



# National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item No.: 24A-PED-01

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

**COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE:** Pedestrian Joint Task Force  
**ITEM NUMBER:** 24A-PED-01  
**TOPIC:** Pedestrian Definition  
**ORIGIN OF REQUEST:** Pedestrian Definition Working Group  
Chair: Ronnie Bell (Signals); Members: Lee Austin (Markings), Eagan Foster (Signals), Tricia Kovacs (Bicycle), Scott Leary (Regulatory & Warning Signs), Gevin McDaniel (Temporary Traffic Control), Randy McCourt (Pedestrian JTF)  
**AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:** 1C.02 Definition of Words and Phrases Used in this Manual Definition #164

### DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:

Approved by Joint Task Force: 02/09/2024  
Approved by Technical Committee: 06/27/2024  
Approved by NCUTCD Council: 06/28/2024

*This is a proposal for recommended changes to the MUTCD that has been approved by the NCUTCD Council. This proposal does not represent a revision of the MUTCD and does not constitute official MUTCD standards, guidance, or options. It 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 is to return the definition of a pedestrian to that used in both the 2009 MUTCD and the 2020 MUTCD NPA. The text of this definition was also included in the 2000 MUTCD and in the 2003 MUTCD. This return to the prior definition should be done immediately. Further study and a review process should be utilized to address any needed future changes for the definition of pedestrian.

### DISCUSSION:

In the 2023 MUTCD the definition of pedestrian was changed to:

**164. Pedestrian—a person on foot, in a wheelchair, on other devices determined by local law to be equivalent, which might include skates or a skateboard.**

This deviates from the following prior definition which has been in every version of the MUTCD since 2000:

33 **Pedestrian—a person afoot, in a wheelchair, on skates, or on a skateboard.**

34 The NPA did not list any proposed changes to the definition of pedestrian. Therefore, there was  
35 no opportunity for public review and comment regarding the revision to this standard language.  
36 The prior (2009) definition of pedestrian is consistent with the new 2023 text regarding target  
37 road users (Section 1A.03). The change noted above was also not addressed in the FHWA  
38 Supplemental Summary of Final Rule Dispositions item 17 for Section 1C.02 Definition of Words  
39 and Phrases Used in the Manual. The Federal Register preamble refers to definitions 10 times,  
40 but not in regards to this change.

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42 The revised definition placed in the 2023 MUTCD is not limited to a specified condition or group  
43 of road users but includes users of other devices (unspecified) as established by local laws.  
44 This creates potential for inconsistency between the application and use of traffic control  
45 devices intended specific to pedestrians as defined previously and the newly created definition  
46 of unspecified pedestrian as defined by local laws. With various micromobility options emerging,  
47 a critical aspect of traffic control devices specific to pedestrian applications that needs to be  
48 considered is travel speeds when using those devices. The "...determined...to be equivalent"  
49 statement does not clarify this nor provide guidance.

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51 The topic of refining the definition of pedestrians and its relationship to the use of micromobility  
52 devices is worthy of exploration and study. There are nearly 1,400 uses of the word "pedestrian"  
53 in the 2023 MUTCD. There was no documentation in the final rule materials (Federal Register  
54 preamble or explanation of changes) indicating this change was made from the NPA or tested  
55 against the uses of the term pedestrian, particularly as they relate to traffic control devices.  
56 While the term "pedestrian" in the MUTCD is used in many ways that are not affected by the  
57 definition, several uses of the word relate to the application of traffic control devices and are  
58 dependent upon the definition.

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60 Developing the MUTCD language depends upon a definition of the word "pedestrian". With the  
61 2023 MUTCD this then defers to "local law" introducing concern for inconsistencies in  
62 application. This seems contrary to the very first sentence of the MUTCD:

63  
64 *The purpose of the MUTCD is to establish uniform national criteria for the use of traffic control devices*  
65 *that meet the needs and expectancy of road users on all streets, highways, pedestrian and bicycle*  
66 *facilities, and site roadways open to public travel.*

67 Given the importance of this topic and the lack of procedural review of a standard creates  
68 potential for unintended consequences. Pedestrians and bicyclists, as vulnerable users, are  
69 commonly mentioned together. There are approximately 35 states where bikes are not treated  
70 the same as pedestrians in crosswalks and the other states that do treat them the same. This  
71 lack of consistency and uniformity affects the uniform application of traffic control devices across  
72 the country.

