National Committee on
Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item Number: 26B-PED-01

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

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| **COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE:** | Pedestrian Joint Task Force |
| **ITEM NUMBER:** | 26B-PED-01 |
| **TOPIC:** | Pedestrian Signal Heads |
| **ORIGIN OF REQUEST:** | Pedestrian JTF and Signals Pedestrian Control Features TF |
| **AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:** | 4D.02 |

**DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:**
Approved by Pedestrian JTF: ..... 01/07/2026
Concurrence by Signals TC:..... 06/24/2026
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 revises the installation of pedestrian signal heads at traffic control signals from a Guidance condition to a Standard. It ties the provision of pedestrian signal heads to the presence of a marked crosswalk. This change is to address the needs of all road users, and in this case, for people who are blind or have low vision.

**DISCUSSION:**
Traffic control devices for all road users have evolved since the advent of the MUTCD. Initially, the provision of pedestrian control at traffic control signals was based upon warrant-like parameters. Warrants or conditions can make accessibility be viewed as an ancillary project cost, based upon activity or other criteria. The 11th edition of the MUTCD elevated this topic in revising the language related to pedestrian signal head provision. The Access Board has specified the need for accessible intersection design addressing people who are blind or who have low vision, including specifics on traffic signal control devices.

In urbanized areas with little pedestrian activity, sometimes pedestrian signal heads were not provided as the MUTCD had conditioned their use. Funding and budget have been prior concerns related to pedestrian signal heads as a standard. This is common with many changes to the MUTCD (curve

warning, retroreflectivity, marking line widths, others). The decision to create a standard that addresses the needs of all road users is balanced with these considerations.

Linking the provision of a marked crosswalk with the provision of a pedestrian signal heads was done as a part of the 11th edition of the MUTCD as a Guidance statement. The decision to mark a crosswalk carries several design and traffic control device considerations with it (APS, marking type, lighting, count down timers and curb ramps). The pedestrian signal head is the traffic control device for pedestrian at intersections controlled by a traffic signal. Connecting the decision to mark a crosswalk at a signalized intersection to provision of pedestrian signal heads provides consistent and uniform guidance to practitioners promoting safety, access and mobility for all users eliminating conditions or warrants.

There are other concerns regarding requiring pedestrian signal heads for temporary traffic control crossings and for short marked crosswalks. For temporary traffic control, similar decisions related to the use of a marked crosswalk exist. Crosswalks may be closed during construction so long as a comparable route for walking is established (including proper traffic control devices for pedestrians). Some might say this could leave pedestrians with excessive out of direction travel. Others might determine that if a crosswalk existed before construction, it must be replaced in kind during construction (which can be difficult when the full corner of an intersection is being reconstructed). These issues are somewhat independent of the pedestrian signal head provision, but require consideration.

Historically there is a belief that short crosswalks (seven second crossing time or less) do not constitute a need for pedestrian signal heads. While providing vehicle displays for pedestrians may have been a prior practice, it does not address the crossing needs of people who are blind or have low vision. The Access Board has established standards for the provision of accessible pedestrian signals. Past criteria that “conditionalized” provision of pedestrian signal heads (permanent or temporary), while important, appear to weigh more upon cost and maintenance than on establishment of uniform standards that provide for safe and accessible pedestrian traffic control for all road users.

Agencies have inventories of traffic control signals without pedestrian signal heads. They will need to establish a plan for compliance as called for in Section 1B.03. Section 1B.03 P03 is clear about “new and reconstructed” as the basis that this change would apply to. This proposal does not call for a compliance date. That is left to the agency as they have the best understanding of resources and needs. However, once a plan is established, follow through must either align with the plan or have documentation as to changed conditions when they occur.

The proposed change is offered to meet the needs of all users and establish a standard design practice for pedestrian signal heads with marked crosswalk at traffic control signals. When a decision is made to install a marked crosswalk at a traffic signal, the provision of pedestrian signal heads would come with it. The change from guidance to standard is necessary to assure standard traffic control for all users at signalized intersections.

Marking crosswalks is a Guidance statement (Section 3C.02, P01). This allows documentation of situation which do not call for crossing accommodations. Some have indicated this change could lead to fewer marked crosswalks; however, that does not align with the standard of care for engineering practice that requires thoughtful and ethical consideration of intersection design.

The NCUTCD Council has previously debated this issue. In 2018, Council voted to elevate the provision of pedestrian signal heads from optional to guidance. In 2023 final rule making for the 11th Edition of the MUTCD made the statement guidance and added a nexus to marked crosswalks. This proposal expands uniformity by focusing upon the nexus with “marked crosswalks” added by FHWA simplifying the text regarding provision of pedestrian signal heads.

**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 4
## SIGNALS

## CHAPTER 4D. DESIGN FEATURES OF TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS

### Section 4D.02 Provisions for Pedestrians

Support:

01 Chapter 4I contains additional information regarding pedestrian control features, Chapter 4J contains additional information regarding pedestrian hybrid beacons, and Chapter 4K contains additional information regarding accessible pedestrian signals and detectors.

**Standard:**

02 **Pedestrian signal heads shall be installed for each marked crosswalk (see Section 3C.02) controlled by a traffic control signal (see Section 1B.03).** ~~**used in conjunction with vehicular traffic control signals under any of the following conditions, unless the pedestrian crossing is prohibited:**~~

~~**A. If the basis for traffic signal installation was justified by an engineering study and meeting either Warrant 4, Pedestrian Volume or Warrant 5, School Crossing (see Chapter 4C);**~~

~~**B. If an exclusive pedestrian signal phase or a leading pedestrian interval (LPI) is provided with all conflicting vehicular movements being stopped;**~~

~~**C. At an established signalized school crossing; or**~~

~~**D. Where there are existing pedestrian accommodations and engineering judgment determines that multi-phase signal indications (such as split-phase timing) would tend to confuse or cause conflicts with pedestrians using a crosswalk guided only by vehicular signal indications.**~~

*Guidance:*

~~*03 Pedestrian signal heads should be installed for each marked crosswalk at a location controlled by a traffic control signal.*~~

04 *Where pedestrian movements regularly occur, pedestrians should be provided with sufficient time to cross the roadway by adjusting the traffic control signal operation and timing to provide sufficient crossing time every cycle or by providing pedestrian detectors.*

05 *Where certain pedestrian movements are prohibited at a traffic control signal location, a No Pedestrian Crossing (R9-3) sign (see Section 2B.57) should be used if it is impracticable to provide a barrier or other physical feature to physically discourage the pedestrian movements.*

Support:

06 Accessible pedestrian signals (see Chapter 4K) that provide information in non-visual formats (such as audible tones and/or speech messages, and vibrating surfaces) enhance safety and accessibility at signalized crossings for pedestrians with vision disabilities.

Option:

07 Pedestrian signal heads may be used under other conditions based on engineering judgment.