



National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

Chair's Message

MESSAGE 2023-#5
December 21, 2023

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NCUTCD Chair

The New MUTCD is Here!

As I am sure you all know, the new MUTCD was published on Tuesday this week. I have already seen evidence of our members combing through the details to evaluate its content. Having had a couple of days to absorb it and hear thoughts from our members, I wanted to offer my thoughts and perspectives on the Manual and provide some direction for our future efforts.

Initial Response

Since Tuesday morning, I have been spending more time on email and meetings related to the MUTCD than I have been reviewing the new content. I am happy with the content I have been able to review and am particularly happy to see the language near the beginning of the Federal Register notice regarding the intended use of the MUTCD. This language addresses many of the misconceptions about the MUTCD that were expressed in some of the docket comments.

By and large, my review and the input I have received suggest that the FHWA has adopted most of the NCUTCD recommendations for the MUTCD provided before the NPA and in our docket comments. As I write this message today, I believe that the 2023 MUTCD is an improvement over the 2009 MUTCD. There are further improvements that can be made and I am grateful that the NCUTCD will finally be able to start doing what we do best – developing proposed changes for the current MUTCD that will become recommended changes upon Council approval.

NCUTCD Review Actions

Your review of the new MUTCD should focus on two aspects: short-term issues and long-term changes. The short-term issues review should identify any content of the new MUTCD that was added without following federal rules for rulemaking. My [previous Chair's Message](#) had detailed instructions on conducting this review. It is too early to have a good handle on this aspect of the review but so far, I think we are looking at few, if any, issues for Council to address at our Annual Meeting next month. If you find something you think falls into the category of “objectionable content,” share that information with your technical committee chair as early as you can.

The review for long-term changes should focus on aspects of the new MUTCD that could be improved in a future revision/edition or new content that could be added. I believe that future initial revisions to the 2023 MUTCD will be targeted on specific issues and will be limited in scope. Accordingly, I have instructed the technical committee and joint task force chairs to prioritize any proposed changes to the 2023 MUTCD. As we become more familiar with the new Manual, the NCUTCD leadership will work on identifying priorities to recommend for future rulemaking efforts.

Anytime a document the size of the new MUTCD is published, there are bound to be errors in the document. If you see something that appears to be an obvious error, share that with your TC/JTF chair.

Links to Related Documents

Richard distributed an email from me on Tuesday with links to several documents. I'm repeating that information below for those that may have missed my message. These documents should provide useful information when performing the reviews.

- [Federal Register Final Rule notice](#) (12/19/2023)
- [11th Edition of the MUTCD](#)
- [Summary of Dispositions](#)
- [2009 MUTCD Redline](#)
- [Final Rule Assessment of Economic Impacts](#)
- [Federal Register Notice of Proposed Amendments](#) (12/14/2020)

In addition to those documents linked above, I expect the following documents to become available in the future:

- Standard Highway Signs
- List of Known Errors
- PowerPoint presentations on MUTCD changes

New Edition Name

FHWA has been referring to the new MUTCD as the 11th edition of the MUTCD. I understand the merit of using an edition number rather than a year. I can remember NCUTCD meetings almost a decade ago where we were referring to the future “2016 MUTCD.” However, in all of the emails and material I have been writing this week on the new MUTCD, I have found it clunky to continually be writing “11th edition of the MUTCD” when referring to it. I have defaulted to calling it the 2023 MUTCD for brevity sake. Hopefully, the profession will coalesce on an easily written name in the near future.

MUTCD Final Rule Pool

We have a winner. Randy McCourt picked 12/15/2023, missing the actual date by only four days. The next closest was Adam Greenstein, who picked 12/31/2023.

Happy Holidays and Thank You

Finally, as we get deep into the holiday season, I want to wish each of you a happy holiday. The Hawkins family celebrates Christmas in our home and we are looking forward to having both of our grown children and their spouses plus grandchildren in our house on Christmas morning. I wish the same joy to all of you regardless of what you may be celebrating this season.

I also want to express my appreciation to all of you for your dedication to the NCUTCD and the MUTCD over the past few years and for the efforts coming in the near future. I am extremely grateful to lead such a group of committed individuals. Gene