73  
74 The consequences of possible inconsistency between MUTCD traffic control device applications  
75 and the definition of "pedestrian" has the potential to create safety and risk issues that have not  
76 been fully considered. A new definition of pedestrian needs to provide flexibility for technology  
77 changes and be properly vetted with practitioners and agencies involved in transportation. Other  
78 agencies have recognized this need in refining their definitions from the 2009 MUTCD. For  
79 example, PROWAG has used the following definition:

80  
81 *A person on foot, travelling by wheelchair or other mobility device, on skates, or on a skateboard.*

82 Washington State DOT's design manual uses this definition:

83

84 *Any person afoot or using a wheelchair (manual or motorized) or means of conveyance (other than a*  
85 *bicycle) propelled by human power, such as skates or a skateboard.*

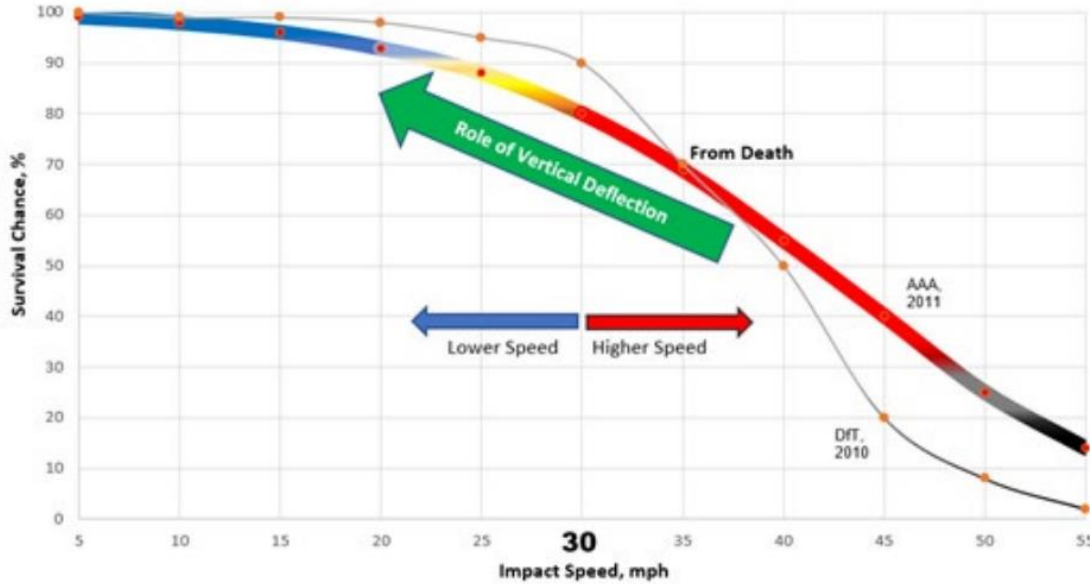
86 Each of these definitions attempts to address the evolving nature of pedestrian mobility and  
87 points to the need to seek consistency. Deferring the definition to "local law" permits variations  
88 which may not have been contemplated in the development of language for the MUTCD. With  
89 the changing micromobility options, communities already have struggled with how to address  
90 scooters (e-scooters), bicycles (e-bikes), segways, or possibly even ridden mobility devices  
91 (carts, golf carts, snowmobiles). With the application of a W11-2 Pedestrian Crossing sign,  
92 would all road users understand which mobility devices fit into that definition as it could change  
93 across jurisdictional boundaries rapidly in urbanized areas.

