National Committee on
Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item Number: 26B-GMI-03

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

COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE:	Guide and Motorist Information Signs Technical Committee
ITEM NUMBER:	26B-GMI-03
TOPIC:	Sign Spreading
ORIGIN OF REQUEST:	Guide and Motorist Information Signs TC
AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:	2E.43

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:
Approved by GMI TC: 06/25/2026
Approved by NCUTCD Council: .....

This is a proposed change to the MUTCD that has been developed by a technical committee, joint committee, or joint task force of the NCUTCD. The NCUTCD is distributing this 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, options, or support. 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:
This proposal corrects inconsistencies between Section 2E.43 and Figure 2E-48.

DISCUSSION:
There is a disconnect between Figure 2E-48 and Guidance statements in Section 2E.43. Section 2E.43 indicates that “the Exit Direction sign should be the only guide sign used in the vicinity of the gore (other than the Exit Gore sign).” However, Figure 2E-48 shows Exit Direction signs co-mounted with other overhead guide signs.

In June 2025, NCUTCD Council adopted a resolution “strongly recommend[ing] that FHWA bring all MUTCD figures and tables into full compliance with MUTCD Standards and Guidance text.” However, in this case, the text of Section 2E.43 needs to be modified, because the figure appears to depict appropriate practice.

A review of Section 2E.43 found several additional opportunities for improvement:

- The second sentence of paragraph 1 is proposed for deletion. The sentence has many confusing elements, including these:

- It refers to “Exit Direction signs for a single exit.” All Exit Direction signs are “for a single exit.” There are no Exit Direction signs depicted or permitted anywhere in the MUTCD for a condition other than for a single exit.
- Its overall message is that an “Exit Direction sign . . . should have only one sign.” This is a tautology.
- It seems plausible that the sentence is intended to mean something like: “At an interchange with a single exit in one travel direction, an overhead interchange guide sign for one interchange should not be mounted in the same sign assembly as an Interchange Advance guide sign for a different interchange.” However, Figure 2E-32 depicts a configuration that conflicts with this interpretation. This condition is also very difficult to comply with in urban areas where interchanges are closely spaced.
- The sentence is redundant with item A in paragraph 4 of the same section.
- It is not necessary to specify the number of destinations shown on Exit Direction and Interchange Advance guide signs in Sec. 2E.43, because this information is already provided in greater detail in Sec. 2E.15.

- The first sentence of paragraph 2 is an Option statement that appears to provide an exception to the Guidance statement discussed above. This sentence also uses unclear wording, because it refers to “more than one sign” without specifying the type of sign. This sentence is also proposed to be deleted. This Option statement would no longer fit in context if the Guidance statement discussed above is deleted as proposed. The sentiment expressed by this sentence is proposed to be relocated to Item A of paragraph 4.

- Paragraph 3 is worded inaptly, because it implies that “a group of signs” might “overload” road users. The word “group” usually means “more than one.” There are many figures in the MUTCD that depict “a group of signs” at the same location. It is undesirable to imply that more than one overhead sign at a location might overload road users. The paragraph is proposed to be reworded to improve clarity and consistency.

- Item A of paragraph 4 consists of two sentences:
  - The first sentence limits other guide signs from being used with an Exit Direction sign. This sentence is poorly worded because Pull-Through signs are guide signs and are frequently recommended to be co-mounted with Exit Direction signs. Furthermore, there are situations where it is desirable to co-mount an Exit Direction sign with an Interchange Advance guide sign for a different exit. This sentence is proposed to be revised to recommend that this use is permitted where “interchanges have multiple exits or are closely spaced.” This change would bring Figure 2E-48 into compliance with the text of the MUTCD.
  - The second sentence provides direction about the location and mounting characteristics of Exit Direction signs. This sentence is proposed to be deleted. The information in this sentence is discussed in much greater detail in Section 2E.25, Exit Direction Signs.

This proposal would also change the distance legend on one sign in Figure 2E-48 from “1 MILE” to “¾ MILE.” The figure shows that this sign would move downstream from Location 1 to Location 2 as when sign spreading is implemented. When the sign is moved downstream, it becomes closer to the exit, so the distance legend should be updated to reflect the new sign location. Changing the distance legend as proposed will help alert MUTCD users that implementing sign spreading may involve updating distance legends.

RECOMMENDED MUTCD CHANGES:

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

PART 2
SIGNS

CHAPTER 2E. GUIDE SIGNS—FREEWAYS AND EXPRESSWAYS

Section 2E.43 Number of Signs at an Overhead Installation and Sign Spreading

Guidance:

01 *If overhead signs are warranted, as set forth in Section 2A.14, the number of signs at these locations should be limited to only those essential in communicating pertinent destination information to the road user.* ~~*Exit Direction signs for a single exit and the Interchange Advance Guide signs should have only one sign with one or two destinations.*~~ *Regulatory signs, such as speed limits, should not be used in conjunction with overhead guide sign installations. Because road users have limited time to read and comprehend sign messages, there should not be more than three guide signs displayed at any one location either on the overhead structure or its support.* [The sentence proposed for deletion is unclear because of its ambiguous wording. This provision is proposed to be relocated to item A of paragraph 4.]

Option:

02 ~~At overhead locations, more than one sign may be installed to advise of a multiple exit condition at an interchange.~~ If the roadway ramp or crossroad has complex or unusual geometrics, additional signs with confirming messages may be provided to properly guide the road user. [The sentence proposed for deletion is phrased as an exception to the sentence in paragraph 1 proposed to be deleted. This exception would no longer fit in context without the provision in paragraph 1. The sentiment is proposed to be relocated to Item A of paragraph 4.]

Support:

03 Sign spreading is a concept where ~~major~~ overhead signs are spaced to limit the amount of information presented to ~~so that~~ road users ~~are not overloaded with a group of signs~~ at a single location. Figure 2E-48 illustrates an example of sign spreading. Sign spreading is particularly beneficial where interchanges are closely spaced and overhead signing is used in conjunction with Interchange Sequence signs. [24B-GMI-01, June 2025]

Guidance:

04 *Where overhead signing is used, sign spreading should be used at all single-exit interchanges and to the extent possible at multi-exit interchanges. Sign spreading should be accomplished by use of the following:*

A. *Interchange guide signs other than Pull-Through signs should not be installed in the same sign assembly as an overhead* ~~*The*~~ *Exit Direction sign unless an interchange has multiple exits or interchanges are closely spaced.* ~~*should be the only guide sign used in the vicinity of the gore (other than the Exit Gore sign). It should be located overhead near the theoretical gore and generally on an overhead sign support structure.*~~ [The existing text is worded poorly because it applies to all “guide signs.” Pull-Through signs are guide signs, and they are frequently recommended to be co-mounted with Exit Direction signs. For a guide sign other than a Pull-Through sign to be co-mounted with an Exit Direction sign, two conditions are proposed: either interchanges must have multiple exits or be closely spaced.]

B. The Interchange Advance guide sign to indicate the next interchange exit should be placed near the crossroad location. If the crossroad goes over the mainline, the Interchange Advance guide sign should be placed on the overcrossing structure or on a separate structure immediately in front of the overcrossing structure.

Figure 2E-48. Example of Sign Spreading

