

**National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
RWSTC RECOMMENDATION FOLLOWING SPONSOR COMMENTS**

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE: NCUTCD Regulatory/Warning Signs Technical Committee

DATE OF ACTION: (TASK FORCE): May 14, 2010

RWSTC APPROVAL DATE: June 30, 2010

TRANSMITTAL TO SPONSORS DATE: October 28, 2010

RWSTC APPROVAL FOLLOWING SPONSOR COMMENTS: January 19, 2011

COUNCIL APPROVAL DATE: 1-20-11

TOPIC: Thru Traffic Merge Left (Right)

AFFECTED PORTIONS OF MUTCD: Section 2C.XX Figure 2C-8, Table 2C-1 and Table 2C-2 (2009 MUTCD)

DISCUSSION:

The *Synthesis of Non-MUTCD Signing* identified seventy-four signs or categories of signs that are not in the MUTCD but were in common use by various States, local governments and Canada. The *Synthesis of Non-MUTCD Signing* recommended that these signs be considered for inclusion in the MUTCD. Thirty-one of these signs were Warning Signs. The Regulatory and Warning Sign Technical Committee (RWSTC) reviewed these signs in June 2006. The RWSTC recommended that thirteen of these signs or sets of signs be included in the MUTCD. One of these thirteen signs was the THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) sign shown below.



At least 11 States routinely use supplemental warning signs approaching lane drops to warn thru traffic (i.e., traffic not exiting at the next interchange or turning at the next

46 intersection) to “merge left” (or right). States also use this sign to advise motorists to
47 leave congested lanes at interchanges.

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49 The W4-7 THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) sign was in Part 6 Temporary
50 Traffic Control (Table 6F-1, Figure 6F-4 and Section 6F.23) of the 2003 MUTCD.

51
52 The THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) sign (W4-7) was approved by
53 Council on June 21, 2007 and was included in the December 2007 NPA in Section 2C.41,
54 Figure 2C-8, Table 2C-1 and Table 2C-2.

55
56 The sign was eliminated from the 2009 MUTCD. Section 140 of the December 2009
57 Final Rule states *“In Section 2C.42 Lane Ends Signs (Section 2C.33 of the 2003*
58 *MUTCD), the FHWA proposed in the NPA to allow the use of the W4–7 THRU TRAFFIC*
59 *MERGE RIGHT (LEFT) sign, as a supplement to other signs, to warn road users in the*
60 *right or left lane that their lane is about to become a mandatory turn or exit lane. ATSSA*
61 *and the NCUTCD supported this new sign; however, a local DOT suggested that an*
62 *additional sign is not needed, because the existing W9–1 and W9–2 Series signs already*
63 *serve this purpose. The FHWA agrees and does not adopt the proposed use of this sign in*
64 *this final rule. The FHWA believes this sign legend can be confusing when there are more*
65 *than two through lanes. Instead, the FHWA adds a GUIDANCE statement in Section*
66 *2C.42 in this final rule to recommend the use of the RIGHT (LEFT) LANE ENDS (W9–1)*
67 *adjacent to the Lane-Reduction Arrow pavement markings. The FHWA also clarifies the*
68 *application of the W4–2, W9–1, and W9–2 warning signs in this final rule by adding a*
69 *STANDARD statement prohibiting their use where a thru lane is designated as a*
70 *mandatory turning lane approaching an intersection. The FHWA adopts these changes to*
71 *be consistent with changes adopted in Sections 2B.20 and 3B .04. The FHWA retains the*
72 *current use of the W4–7 sign for temporary conditions in Part 6.”*

73
74 The last sentence of Section 140 of the December 16, 2009 Final Rule appears to be
75 in error. The THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) sign (W4-7) does not appear to
76 be in Table 6F-1, Figure 6F-4 or any Section of Part 6F of the 2009 MUTCD. Its
77 deletion from Part 6F does not appear to have been addressed in the December 16, 2009
78 Final Rule.

79
80 While many States use supplemental signs to warn of lane drops at interchanges and
81 intersections the Final Rule takes the position that the proposed sign may be confusing
82 when there are more than two thru lanes and that the W4-2, W9-1 and W9-2 signs as
83 proposed in the Final Rule are adequate without the proposed sign.

84
85 According to Section 2C.42 of 2009 MUTCD, the LANE ENDS MERGE LEFT
86 (RIGHT) (W9-2) sign or the Lane Ends (W4-2) sign should be used to warn of the
87 reduction in the number of traffic lanes in the direction of travel on a multi-lane highway.
88 The RIGHT (LEFT) LANE ENDS (W9-1) sign may then be used in advance of the Lane
89 Ends (W4-2) sign or the LANE ENDS MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) (W9-2) sign as
90 additional warning or to emphasize that the traffic lane is ending and that a merging
91 maneuver will be required. So when additional emphasis is needed, both signs are to be

92 used and the RIGHT (LEFT) LANE ENDS (W9-1) sign becomes the supplemental sign
93 rather than the originally proposed THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) sign.

94
95 Since this sign was proposed as a supplement, the RWSTC cannot argue with the
96 position that another supplemental sign is necessarily better than the proposed signing
97 and pavement markings used to address the situation.

98
99 The RWSTC has always felt that one of the primary uses of this sign is to advise
100 motorists to leave congested lanes on multilane approaches to interchanges, intersections
101 and other congested areas. In these situations, the lane is not ending, so the W4-2, W9-1
102 and W9-2 signs are not appropriate. The message is frequently used at special events on
103 VMS. There is a need to address this phenomenon at locations where congestion clogs
104 the left or right lane approach lane on a regular basis.

105
106 The RWSTC proposes resubmitting this sign for use at multilane approaches to
107 congested locations to advise motorists to leave the congested lane. It would be
108 appropriate regardless of the number of approach lanes. Since it is not being used in
109 conjunction with a lane ending, it would now be in a new Section.

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111
112 **RECOMMENDATION: Add Section 2C.XX, add to Table 2C-1, Table 2C-2 and**
113 **Figure 2C-8**

114
115 **Note: Proposed changes to the MUTCD are shown in underline red and removed**
116 **text are shown in ~~strikethrough red~~.**

117
118 **RECOMMENDED WORDING:**

119
120 **Section 2C.XX THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) Sign (W4-7)**

121
122 **Option:**

123 **The THRU TRAFFIC MERGE LEFT (RIGHT) (W4-7) sign (see Figure 2C-8)**
124 **may be used at multilane approaches to congested areas to inform road users that it is**
125 **desirable for thru traffic to move out of a lane that will be occupied by large volumes of**
126 **entering or exiting traffic.**

127
128
129 RWSTC VOTE: For: 19

130 Opposed 2

131 Abstentions: 1

132
133 Approved

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135 VOTE: COUNCIL For: Unanimous

136 APPROVED January 2011

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139 10, revised 1-19-11, revised 1-20-11
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