94

95 Operating speeds vary widely with emerging types of micromobility. One moment their use fits  
96 within the pedestrian realm (2 to 5 mph for walkers and joggers). The next moment motorized  
97 micromobility advances and are capable of traveling 20-35 mph. In Figure 1, the research (AAA)  
98 on survivability of a pedestrian in crashes of various speeds is shown. Figure 2 highlights the  
99 distance traveled at various speeds – higher speed micromobility in the pedestrian realm has  
100 potential to transition from the sidewalk space to vehicular travel lanes within the perception,  
101 intellection, emotion, volition time (PIEV) of both the "pedestrian" and the "driver". Collectively,  
102 this information points to a need for greater clarity in any change to the definition of pedestrian.

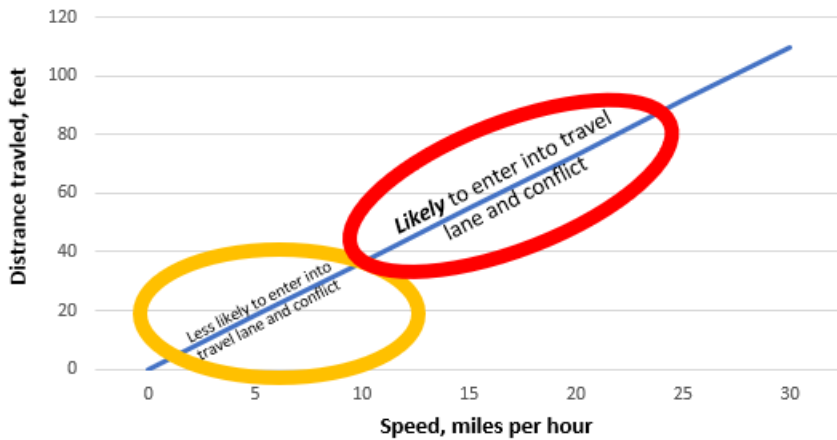
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104 Figure 1  
 105 Survival Expectations of Pedestrian in a Crash Based Upon Impact Speed



106 Source: Recommended Practice – A Guide to Vertical Deflection Speed Reduction Techniques: Planning and Design of Speed  
 107 Humps, Speed Tables and Other Related Measures, ITE, December 2022, page 24.  
 108  
 109

110 Figure 2  
 111 Distance Traveled in PIEV Time (2.5 seconds)



112 For these reasons, it is proposed to change the 2023 MUTCD definition, having it revert back to  
 113 the 2009 MUTCD text (and 2020 NPA) until further study, collaboration and review can be  
 114 conducted. This will allow concerns that were the source of this change to be properly  
 115 addressed within a future modification of the MUTCD before greater inconsistencies emerge  
 116 from local law. The eventual change can address the intent of the final rule with better  
 117 coordination for consistency within the MUTCD and other documents that address standards  
 118 with pedestrians and traffic control devices. The PJTF has established a working group that will  
 119 begin work, engaging other groups, to review an appropriate definition for pedestrians this year.  
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123 **RECOMMENDED MUTCD CHANGES:**

124 The following present the proposed changes to the current MUTCD within the context of the  
 125 current MUTCD language. Proposed additions to the MUTCD are shown in blue underline and

126 proposed deletions from the MUTCD are shown in ~~red strikethrough~~. Changes previously  
127 approved by NCUTCD Council (but not yet adopted by FHWA) are shown in green double  
128 underline for additions and ~~green double strikethrough~~ for deletions. In some cases,  
129 background comments may be provided with the MUTCD text. These comments are indicated  
130 by [bracketed white text in shaded green]. Deletions made by a technical committee or task  
131 force after initial distribution to sponsoring organizations are shown in ~~highlighted red~~  
132 ~~strikethrough and Helvetica text~~. Additions made by a technical committee or task force after  
133 initial distribution to sponsoring organizations are shown in underline blue and Helvetica text.

134  
135 **PART 1. GENERAL**

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137 **CHAPTER 1C. DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS, AND**  
138 **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS MANUAL**

139  
140 **Section 1C.02 Definitions of Words and Phrases Used in this Manual Section**

141 03 The following words and phrases, when used in this Manual, shall have the following  
142 meanings:

143  
144 164. Pedestrian—a person on foot, in a wheelchair, on ~~other devices determined by local law to be~~  
145 ~~equivalent, which might include~~ skates, or on a skateboard.