organizations and FHWA engineers. Although the NJC Chairman was now elected by the committee membership, the secretary, the staff and all of the printing and artwork were provided by the FHWA. This revision incorporated the *AASHO Interstate Highway Signing Manual* which was approved by the FHWA under 23 U.S.C. 109(b).
- In 1972, the FHWA proposed to the NJC that it become an official advisory committee to the FHWA and in this way more financial support could be made available to members of the committee. After deliberation, the NJC agreed to the FHWA's proposal and it became the National Advisory Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NAC) under FHWA charter adopted on April 7, 1973.
- For the next six years, all modifications and other matters relating to the MUTCD were developed by NAC working with FHWA engineers without benefit of the rulemaking process in 5 U.S.C. 533. This group produced the 1978 MUTCD.
- In 1979, OMB Circular A-63 directed the review of advisory committees for the purpose of reducing their number and size. The NAC was a casualty of this review and the FHWA officially terminated its sponsorship of NAC on June 12, 1979 (published in the Federal Register May 22, 1979). At this time, the FHWA indicated it would develop and update future editions of the Manual, but did agree to solicited comments and recommendations regarding "alternative methods for assuring the availability of a variety of interests, viewpoints, and technical skills essential for the standards development process."

The National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

- In response to the FHWA's action, a group of concerned organizations previously involved with the NAC met to review the FHWA's decision and to determine how best to assure that revisions and additions to the MUTCD would continue to be based on a broad range of input by the operating practitioners. The involved associations or organizations approved the concept of a new committee to accomplish this purpose and an initial organizational meeting was held June 20, 1979 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Richard Luettich had been Chair of the NAC and chaired this meeting. Many members of the old NAC attended this open meeting and there was general support for the formation of a new National Committee.

- Immediately following the Colorado Springs meeting, a number of members of the old NAC sponsoring organizations and other interested parties met for several days to discuss the formation of a new National Committee. The concept was overwhelmingly approved and Richard Luettich was selected to serve as chairman during the formation stage.
During the following months numerous meetings and discussions were conducted to draft a constitution and a set of by-laws for a new National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NCUTCD). On November 30, 1979, the final version of the constitution and by-laws was formally forwarded to each potential sponsoring organization and all approved except for the National League of Cities. (See Appendix A for a list of Sponsoring Organizations). Note: the first “Constitution” of the NCUTCD was adopted in December 1979. While it listed 16 sponsoring organizations as noted in Appendix A, the National League of Cities (NLC) declined to participate in the NCUTCD because “technical matters, such as those associated with traffic control standards are simply beyond the scope of our active involvement,” and they recommended that the American Public Works Association (APWA) be added as a sponsoring organization.
- During the first meeting of the NCUTCD in January 1980, the constitution was revised to delete the NLC and add APWA as well as the Human Factors & Ergonomics Society (HFES) as Sponsor Organizations, bringing the total to 17.
- The original constitution included members and associate members appointed from Groups I, II, III, and IV, much the same as today. In Group I, AASHTO and ITE each had seven members and seven associate members, and NACO and APWA each had three members and associate members. All other sponsoring organizations in the three other groups had one member and one associate member each.
- The first constitution included six Technical Committees: Research, Signs, Signals, Markings, Railroads, and Construction and Maintenance.
- Initially, the expenses of the NCUTCD were paid by AASHTO and ITE with the financial guidance being provided by AASHTO and office space being provided by ITE, who also agreed to furnish staff support. David Hensing from AASHTO was the first assigned to oversee expenses and Jon Upchurch, who was on the ITE staff, was assigned to serve as secretary on a part-time basis. Beginning in 1981, the total expenses of the NCUTCD were supported by voluntary contributions by most of the other sponsoring organizations as well as through registration fees for the meetings.
- In June 1985, the constitution was revised and combined with the by-laws to change the title to “By-Laws”. Also the National Association of County Engineers (NACE) replaced NACO as a sponsoring organization and the office of Treasurer was added as a non-voting member of the Executive Board. The office of “Secretary” was also added and defined at this time (this office was later changed to “Executive Secretary”).
- In October 16, 1985, the NCUTCD was officially incorporated in Arizona as a non-profit corporation.
- In 1991, the Center for Auto Safety (CFAS), one of the original Sponsoring Organizations, withdrew its support.

