



National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item No.: 25A-RW-01

NCUTCD RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGES TO THE MANUAL ON UNIFORM TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE: Regulatory and Warning Signs Technical Committee
ITEM NUMBER: 25A-RW-01
TOPIC: School Zone When Flashing for CAV
ORIGIN OF REQUEST: CAV Joint Task Force and Signs for CAV MCTF
**AFFECTED SECTIONS
OF MUTCD:** 7B.05

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:

Approved by RWSTC: 01/08/2025, 06/11/2025
Approved by CAVJTF 01/08/2025
Approved by NCUTCD Council: 06/12/2025

This is a recommended change 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:

The practice of utilizing hour, day and “when children present” text plaques to define the presence of a school speed limit for a School Speed Limit Assembly (Figure 7B-1) is inconsistent with 11th Edition MUTCD language in Part 5. To clarify intent, a new support statement is proposed for Part 7.

DISCUSSION:

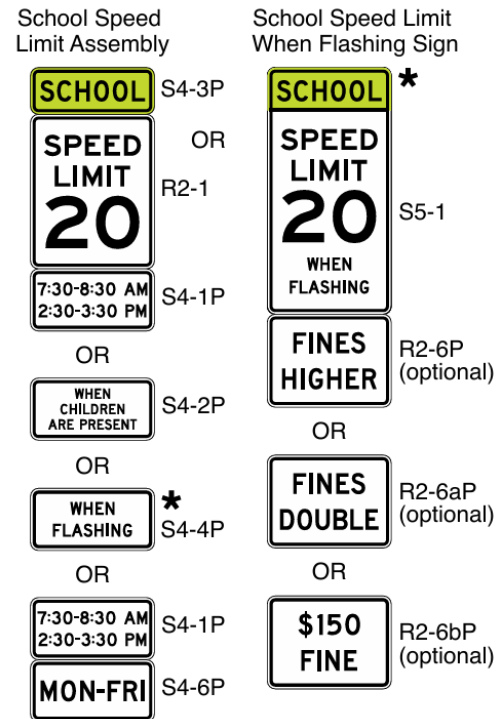
The 11th Edition of the MUTCD Section 1A.03 states that “traffic control devices can be targeted at operators of motor vehicles, including driving automation systems, and at vulnerable road users.” The need for uniformity and consistency in sign applications are a key aspect for all road users (Section 1A.01) and for driving automation systems (Section 5A.04). In Part 7 the use of school speed limit assemblies offers at least four options to address the periods of the day that the speed limit applies. In 1971 when school speed limit signs first were introduced to the MUTCD, states had (and continue today) with various laws regarding school zone speed limits and required signing. This has resulted in various applications using the options afforded in the MUTCD.

The various plaques (S4-1P, 4-2P, S4-4P and S4-1P with S4-6P) all approach the definition of when the speed limit is in effect in different manners as shown in Figure 7B-1 (to right). For a human driver, driving automation systems (DAS), and enforcement understanding “when children are present” is difficult (for example a person dressed in a hoodie and jeans could be an adult or child). The unwritten understanding of 7:30-8:30 AM during school days is a common understanding but drivers and DAS requires literal interpretation. Even MON-FRI (during summer or teacher service days) requires interpretation. Clearly defining every circumstance and school district operation (and schools with ball fields and parks) creates lack of clarity for both human drivers and DAS. Use of plaques of this nature can be inconsistent with stated objectives of the MUTCD 11th Edition (Section 1A.01 B. and C.) and Chapter 5 (Section 5A.04 P06A and 5B.01, P03A) where guidance calls for:

- Applying uniform and consistent traffic control devices on each type of roadway and applying a similar approach to traffic control at similar locations in similar situations.
- Clearly associating the sign application with the displayed message to the specific road to which it applies with different speed limits or restrictions.

