



National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

Chair's Message

MESSAGE 2021-#4
December 6, 2021

Gene Hawkins
NCUTCD Chair

January Meeting Plans

The January meeting will be upon us in no time at all. It will be held Wednesday through Friday, January 12-14, 2022 at the Crystal City Hilton. Registration is required to attend any part of the meeting, including task force and technical committee meetings. You can register on our website. This will be the first time that many of us have seen each other in two years. The NCUTCD January meeting will be different from prior January meetings in many respects. Among the differences:

- We are meeting during the second half of the same week as the TRB Annual Meeting. For those who are attending both meetings, this will create both challenges and opportunities. We welcome input from members regarding the overlap of these meetings to help us in planning future NCUTCD January meetings.
- Wednesday afternoon is devoted to task force meetings and other groups. Richard is working on a schedule for these meetings. There will likely be a limited number of task force meetings on Wednesday morning as well.
- Thursday will be the day for technical committee meetings. This is the only day that technical committees will be meeting. Technical committees will focus their attention on strategic planning for the 12th edition of the MUTCD.
 - ♦ Due to the fact that FHWA is processing the NPA comments for the 11th edition, I have instructed the technical committee chairs to not develop recommended changes to the 2009 MUTCD.
- Friday is reserved for the General Session. There will be only one General Session during this meeting. During the general session, Council will hear the typical reports (including an expected FHWA report), conduct the NCUTCD elections (see separate section in this message for details), and consider adopting language on the Rules of the Road (ROR) document (see separate section in this message for details). Several people have asked how long the General Session will last. I cannot answer that question as it will depend upon how long it takes to conduct the election and to adopt/reject the ROR proposals. We will adjourn no later than 5:00 pm, but I expect it to end earlier than that.
- While the NCUTCD has been operating in a virtual environment for the past two years, there will be no opportunity for remote participation in any of the NCUTCD meetings held in January.

The preliminary agenda for the meeting is available on our website. This agenda is general in nature and does not contain information about specific groups. A detailed program will be available at check-in. The chair of various task forces, technical committees, and other groups will have the specifics on meeting day/time/location in advance of the meeting.

January Meeting Protocol

As I mentioned above, this will be our first opportunity to gather together since the start of the COVID pandemic. When you register(ed) for the meeting, you were required to accept terms and conditions, which is a new feature of registration. Some of the key points of the terms and conditions include:

- The NCUTCD recommends that attendees be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The NCUTCD encourages the wearing of a mask indoors except when eating, drinking, or

speaking during a meeting. The NCUTCD intends to conform to any requirements and mandates established by local authorities and/or the Hilton Crystal City. If local authorities and/or the Hilton Crystal City change their practices between now and the meeting, NCUTCD and meeting attendees will be expected to comply with the new provisions.

- Attendees consent to their voice, likeness, and any materials they provide being recorded for use and dissemination, without payment of any compensation for such use, in any language, format, or media now known or later devised.
- Attendees release the NCUTCD and its sponsoring organizations from any and all claims, liability, or damages arising from any such use. The NCUTCD will proceed in reliance upon such consent and release.
- The NCUTCD expects a professional and cordial environment at all meetings and activities. All forms of discrimination, harassment, and bullying are prohibited in NCUTCD activities. Prejudicial treatment, harassment, or other conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment is prohibited. Unwelcome or aggressive behavior involving the use of influence, threat, intimidation, or coercion to dominate others is also prohibited.

To those who wanted a meeting protocol that was either stricter or less strict, understand that selecting the protocol to employ was not an easy decision and not taken lightly. We had individuals who indicated they would not attend unless vaccinations and masks were required and we had others who said they would not attend if vaccinations and masks were mandated. In the end, we determined that following the local guidelines was the most appropriate course of action for a variety of reasons. We recognize that a few have decided not to attend the Annual Meeting based on the protocols we enacted. We hope we see those folks at the Midyear Meeting.

NCUTCD Election

During the General Session on Friday, January 14, the Council will vote on officers for the next two years. Here is how that process will work:

- The chair of the Nominating Committee, Lee Billingsley, will give the NC report and announce the slate of officers. Unless nominations by petition are received by December 10, the slate of candidates are:
 - ♦ Chair: Gene Hawkins (incumbent) and Jonathan Upchurch.
 - ♦ Vice-Chair of Programs: Bill Lambert (incumbent).
 - ♦ Vice-Chair of Research: Bryan Katz (incumbent).
 - ♦ Treasurer: Kathy Falk (incumbent).
- Candidates for chair will each have the opportunity to speak to Council for up to three minutes. As the candidates for the other offices are unopposed, they will not speak to Council.
- Individual Council delegates and Technical Committee chairs will have an opportunity to provide up to one minute of comments, if they choose to do so.
- A written ballot will be distributed to Council. Council delegates will complete the ballot and submit ballots to the Teller Committee (two Honorary Members), who will count the ballots.
- The Teller Committee will report the results of the election.

