



National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

Chair's Message

MESSAGE 2020-#2
April 8, 2020

Gene Hawkins
NCUTCD Chair

It is my hope that this will be the most unusual Chair's Message that I have to write. For that reason, it is focused on a few critical NCUTCD issues.

June 2020 NCUTCD Meeting Cancellation

The Executive Board has decided to cancel the June 2020 NCUTCD meeting in Virginia Beach, VA. The meeting is canceled, not postponed. Full refunds will be issued to those that have registered for the meeting. The Board considered many different factors in making the decision, the most important of which is the health and well-being of our members. Some of the most important factors considered (but not the only ones) include:

- The Virginia Governor has issued a shelter-in-place executive order through June 10 (one week prior to the start of our meeting).
- AASHTO has decided to cancel their Committee on Traffic Engineering meeting scheduled to take place the same week as our meeting.
- An expectation of greatly reduced attendance at the meeting due to travel restrictions if we were to hold the meeting as planned.
- Canceling the meeting comes with potential financial penalties. Fortunately, the Board and our prior Executive Secretary Bob Garrett, have done a good job of developing resources that provide us with the ability to address those penalties.
- I am asking the technical committee chairs to schedule virtual technical committee meetings for at least some portion of the time that we would normally be meeting in June. Although the meeting has been canceled, please keep your calendar open for June 17-19 so that you can participate in the online TC meetings.
- There will not be a virtual General Session on Thursday or Friday. The Council will not be meeting in a virtual environment unless needed to approve recommended docket comments for the MUTCD NPA.
- It is up to task force chairs to decide if they want to conduct virtual meetings. Work with Executive Secretary Richard Moeur if you are a TF chair and want to set up a virtual meeting.

MUTCD NPA

There is no official word on when the NPA for a new MUTCD will be published. I had hoped to have a sense of the status of the NPA before the Board made a decision about the June meeting. However, the regulations regarding the rulemaking process prohibit FHWA from indicating when we can expect the NPA to be published. It is possible that it could be published before June, in which case you can expect one or more special messages from me regarding how we will respond to the NPA.

Future NCUTCD Meeting Information

- **January 2021:** The January 2021 NCUTCD meeting is still planned to take place on January 27-29, 2021 (Wednesday-Friday). Our meeting will conflict with the annual meetings of TRB and ATSSA (see my prior Chair's Message). The extent of the conflict is unknown at this time and will depend partly on the date that the NPA is published and whether we will need to extend the NCUTCD meeting through Saturday. If the current health crisis extends into fall/winter, it could impact the January meeting.
- **June 2021:** Given the cancelation of the June 2020 meeting, we may hold the June 2021 meeting in Virginia Beach, VA instead of Seattle, WA. This is an AASHTO decision and we will coordinate with them as we always do. It may be some time before that decision is made.

NCUTCD Announcements

- **Member Passing - John LaPlante:** On Saturday, March 21, John LaPlante passed away at age 80 after testing positive for the novel coronavirus less than two weeks earlier. John served as vice-chair of the Bicycle Technical Committee for many years and was a national champion for bicycle and pedestrian issues. He is survived by his wife Linda and daughter Leslie.
- **Rules of the Road Committee:** At the urging of Jim Pline, I am rebooting the Rules of the Road Committee. Ronnie Bell has agreed to chair this committee. The goal of the committee is to develop recommendations for the legal "rules of the road" that we can put on our website for use by state and local agencies. The focus is on the rules of the road that relate to traffic control devices. This is not an effort to update the entire Uniform Vehicle Code.
- **New Feature - Agency Practice:** In my previous Chair's Message, I asked for a 1-pager on agency practices that have evolved from NCUTCD participation or recommendations. I did not receive any contributions. I hope you will consider developing one.
- **New Feature - Leadership Bio:** A bio about John Fisher, chair of the Signals Technical Committee, is at the end of this message. I will continue to include a bio in each future Chair's Message.

NCUTCD Leadership Biography

Name: John Fisher

NCUTCD Positions: Chair of the Signals Technical Committee since January 2016 and Chair of the ITE Delegation from 2012 to 2016. I attended my first NCUTCD meeting in June 1993 in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, when I joined the Signals Technical Committee and haven't missed one yet.

Where you live: I have lived in Los Angeles County all of my life and reside in South Pasadena, California.

Professional Positions: I have been professionally-active for 49 years, including 39 years with the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), 13 of those as Assistant General Manager. In my semi-retirement I have been an expert witness for tort liability cases and also work part-time for the City of Culver City.

Professional Affiliations: ITE Fellow and ASCE Member; registered Civil Engineer and Traffic Engineer in California; PTOE.

Involvement with Traffic Control Devices: I started to become interested in traffic control devices as I approached driving age and when the construction of the extensive Southern California freeway system was in full-swing. I curiously noted the evolutionary changes such as glass button-letters to retroreflective sheeting, word message to symbol signs and signal mast arms.

Family Information: Sheila and I have been married for 35 years. We have two adult children, Natalie and Glenn. Natalie is a librarian and Glenn is a public works inspector.

Hobbies: Sheila and I belong to six societies focused on historic preservation. As part of this interest we restored our first 1928 home and are still restoring our current 1928 home. We love everything from the Jazz Age and Swing Era—except The Great Depression! We also enjoy dancing. I collect music from many different eras and genres covering over a century of recorded music. I now have 7,200 recordings in my collection on an MP 3 mini-disk and those are just the recordings that I really like. Just ask me about forgotten and obscure artists such as Kid Ory, Bob Wills, Louis Jordan, Elmore James, Howlin' Wolf, Allman Brothers or the Salsoul Orchestra.

Transportation History: When I was with LADOT I came across the files of the city's first traffic engineer, dating back to 1922. That initial effort eventually led to me compiling the rich history of transportation in Southern California. You can google "Transportation Topics and Tales" and read about it.

Advice to Young Professionals: 1. In combination with technical data develop your sense of intuition in solving problems. 2. Be independently-minded, ask questions, use common sense and avoid in-vogue ideological thinking. 3. Although there will continue to be improvements in advanced driver assistance systems, total driverless systems are an asymptotic goal. Thus, there will continue to be a need for traffic control devices that fulfill a human need and command respect. 4. We have to balance the needs of all surface modes of travel, so do your best to achieve the best win-win that is practical. 5. Our profession is both a science and an art. Master the science and develop your artistry.