



# National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

13236 North 7th Street, Suite 4-259, Phoenix, Arizona 85022  
Phone/Text: 231-4-NCUTCD (231-462-8823)  
E-mail: secretary@ncutcd.org Website: <https://ncutcd.org>

Item No.: 24A-PED-02

## NCUTCD PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES TO THE MANUAL ON UNIFORM TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

**COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE:** Pedestrian Joint Task Force  
**ITEM NUMBER:** 24A-PED-02  
**TOPIC:** Pedestrian Clearance Interval with Preemption  
**ORIGIN OF REQUEST:** Pedestrian Clearance Interval Working Group  
Bob Garbacz (SIG), Rob Ziemba (SIG), Eagan Foster (SIG),  
Jay Jackson (SIG), Fred Mills (RR), Randy McCourt (PED)  
**AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:** 4F.19 Preemption Control of Traffic Control Signals

### DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:

Approved by Joint Task Force: 02/09/2024 Pedestrian Joint Task Force  
Approved by Technical Committee: MM/DD/YYYY Pending Approval of Signals Tech. Com.  
Approved by NCUTCD Council: MM/DD/YYYY

*This is a proposed change to the MUTCD that has been developed by a technical committee or joint task force of the NCUTCD. The NCUTCD is distributing it to its sponsoring organizations for review and comment. Sponsor comments will be considered in revising the proposal prior to NCUTCD Council consideration. This proposal does not represent a revision of the MUTCD and does not constitute official MUTCD standards, guidance, or options. If approved by the NCUTCD Council, the recommended changes will be submitted to FHWA for consideration for inclusion in a future MUTCD revision. The MUTCD can be revised only through the federal rulemaking process.*

### SUMMARY:

In the 2023 MUTCD, FHWA changed a standard to option regarding truncation of pedestrian clearance intervals. The current language allows for an option to truncate pedestrian intervals without limitation. Additional text is provided to align the 2023 text with the Federal Register Preamble explanation of what was changed.

### DISCUSSION:

The 2023 MUTCD text modification for Section 4F.19 converts what was a standard statement to an option statement related to truncation of pedestrian clearance intervals transitioning into preemption. The text as modified from the 2020 NPA opens the potential for unlimited truncation of pedestrian change intervals with preemption. The description provided in the June 2013 (12B-STC-02) approved recommended change to the 2009 MUTCD explains the need for change, addressing vulnerable user safety in crossing streets after a walk indication has already

34 allowed them to enter the street. To address this concern, it is proposed that similar language  
35 which was used in the NCUTCD Council approved change (approved three times by Council in  
36 12B-STC-02,14A-STC-01 and NPA item #414/Chapter 4F Docket Comment May 2021) and  
37 2020 NPA be used within the FHWA's desire to convert this information to an option statement.  
38 By an option statement this does not fully limit or control the practice. The proposal simply  
39 outlines the preferred practice for practitioner consideration and provides greater clarity  
40 regarding the omission of pedestrian change interval.

41  
42 The following sections display the progression this text from the 2009 MUTCD, the NCUTCD  
43 approved recommendation of June 2013 (with changes noted) and the December 2020 FHWA  
44 NPA text for this paragraph for reference. As can be seen, the use of the exclusionary text,  
45 converted to option, simply clarifies the practice but does not establish it as either standard or  
46 guidance as advanced by FHWA in the final rule for the 2023 MUTCD. That may be subject to  
47 future study and considerations.

48

#### 49 **2009 MUTCD**

50 Standard:

51 During the transition into preemption control:

- 52 A. The yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be  
53 shortened or omitted.
- 54 B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval and/or pedestrian change  
55 interval shall be permitted.
- 56 C. The return to the previous green signal indication shall be permitted following a steady  
57 yellow signal indication in the same signal face, omitting the red clearance interval, if  
58 any.

59

#### 60 **June 2013 NCUTCD 12B-STC-02**

61 Standard:

62 During the transition into preemption control:

- 63 A. The yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be  
64 shortened or omitted.
- 65 B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval ~~and/or pedestrian change~~  
66 ~~interval~~ shall be permitted.
- 67 C. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian change interval shall be permitted only for  
68 boats at movable bridges and for rail traffic to which other traffic is required to yield the  
69 right-of-way by law.
- 70 GD. The return to the previous green signal indication shall be permitted following a steady  
71 yellow signal indication in the same signal face, omitting the red clearance interval, if any.

72

#### 73 **June 2014 NCUTCD 14A-STC-01** (showing only items B. and C.)

74 Standard:

- 75 B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval ~~and/or pedestrian change~~  
76 ~~interval~~ shall be permitted.
- 77 C. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian change interval shall be permitted only  
78 when the traffic control signal is being preempted because a boat is approaching a  
79 movable bridge or because rail traffic is approaching a grade crossing.