The newly elected officers will assume office at the conclusion of the Annual Meeting. Based on registration numbers, we expect a quorum to be present for the Council.

Rules of the Road Proposal

In my last Chair's Message, I mentioned that the NCUTCD is beginning the process of creating a "Rules of the Road" (ROR) document to address recommended legislation related to traffic control devices. This fall, the ROR Joint Task Force developed recommended language for a starting point of this process and those recommendations were sent to our sponsoring organizations for review and comment. They will be presented to Council for possible approval during the January meeting. If approved, they will serve as a starting point for updating the ROR content from the 2000 Uniform Vehicle Code (UVC). A few key points about this process:

- The content that was distributed for review and for Council action is mostly the same as that in the 2000 UVC. We are looking to get Council approval of that content as a foundation from which the ROR JTF can move forward to address needed updates.
- At this time, I do not anticipate publishing any of the content that could be approved by Council in January. Any content approved by Council in January would be premature to publish as there is much additional work that will need to be done.
- The NCUTCD is only addressing ROR that relate to traffic control devices. We are not updating the entire UVC.
- I realize that there are many items that some of our members would like to see included in the UVC and/or ROR. Those items will be addressed in future deliberations. For the January meeting, we will focus on the language distributed to sponsors for review and comment. Council members may offer amendments to revise that language, but I will rule out-of-order any amendments to add new concepts to the language. Sponsors need a chance to comment on the content before consideration by Council. This is why I do not plan to publish any of the content that is approved by Council in January.

MUTCD 12th Edition Strategic Planning

Given the unique situation of the January meeting, which follows the close of the NPA docket but precedes the publication of the final rule for a new edition of the MUTCD, I have instructed the technical committee chairs to focus their meeting time on planning for the 12th edition of the MUTCD. I would like each technical committee to start with a clean sheet of paper and envision what they think the MUTCD of the future should be like. I offer the following questions as a starting point for discussions on the 12th edition:

- What is the role of the MUTCD?
- If we were to write the MUTCD from scratch today, what would it look like?
- Is there a better way to structure the MUTCD?
- Is there a better way to deliver the MUTCD?
- What are the critical issues that the MUTCD needs to address?
- What are the mundane issues the MUTCD needs to address?
- If the MUTCD were to be reduced in size, what do you definitely want to keep in the MUTCD?
- If the MUTCD were to be reduced in size, what should be removed from the MUTCD?
- If the MUTCD were to be increased in size, what should be added to the MUTCD?

I have only a few rules for these discussions:

- I want to hear big and bold ideas for the 12th edition. I do not want to hear of anyone making comments like "If it changes too much, I'll have to do more work to implement the changes" or "I like the MUTCD the way it is and don't want to see it change."
- Nothing is off the table for the discussions. The January discussions are very preliminary, so let us brainstorm as many ideas as we can come up with.
- I do not want anyone to take the approach that we will simply be revising the language in the 11th edition (after the final rule) in developing a plan for the 12th edition.

- Take a broad brush approach. Each technical committee can discuss any MUTCD-related issue they want to, even if it is not something that another technical committee normally deals with.

For those that have joined the NCUTCD over the last few years, I remind you that the NCUTCD approved a [20-year Vision and Strategic Plan for the MUTCD](#) in January 2014. That document is located under the Links tab of our website if the link does not work. At some point in the future, we may be looking to update or replace this document, but I would like the January meeting discussions to be focused more on generated ideas than revising the language in the previous plan.

For those that will be at the TRB Annual Meeting, I want to make you aware of Session 1285: Planning for the 12th Edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices on Tuesday, January 11. I hope you will check out this session if you are attending the TRB Annual Meeting.

As a final note, the point of the January meeting planning exercises is to brainstorm ideas for future consideration. Nothing we do in January represents a commitment to a course of action. Let's throw some spitballs at the wall and see what the ideas are. Maybe the 12th edition ends up being a refinement of the 11th edition. But maybe our efforts lead to a transformative change the same way that our efforts in the 1990s led to a transformative change in the 2000 MUTCD.

Future Meetings

Here are a few details on future NCUTCD meetings:

- June 15-17, 2022, Virginia Beach, VA: As has been our tradition with past meetings, we are meeting at the end of the week of the AASHTO Traffic Engineering Committee meeting. Current plans are for the NCUTCD meeting to be face-to-face only.
- January 2023: Due to the growth of NCUTCD membership, we are currently evaluating other hotels in the Washington, D.C. area. We hope to finalize plans for the this meeting sometime soon after the January 2022 meeting.

Special Notes

Additional notes worthy of passing along to our members and friends:

- Jim Pline celebrated his 90th birthday in mid-November. Jim is one of our Honorary Members and has been a long-time contributor to the NCUTCD and its predecessor organizations.
- Ernie Huckaby has resigned from the NCUTCD and GMI. Ernie has been an NCUTCD member since 2005 and, prior to that, served as the FHWA MUTCD Team Leader during the development of the 2000 and 2003 editions of the MUTCD.