RWSTC June 2012     RW # 1

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE : Regulatory/Warning Sign Subcommittee

TOPIC: Signs Placed on Existing Supports

STATUS/DATE OF ACTION:
- TC Drafts: 01/27/2011, 02/01/11, 02/02/11, 07/28/11, 05/14/12
- TC Approval: 01/18/2012
- Transmitted to Sponsors: Spring 2012
- RWSTC Approval: 6-20-12
- following sponsor comments
- Council Approval: 6-22-12

ORIGIN OF REQUEST: Task Force: James Pline (Chair), Ibarguen, Heydel, Paddick, Ranck

AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD: Section 2A.19 Lateral Offset and Section 2A.21 Posts and Mountings.

SUMMARY:
The 2009 MUTCD makes provision that signs may be placed on existing supports as follows;

Section 2A.19, Lateral Offset:
Option:
07 Where permitted, signs may be placed on existing supports used for other purposes, such as highway traffic signal supports, highway lighting supports, and utility poles.

Standard:
08 If signs are placed on existing supports, they shall meet other placement criteria contained in this Manual.

This requirement raises a question that if the sign is installed on an existing support then that support shall meet other placement criteria in the Manual meaning that the support shall be crashworthy (breakaway, yielding or shielded with a longitudinal barrier or crash cushion) if within the clear zone. The Manual should not be the document that upgrades existing supports, ie. Signal, lighting and utility poles, to a crashworthy
RESEARCH:

Research of the previous editions of the Manual found that the 2000 MUTCD added the following statement in Section 2A.19. Lateral Offset:

**Standard:**

Roadside-mounted sign supports shall be breakaway, yielding, or shielded with a longitudinal barrier or crash cushion if within the clear zone.

This provision was in the proposed rulemaking and received no response to the proposed change. It is assumed that paragraph “08” was added at the same time under the same rulemaking since it initially appears in the 2000 MUTCD and is repeated verbatim in both the 2003 and 2009 Editions.

The Manual has recognized that signs can be placed on existing supports starting with the 1935 Edition and repeated in the 1948, 1961, 1972 and 1978 Editions. The wording in the 1978 Manual reads as follows;

“In some cases, especially in urban districts, signs can be correctly placed on existing supports used for other purposes, such as traffic signals, street lights, and public utility poles where permitted, thereby saving expense and minimizing sidewalk obstructions.”

DISCUSSION:

There is no argument that any sign installation made under the provisions of the Manual shall include posts and mountings that meet the AASHTO “Specifications for Structural Supports for Highway Signs, Luminaires, and Traffic Signals”, Section 2A.21. However, when a sign is placed on an existing support it is not intended that the support be upgraded to those same requirements. The need to upgrade any existing supports along the roadway comes under the preview of the above specifications and the Roadside Design Guide. The Manual’s purpose is to address the installation of traffic control devices not the crashworthiness of existing supports along the roadway.

The Standard statement is not needed since it has nothing to do with the lateral offset of the sign installation and serves no purpose since the location is prescribed under other Manual provisions. Additionally, the Option statement permitting use of existing supports appears more appropriate in either Section 2A.16. **Standardization of Location** or Section 2A.21 **Posts and Mountings**.

The Standard statement could cause an undue burden on a jurisdiction requiring them to upgrade the supporting pole to crashworthy criteria. It has been a long standing consideration (Since 1935) that when the personnel make a field installation in the appropriate location if a support pole exists at the location then they can install the sign on that existing support pole rather than have a separate post next the existing support pole.

This Standard statement provides the inference that the existing support shall be upgraded to meet the other Manual criteria that includes crashworthiness of the support
pole. This could open the door for a legal interpretation that an agency was not in conformance with the MUTCD if they failed to upgrade an existing support.

**RECOMMENDED MUTCD PROVISIONS/ REVISIONS:**

Note: Proposed changes to the MUTCD are shown in *Underlined red* and removed text are shown in *strike-through-Red*.

Delete paragraph (07) and (08) in Section 2A.19 as noted in RED.

Section 2A.19 *Lateral Offset*

Option:

(07) Where permitted, sign may be placed on existing supports used for other purposes, such as highway traffic signal supports, highway lighting supports, and utility poles.

Standard:

(08) If signs are placed on existing supports, they shall meet other placement criteria contained in this Manual.

Add paragraph (03) and (04) in Section 2A.21 as noted in *Red*

Section 2A.21 *Post and Mountings*

Standard:

(01) Sign posts, foundations, and mountings shall be so constructed as to hold signs in a proper and permanent position, and to resist swaying in the wind or displacement by vandalism.

Support:

(02) The latest edition of AASHTO’s “Specifications for Structural Supports for Highway Signs, Luminaires, and Traffic Signals” contains additional information regarding posts and mountings (see Page i for AASHTO address).

Option:

(03) Where permitted, signs may be placed on existing supports used for other purposes, such as highway traffic signal supports, highway lighting supports, and utility poles.

Support:

(04) See lateral and height placement criteria for Guidance and Standards contained in this Manual, for signs that are placed on existing supports.
N:NCUTCD/june 2012/RW #1 Sections 2A.19 and 2A.20 lateral offsets – signs on existing supports 6-20-12 Revised following sponsor comments APPROVED BY COUNCIL 6-22-12