National Committee on
Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item No.: 19B-SIG-02

NCUTCD Proposal for Changes to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE:	Signals Technical Committee
ITEM NUMBER:	19B-SIG-02
TOPIC:	Alternatives to Traffic Control Signals
ORIGIN OF REQUEST:	Signals Technical Committee
AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:	Section ~~4B.04~~ 4B.05 Alternatives to Traffic Control Signals and Section 4C.01 Studies and Factors for Justifying Traffic Control Signals

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

- Approved by Technical Committee: 06/19/2019
- Approved by NCUTCD Council:

This is a proposal for recommended changes to the MUTCD that has been developed by a technical committee 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 by the FHWA through the federal rulemaking process.

SUMMARY

This proposal would add language to an Option statement with information about roundabouts to Section 4B.05 and add a Guidance statement to Section 4C.01 to emphasize consideration of alternatives to traffic control signals listed in Section 4B.05 before installing a traffic control signal.

DISCUSSION

The Signals Technical Committee (STC) explored ways to emphasize the consideration of roundabouts as an alternative to a traffic control signal. Two of the STC task forces worked together to develop proposed additional text for Section 4B.06 to specifically note that a roundabout is an alternative to a traffic control signal and to add a Guidance statement to 4C.01 to emphasize consideration of alternatives to traffic control signals specified in 4B.05 before installing a traffic control signal.

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 [black font in brackets highlighted light blue].

PART 4. HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SIGNALS
CHAPTER 4B TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS - GENERAL

Section ~~4B.04~~ 4B.05 Alternatives to Traffic Control Signals

Guidance:

01 *Since vehicular delay and the frequency of some types of crashes are sometimes greater under traffic signal control than under STOP sign control, consideration should be given to providing alternatives to traffic control signals even if one or more of the signal warrants has been satisfied.*

Option:

02 These alternatives may include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. Installing signs along the major street to warn road users approaching the intersection;
B. Relocating the stop line(s) and making other changes to improve the sight distance at the intersection;
C. Installing measures designed to reduce speeds on the approaches;
D. Installing a flashing beacon at the intersection to supplement STOP sign control;
E. Installing flashing beacons on warning signs in advance of a STOP sign controlled intersection on major- and/or minor-street approaches;
F. Adding one or more lanes on a minor-street approach to reduce the number of vehicles per lane on the approach;
G. Revising the geometrics at the intersection to channelize vehicular movements and reduce the time required for a vehicle to complete a movement, which could also assist pedestrians;
H. Revising the geometrics at the intersection to add pedestrian median refuge islands and/or curb extensions;
I. Installing roadway lighting if a disproportionate number of crashes occur at night;
J. Restricting one or more turning movements, perhaps on a time-of-day basis, if alternate routes are available;
K. If the warrant is satisfied, installing multi-way STOP sign control;
L. Installing a pedestrian hybrid beacon (see Chapter 4F) or In-Roadway Warning Lights (see Chapter 4N) if pedestrian safety is the major concern;
M. Installing a roundabout to reduce vehicular crossing conflicts by converting all movements to right turns; and
N. Employing other alternatives, depending on conditions at the intersection.

CHAPTER 4C. TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNAL NEEDS STUDIES

Section 4C.01 Studies and Factors for Justifying Traffic Control Signals

Standard:

01 **Except for temporary traffic control signals (see Section 4D.32), before a traffic control signal is installed at a particular location, ~~A~~an engineering study of traffic conditions, pedestrian characteristics, and physical characteristics of the location shall be performed and placed in the agency's files. The engineering study shall clearly indicate the reason(s) that a traffic control signal was ~~to~~ determined ~~whether installation of a traffic control signal is~~ to be justified at ~~a particular~~ the location.**

02 **The investigation of the need for a traffic control signal shall include an analysis of factors related to the existing operation and safety at the study location and the potential to improve these conditions, and the applicable factors contained in the following traffic signal warrants:**

- **Warrant 1, Eight-Hour Vehicular Volume**
- **Warrant 2, Four-Hour Vehicular Volume**
- **Warrant 3, Peak Hour**
- **Warrant 4, Pedestrian Volume**
- **Warrant 5, School Crossing**
- **Warrant 6, Coordinated Signal System**
- **Warrant 7, Crash Experience**
- **Warrant 8, Roadway Network**
- **Warrant 9, Intersection Near a Grade Crossing**

03 **The satisfaction of a traffic signal warrant or warrants shall not in itself require the installation of a traffic control signal.**

Support:

04 Sections 8C.09 and 8C.10 contain information regarding the use of traffic control signals instead of gates and/or flashing-light signals at highway-rail grade crossings and highway-light rail transit grade crossings, respectively.