80

#### 81 **December 2020 FHWA NPA (also approved by NCUTCD Council as a part of FHWA-2020-0001 Chapter 4F Docket Comments)**

82

- 83 Standard:  
84 During the transition into preemption control:
- 85 A. The yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be
  - 86 shortened or omitted.
  - 87 B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval shall be permitted.
  - 88 C. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian change interval shall be permitted only
  - 89 when the traffic control signal is being preempted because a boat is approaching a
  - 90 movable bridge or because rail traffic is approaching a grade crossing.
  - 91 D. The return to the previous green signal indication shall be permitted following a steady
  - 92 yellow signal indication in the same signal face, omitting the red clearance interval, if
  - 93 any.
- 94

95 This following proposal takes the NCUTCD Council approved (three times) and reuses it in the  
96 new 2023 MUTCD language by folding it into the option language. It segregates out the  
97 omission of the pedestrian clearance interval as linked to the omission of the pedestrian walk  
98 interval. In doing so the carve outs for due to rail or boat preemption on pedestrian change  
99 interval truncation are reinstated as options which do not affect the concerns noted in the  
100 Federal Register preamble regarding emergency service effectiveness. Terminology from “shall  
101 be **permitted**” is updated using the 2023 MUTCD language.

102

103 Further research regarding the concerns of emergency service being “greatly diminished and  
104 completely ineffective due to increased delay” is needed as some agencies have effectively  
105 instituted the pedestrian clearance interval protection for these preemption systems. The  
106 protection of vulnerable users in of high importance in the design of signal preemption systems  
107 and this change helps clarify that importance.

108

#### 109 **RECOMMENDED MUTCD CHANGES:**

110 The following present the proposed changes to the current MUTCD within the context of the  
111 current MUTCD language. Proposed additions to the MUTCD are shown in blue underline and  
112 proposed deletions from the MUTCD are shown in ~~red strikethrough~~. Changes previously  
113 approved by NCUTCD Council (but not yet adopted by FHWA) are shown in green double  
114 underline for additions and ~~green double strikethrough~~ for deletions. In some cases,  
115 background comments may be provided with the MUTCD text. These comments are indicated  
116 by bracketed white text in shaded green. Deletions made by a technical committee or task  
117 force after initial distribution to sponsoring organizations are shown in ~~highlighted red~~  
118 ~~strikethrough and Helvetica text~~. Additions made by a technical committee or task force after  
119 initial distribution to sponsoring organizations are shown in underline blue and Helvetica text.

120

121 **PART 4. HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

122  
123 **CHAPTER 4F. STEADY (STOP-AND-GO) OPERATION OF TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS**

124  
125 **Section 4F.19 Preemption Control of Traffic Control Signals Support:**

126 Support:

127 01 Preemption control (see definition in Section 1C.02) is typically given to trains, boats, emergency  
128 vehicles, and light rail transit.

129 02 Examples of preemption control include the following:

130 A. The prompt displaying of green signal indications at signalized locations ahead of fire vehicles,  
131 law enforcement vehicles, ambulances, and other official emergency vehicles;

132 B. A special sequence of signal phases and timing to expedite and/or provide additional clearance  
133 time for vehicles to clear the tracks prior to the arrival of rail traffic; and

134 C. A special sequence of signal phases to display a steady red indication to prohibit turning  
135 movements toward the tracks during the approach or passage of rail traffic.

136 **Standard:**

137 03 **During the transition into preemption control, the yellow change interval, and any red**  
138 **clearance interval that follows, shall not be shortened or omitted.**

139 Option:

140 04 During the transition into preemption control:

141 A. ~~A. Any~~The pedestrian walk interval ~~and/or pedestrian change interval~~ may be shortened. ~~or~~  
142 ~~omitted.~~

143 B. The pedestrian walk interval and its associated pedestrian change interval may be omitted.

144 C. The pedestrian change interval may be shortened or omitted only for a boat approaching a  
145 moveable bridge or because rail traffic is approaching a grade crossing.

146 ~~BD~~. The red clearance interval, if any, may be omitted so that the return to the previous green signal  
147 indication follows a steady yellow signal indication in the same signal face.

148 **Standard:**

149 05 **During preemption control and during the transition out of preemption control:**

150 A. **Any yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be**  
151 **shortened or omitted.**

152 B. **A signal indication sequence from a steady yellow signal indication to a green signal**  
153 **indication shall not be permitted.**

154 Option:

155 06 A distinctive indication may be provided at the intersection to inform law enforcement personnel  
156 who are escorting traffic (such as a parade or funeral procession) that the traffic control signal has  
157 changed to a red indication not because of normal cycling, but because it has been preempted by rail  
158 traffic approaching an adjacent grade crossing or by boat traffic approaching an adjacent movable bridge.

159 07 A distinctive indication may be provided at the intersection to show that an emergency vehicle has  
160 been given control of the traffic control signal (see Section 11-106 of the “Uniform Vehicle Code”). In  
161 order to assist in the understanding of the control of the traffic control signal, a common distinctive  
162 indication may be used where drivers from different agencies travel through the same intersection when  
163 responding to emergencies.

164 *Guidance:*

165 08 *Except for traffic control signals interconnected with light rail transit systems, traffic control signals*  
166 *with railroad preemption or coordinated with flashing-light signal systems should be provided with a*  
167 *back-up power supply.*

168 09 *If a traffic control signal or hybrid beacon is installed near or within a grade crossing or if a grade*  
169 *crossing with active traffic control devices is within or near a signalized highway intersection, Chapter*  
170 *8D should be consulted.*

171 Support:

172 10 Section 8D.09 contains additional information regarding preemption for grade crossings. Section  
173 8D.10 contains information regarding prohibiting movements toward the grade crossing during  
174 preemption. Sections 8D.11 and 8D.12 contain additional information regarding pre-signals and queue  
175 cutter signals, respectively, for grade crossings.