



# National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item No.: 24A-PED-02

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

**COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE:** Pedestrian Joint Task Force  
**ITEM NUMBER:** 24A-PED-02  
**TOPIC:** Pedestrian Change Interval with Preemption  
**ORIGIN OF REQUEST:** Pedestrian Clearance Interval Working Group  
Bob Garbacz (Signals), Rob Ziembra (Signals), Eagan Foster (Signals), Jay Jackson (Signals), Fred Mills (Railroad & LRT), Randy McCourt (Pedestrian JTF)  
**AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:** 4F.19 Preemption Control of Traffic Control Signals

### 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:

In the 2023 MUTCD, FHWA changed a standard to option regarding truncation of pedestrian clearance intervals. The current language allows for an option to truncate pedestrian intervals without limitation. Additional text is provided to align the 2023 text with the Federal Register preamble explanation of what was changed.

### DISCUSSION:

Truncating pedestrian change interval in the transition to preemption does not improve the safety of vulnerable users at grade crossings. Allowing for the shortening or omitting of the pedestrian change interval potentially exposes vulnerable road users, especially those with vision and/or mobility disabilities, to significant risk. The risk is created when they are crossing the street and their pedestrian indication is terminated mid-crossing to permit the signal to change to green on that approach in preparation for an approaching emergency response vehicle. It does not allow adequate clearance time for pedestrians to complete a crossing that has already commenced. The 2023 MUTCD text modification for Section 4F.19 converts what was a standard statement to an option statement related to truncation of pedestrian clearance intervals transitioning into preemption. The text as modified from the 2020 NPA opens the

35 potential for unlimited truncation of pedestrian change intervals with preemption. The description  
36 provided in the June 2013 (12B-STC-02) approved recommended change to the 2009 MUTCD  
37 explains the need for change, addressing vulnerable user safety in crossing streets after a walk  
38 indication has already allowed them to enter the street. To address this concern, it is proposed  
39 that similar language which was used in the NCUTCD Council approved change (approved  
40 three times by Council in 12B-STC-02,14A-STC-01 and NPA item #414/Chapter 4F Docket  
41 Comment May 2021) and 2020 NPA be used within the FHWA's desire to convert this  
42 information to an option statement. By an option statement this does not fully limit or control the  
43 practice. The proposal simply outlines the preferred practice for practitioner consideration and  
44 provides greater clarity regarding the omission of pedestrian change interval.

45  
46 The following sections display the progression this text from the 2009 MUTCD, the NCUTCD  
47 approved recommendation of June 2013 (with changes noted) and the December 2020 FHWA  
48 NPA text for this paragraph for reference. As can be seen, the use of the exclusionary text,  
49 converted to option, simply clarifies the practice but does not establish it as either standard or  
50 guidance as advanced by FHWA in the final rule for the 2023 MUTCD. That may be subject to  
51 future study and considerations, particularly as FHWA considers adoption of PROWAG  
52 (specifically Section R306.2) into the MUTCD through future rule making.

#### 53 54 **2009 MUTCD**

##### 55 **Standard:**

##### 56 **During the transition into preemption control:**

- 57 **A. The yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be**  
58 **shortened or omitted.**
- 59 **B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval and/or pedestrian change**  
60 **interval shall be permitted.**
- 61 **C. The return to the previous green signal indication shall be permitted following a steady**  
62 **yellow signal indication in the same signal face, omitting the red clearance interval, if any.**

#### 63 64 **June 2013 NCUTCD 12B-STC-02**

##### 65 **Standard:**

##### 66 **During the transition into preemption control:**

- 67 **A. The yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be**  
68 **shortened or omitted.**
- 69 **B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval ~~and/or pedestrian change~~**  
70 **~~interval~~ shall be permitted.**
- 71 **C. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian change interval shall be permitted only for**  
72 **boats at movable bridges and for rail traffic to which other traffic is required to yield the**  
73 **right-of-way by law.**
- 74 **ED. The return to the previous green signal indication shall be permitted following a steady**  
75 **yellow signal indication in the same signal face, omitting the red clearance interval, if any.**

#### 76 77 **June 2014 NCUTCD 14A-STC-01 (showing only items B. and C.)**

##### 78 **Standard:**

- 79 **B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval ~~and/or pedestrian change~~**  
80 **~~interval~~ shall be permitted.**
- 81 **C. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian change interval shall be permitted only**  
82 **when the traffic control signal is being preempted because a boat is approaching a**  
83 **movable bridge or because rail traffic is approaching a grade crossing.**

84 **December 2020 FHWA NPA (also approved by NCUTCD Council as a part of FHWA-2020-**  
85 **0001 Chapter 4F Docket Comments)**

86 **Standard:**

87 **During the transition into preemption control:**

- 88 **A. The yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be**  
89 **shortened or omitted.**
- 90 **B. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian walk interval shall be permitted.**
- 91 **C. The shortening or omission of any pedestrian change interval shall be permitted only when**  
92 **the traffic control signal is being preempted because a boat is approaching a movable**  
93 **bridge or because rail traffic is approaching a grade crossing.**
- 94 **D. The return to the previous green signal indication shall be permitted following a steady**  
95 **yellow signal indication in the same signal face, omitting the red clearance interval, if any.**

96  
97 This following proposal takes the NCUTCD Council approved (three times) and reuses it in the  
98 new 2023 MUTCD language by folding it into the option language. It segregates out the  
99 omission of the pedestrian clearance interval as linked to the omission of the pedestrian walk  
100 interval. In doing so the carve outs for due to rail or boat preemption on pedestrian change  
101 interval truncation are reinstated as options which do not affect the concerns noted in the  
102 Federal Register preamble regarding emergency service effectiveness. Terminology from “shall  
103 be **permitted**” is updated using the 2023 MUTCD language.