Guidance:

04a *When considering the installation of a traffic control signal, alternatives to traffic control signals, including those listed in Section 4B.05, should also be considered.*

05 *A traffic control signal should not be installed unless one or more of the factors described in this Chapter are met.*

06 *A traffic control signal should not be installed unless an engineering study indicates that installing a traffic control signal will improve the overall safety and/or operation of the intersection.*

07 *A traffic control signal should not be installed if it will seriously disrupt progressive traffic flow.*

08 *The study should consider the effects of the right-turn vehicles from the minor-street approaches. Engineering judgment should be used to determine what, if any, portion of the right-turn traffic is subtracted from the minor-street traffic count when evaluating the count against the signal warrants listed in Paragraph 2.*

09 *Engineering judgment should also be used in applying various traffic signal warrants to cases where approaches consist of one lane plus one left-turn or right-turn lane. The site-specific traffic characteristics should dictate whether an approach is considered as one lane or*

two lanes. For example, for an approach with one lane for through and right-turning traffic plus a left-turn lane, if engineering judgment indicates that it should be considered a one-lane approach because the traffic using the left-turn lane is minor, the total traffic volume approaching the intersection should be applied against the signal warrants as a one-lane approach. The approach should be considered two lanes if approximately half of the traffic on the approach turns left and the left-turn lane is of sufficient length to accommodate all left-turn vehicles.

10 *Similar engineering judgment and rationale should be applied to a street approach with one through/left-turn lane plus a right-turn lane. In this case, the degree of conflict of minor-street right-turn traffic with traffic on the major street should be considered. Thus, right-turn traffic should not be included in the minor-street volume if the movement enters the major street with minimal conflict. The approach should be evaluated as a one-lane approach with only the traffic volume in the through/left-turn lane considered.*

11 *At a location that is under development or construction and where it is not possible to obtain a traffic count that would represent future traffic conditions, hourly volumes should be estimated as part of an engineering study for comparison with traffic signal warrants. Except for locations where the engineering study uses the satisfaction of Warrant 8 to justify a signal, a traffic control signal installed under projected conditions should have an engineering study done within 1 year of putting the signal into stop-and-go operation to determine if the signal is justified. If not justified, the signal should be taken out of stop-and-go operation or removed.*

Option:

12 For signal warrant analysis, a location with a wide median, even if the median width is greater than 30 feet, ~~should~~ may be ~~considered~~ analyzed as one intersection or as two intersections based on engineering judgment.

~~Option:~~

13 At an intersection with a high volume of left-turn traffic from the major street, the signal warrant analysis may be performed in a manner that considers the higher of the major-street left-turn volumes as the "minor-street" volume and the corresponding single direction of opposing traffic on the major street as the "major-street" volume.

14 For signal warrants requiring conditions to be present for a certain number of hours in order to be satisfied, any four ~~sequential~~ consecutive 15-minute periods may be considered as 1 hour if the separate 1-hour periods used in the warrant analysis do not overlap each other and both the major-street volume and the minor-street volume are for the same specific one-hour periods.

15 For signal warrant analysis, bicyclists may be counted as either vehicles or pedestrians.

Support:

16 When performing a signal warrant analysis, bicyclists riding in the street with other vehicular traffic are usually counted as vehicles and bicyclists who are clearly using pedestrian facilities are usually counted as pedestrians.

Option:

17 Engineering study data may include the following:

A. The number of vehicles entering the intersection in each hour from each approach during 12 hours of an average day. It is desirable that the hours selected contain the greatest percentage of the 24-hour traffic volume.

B. Vehicular volumes for each traffic movement from each approach, classified by vehicle type (heavy trucks, passenger cars and light trucks, public-transit vehicles, and, in some locations, bicycles), during each 15-minute period of the 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon during which total traffic entering the intersection is greatest.

C. Pedestrian volume counts on each crosswalk during the same periods as the vehicular counts in Item B and during hours of highest pedestrian volume. Where young, elderly, and/or persons with physical or visual disabilities need special consideration, the pedestrians and their crossing times may be classified by general observation.

D. Information about nearby facilities and activity centers that serve the young, elderly, and/or persons with disabilities, including requests from persons with disabilities for accessible crossing improvements at the location under study. These persons might not be adequately reflected in the pedestrian volume count if the absence of a signal restrains their mobility.

E. The posted or statutory speed limit or the 85th-percentile speed on the uncontrolled approaches to the location.

F. A condition diagram showing details of the physical layout, including such features as intersection geometrics, channelization, grades, sight-distance restrictions, transit stops and routes, parking conditions, pavement markings, roadway lighting, driveways, nearby railroad crossings, distance to nearest traffic control signals, utility poles and fixtures, and adjacent land use.

G. A collision diagram showing crash experience by type, location, direction of movement, severity, weather, time of day, date, and day of week for at least 1 year.

18 The following data, which are desirable for a more precise understanding of the operation of the intersection, may be obtained during the periods described in Item B of Paragraph 17:

A. Vehicle-hours of stopped time delay determined separately for each approach.

B. The number and distribution of acceptable gaps in vehicular traffic on the major street for entrance from the minor street.

C. The posted or statutory speed limit or the 85th-percentile speed on controlled approaches at a point near to the intersection but unaffected by the control.

D. Pedestrian delay time for at least two 30-minute peak pedestrian delay periods of an average weekday or like periods of a Saturday or Sunday.

E. Queue length on stop-controlled approaches.