- In 1992, three new Sponsoring Organizations were added, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (AHAS), International Municipal Signal Association (IMSA), and American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), bringing the total number of sponsoring organizations to 19. At this time, the bylaws were also amended to increase the AASHTO and ITE voting delegations from seven to eight members and associate members.
- Between 1992 and 1996, two more of the original sponsoring organizations dropped out, these being HUFSA and NEMA and the American Highway Users Alliance (AHUA) was added to bring the total sponsoring organizations in June 1996 to 18.
- In June 1992, the then existing Signs Technical Committee was split into two committees, these being the Regulatory and Warning Signs Technical Committee and the Guide and Motorist Information Signs Technical Committee.
- In 1997, a Bicycle Technical Committee was added. This made a total of 8 Technical Committees.
- In 1998, the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) was added, making the total number of sponsoring organizations at 19.
- In January 2000, the Human Factors & Ergonomics Society (HFES) dropped out and was replaced by the Human Factors Resources (HFR) and the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association (AREMA) was added bringing the total number of sponsoring organizations to 20.
- In January 2001, the Construction and Maintenance Technical Committee was changed to the Temporary Traffic Control Technical Committee.
- In January 2003, the position of “Honorary Member” was established to recognize those individuals who have contributed to the National Committee in an outstanding manner over a number of years.
- In January 2004, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) was approved making the number of sponsoring organizations at 21.
- In January 2005, the Railroad Highway Grade Crossing Technical Committee was changed to the Railroad and Light Rail Transit Highway Grade Crossing Technical Committee.
- In May 2007, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators discontinued its role as a Sponsoring Organization.
- In January 2008, the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances ceased to exist as an organization and was thus no longer a sponsoring organization.
- In January 2009, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) were added as sponsoring organizations thus bring the total number to 21.
- In June 2011, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (AHAS) dropped their sponsoring organization membership thus bringing the total number of sponsoring organizations to 20.

- The NCUTCD has presented recommendations to the FHWA under Federal Register Administrative Rulemaking since 1980 for the 1988, 1993, Part VI supplement, 2000, 2003, and 2009 Manuals.

Technical Committee Make-Up and History

The jurisdictions of each Technical Committee, as outlined in the bylaws are shown below. A listing of the past Chairs of the various Technical Committees is found in Appendix B.

Research

The jurisdiction of the Research Technical Committee is to stimulate traffic control device research on subjects identified by the other Technical Committees. This committee is chaired by the National Committee Vice-Chair for Research.

Signs Regulatory and Warning (R/W)

The jurisdiction of the Signs Regulatory and Warning Technical Committee shall include the design and usage of regulatory and warning highway traffic signs except the usage of signs for construction and maintenance operations, railroad–highway grade crossings and bicycles now assigned to other Technical Committees.

Signs Guide and Motorist Information (G/M)

The jurisdiction of the Signs Guide and Motorist Information Technical Committee shall include the design and usage of guide and motorist information highway traffic signs except the usage of signs for construction and maintenance operations, railroad–highway grade crossings, and bicycles now assigned to other Technical Committees.

Markings

The jurisdiction of the Markings Technical Committee is to provide professional advice on street and highway markings including pavement and curb markings, object markers, islands, delineators, colored pavements, roadway closure barricades, and channelizing devices.

Signals

The jurisdiction of the Signals Technical Committee covers all aspects of the types of devices described in Part 4 of the MUTCD, the use of other devices that are critical to the operational effectiveness of the Part 4 devices, and the making of recommendations to other Technical Committees on devices that are under the jurisdiction of those committees and which may be used in conjunction with or in proximity to the devices covered by Part 4.

Railroad and Light Rail Transit Highway Grade Crossings

The jurisdiction of the Railroad and Light Rail Transit Highway Grade Crossing Technical Committee shall be limited to traffic controls applicable to road users at or on the highways or pedestrian ways at grade crossings with railroads or light rail transit lines. The committee shall share its activities and coordinate with other appropriate Technical Committees of the National Committee as appropriate.

Temporary Traffic Control

The jurisdiction of the Temporary Traffic Control Technical Committee is to consider and recommend standards and guidelines, or research leading to their development, for the design, application, installation, and maintenance of all types of traffic control devices and related worker protection equipment required for highway or street construction, maintenance, emergency, and utility operations.

Bicycle

The jurisdiction of the Bicycle Technical Committee shall be to recommend the design and usage of all types of traffic signs for bicyclists except the usage of signs for construction and maintenance operations and railroad/light rail-highway grade crossings now assigned to other Technical Committees.

Other Committees

In addition to the eight technical committees as described above the bylaws require the Chair of the National Committee to appoint an Edit Committee for the purpose of reviewing the MUTCD to assure that the wording is consistent in formatting and style, and carrying out other tasks as assigned by the National Committee Chair or the Executive Board. The Vice-Chair of Programs shall serve as Chair of the Edit Committee.

APPENDIX A

NCUTCD SPONSORS

The most updated list of the history of the sponsoring organizations can be found online at <https://ncutcd.org/aboutus/history/sponsoring-organization-history/>.

APPENDIX B
History of NCUTCD and NCUTCD Leadership

The most updated list of the history of the NCUTCD and the NCUTCD Leadership can be found online at <https://ncutcd.org/aboutus/history/history-of-ncutcd-and-ncutcd-leadership/>.

APPENDIX C

NCUTCD Meetings

The National Committee normally meets twice a year, January and June, each time for three days. The January meeting is normally held in Arlington, Virginia, on Wednesday through Friday of the week immediately preceding the Transportation Research Board meeting which is held in Washington, DC.

The summer meeting is normally held in conjunction with the meeting of the AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering. Past summer meetings have been held in various locations throughout the United States. Following is a list of past summer meeting locations.

The most updated list of the history of the NCUTCD and the NCUTCD Leadership can be found online at <https://ncutcd.org/meetings/>.