104  
105 Further research regarding the concerns of emergency service being “greatly diminished and  
106 completely ineffective due to increased delay” is needed as some agencies have effectively  
107 instituted the pedestrian clearance interval protection for these preemption systems. The  
108 protection of vulnerable users is of high importance in the design of signal preemption systems  
109 and this change helps clarify that importance.

110  
111 **RECOMMENDED MUTCD CHANGES:**

112 The following present the proposed changes to the current MUTCD within the context of the  
113 current MUTCD language. Proposed additions to the MUTCD are shown in blue underline and  
114 proposed deletions from the MUTCD are shown in ~~red-strikethrough~~. Changes previously  
115 approved by NCUTCD Council (but not yet adopted by FHWA) are shown in green double  
116 underline for additions and ~~green-double-strikethrough~~ for deletions. In some cases,  
117 background comments may be provided with the MUTCD text. These comments are indicated  
118 by bracketed white text in shaded green. Deletions made by a technical committee or task  
119 force after initial distribution to sponsoring organizations are shown in ~~highlighted red~~  
120 ~~strikethrough and Helvetica text~~. Additions made by a technical committee or task force after  
121 initial distribution to sponsoring organizations are shown in underline blue and Helvetica text.

122

123 **PART 4. HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SIGNALS**

124  
125 **CHAPTER 4F. STEADY (STOP-AND-GO) OPERATION OF TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS**

126  
127 **Section 4F.19 Preemption Control of Traffic Control Signals Support:**

128 Support:

129 01 Preemption control (see definition in Section 1C.02) is typically given to trains, boats, emergency  
130 vehicles, and light rail transit.

131 02 Examples of preemption control include the following:

132 A. The prompt displaying of green signal indications at signalized locations ahead of fire vehicles,  
133 law enforcement vehicles, ambulances, and other official emergency vehicles;

134 B. A special sequence of signal phases and timing to expedite and/or provide additional clearance  
135 time for vehicles to clear the tracks prior to the arrival of rail traffic; and

136 C. A special sequence of signal phases to display a steady red indication to prohibit turning  
137 movements toward the tracks during the approach or passage of rail traffic.

138 **Standard:**

139 03 **During the transition into preemption control, the yellow change interval, and any red**  
140 **clearance interval that follows, shall not be shortened or omitted.**

141 Option:

142 04 During the transition into preemption control:

143 A. ~~A. Any pedestrian. The walk interval and/or pedestrian change interval~~ may be shortened or  
144 ~~omitted.~~ if the walk interval has begun.

145 B. The walk interval together with its associated pedestrian change interval may be omitted if the  
146 walk interval has not begun.

147 C. The pedestrian change interval may be shortened or omitted only for a boat approaching a  
148 moveable bridge or for rail traffic approaching a grade crossing.

149 ~~BD.~~ The red clearance interval, if any, may be omitted so that the return to the previous green signal  
150 indication follows a steady yellow signal indication in the same signal face.

151 **Standard:**

152 05 **During preemption control and during the transition out of preemption control:**

153 A. **Any yellow change interval, and any red clearance interval that follows, shall not be**  
154 **shortened or omitted.**

155 B. **A signal indication sequence from a steady yellow signal indication to a green signal**  
156 **indication shall not be permitted.**

157 Option:

158 06 A distinctive indication may be provided at the intersection to inform law enforcement personnel  
159 who are escorting traffic (such as a parade or funeral procession) that the traffic control signal has  
160 changed to a red indication not because of normal cycling, but because it has been preempted by rail  
161 traffic approaching an adjacent grade crossing or by boat traffic approaching an adjacent movable bridge.

162 07 A distinctive indication may be provided at the intersection to show that an emergency vehicle has  
163 been given control of the traffic control signal (see Section 11-106 of the “Uniform Vehicle Code”). In  
164 order to assist in the understanding of the control of the traffic control signal, a common distinctive  
165 indication may be used where drivers from different agencies travel through the same intersection when  
166 responding to emergencies.

167 *Guidance:*

168 08 *Except for traffic control signals interconnected with light rail transit systems, traffic control signals*  
169 *with railroad preemption or coordinated with flashing-light signal systems should be provided with a*  
170 *back-up power supply.*  
171 09 *If a traffic control signal or hybrid beacon is installed near or within a grade crossing or if a grade*  
172 *crossing with active traffic control devices is within or near a signalized highway intersection, Chapter*  
173 *8D should be consulted.*

174 Support:

175 10 Section 8D.09 contains additional information regarding preemption for grade crossings. Section  
176 8D.10 contains information regarding prohibiting movements toward the grade crossing during  
177 preemption. Sections 8D.11 and 8D.12 contain additional information regarding pre-signals and queue  
178 cutter signals, respectively, for grade crossings.