The “when flashing” application does not suffer from these shortcomings and should be emphasized. While it is not the intent to change all state laws, if the MUTCD is to be the guidance for traffic control devices for all road users (including DAS) the priorities and emphasis of applications should be reflected in the Part 7 text. This proposal seeks to place the order and priority of the School Speed Limit When Flashing Sign and the School Speed Limit Assembly so as to:

1. Emphasize the preferred application for all road users first
2. Clarifying support for the preferred application
3. Retaining existing language for other options, as part of the transition to eventual uniformity as State laws evolve.



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 [bracketed white text in shaded green].

PART 7. TRAFFIC CONTROL FOR SCHOOL AREAS

CHAPTER 7B. SIGNS

Section 7B.05 School Speed Limit Signs and Plaques

Standard:

01 A ~~School Speed Limit Assembly (see Figure 7B-1) or a~~ School Speed Limit When Flashing (S5-1) sign (see Figure 7B-1) or School Speed Limit assembly (see Figure 7B-1) shall be used to indicate the speed limit where a reduced school speed limit zone has been established based upon an engineering study or where a reduced school speed limit is specified for such areas by statute. The ~~School Speed Limit assembly or~~ School Speed Limit When Flashing sign or School Speed Limit Assembly shall be placed at or as near as practicable to the point where the reduced school speed limit zone begins (see Figures 7B-2 and 7B-4).

02 If a reduced school speed limit zone has been established, a School (S1-1) sign shall be installed in advance (see Table 2C-3 for advance placement guidelines) of the first ~~School Speed Limit assembly~~ S5-1 sign or School Speed Limit assembly that is encountered in each direction as traffic approaches the reduced school speed limit zone (see Figures 7B-2 and 7B-4).

03 Except as provided in Paragraph 4 of this Section, the downstream end of an authorized and posted reduced school speed limit zone shall be identified with an END SCHOOL SPEED LIMIT (S5-3) sign (see Figures 7B-1, 7B-2, and 7B-4).

Option:

04 If a reduced school speed limit zone ends at the same point as a designated school zone (see Section 7B.02), an END SCHOOL ZONE (S5-2) sign may be used instead of an END SCHOOL SPEED LIMIT (S5-3) sign. A standard Speed Limit sign showing the speed limit for the section of highway that is downstream from the authorized and posted reduced school speed limit zone may be mounted on the same post above the END SCHOOL SPEED LIMIT (S5-3) sign or the END SCHOOL ZONE (S5-2) sign.

Guidance:

05 *The beginning point of a reduced school speed limit zone should be at least 200 feet in advance of the school grounds or a school crossing; however, this 200-foot distance should be increased if the reduced school speed limit is 30 mph or higher. The maximum beginning point of a reduced school speed limit zone should not be greater than 500 feet in advance of the school grounds or a school crossing.*

Standard:

06 The School Speed Limit assembly shall be one of the following: ~~either~~

A. a static sign assembly with Speed Limit Sign Beacons,

B. a blank-out sign, ~~or~~

C. a changeable message sign (see Chapter 2L), or

D. a static sign assembly.

[Revised to ordered list and added D.]

~~07—The static School Speed Limit assembly shall consist of a top plaque (S4-3P) with the legend SCHOOL, a Speed Limit (R2-1) sign, and a bottom plaque (S4-1P, S4-2P, S4-4P, or S4-6P) indicating the specific periods of the day and/or days of the week that the special school speed limit is in effect (see Figure 7B-1).~~ **[Moved to Paragraph 08 and edited.]**

~~0807~~ When a School Speed Limit When Flashing (S5-1) sign or a School Speed Limit assembly ~~(R2-1) sign~~ with a ~~supplemental~~ WHEN FLASHING (S4-4P) plaque is used, a Speed Limit Sign Beacon (see Section 4S.04) shall be used to identify the periods that the school speed limit is in effect.

Support:

07a School Speed Limit When Flashing (S5-1) sign, School Speed Limit assembly with (WHEN FLASHING (S4-4) plaque, blank-out signs, or changeable message signs and Speed Limit Sign Beacons with WHEN FLASHING (S4-4p) plaques support driving automation systems by provide clear, and simple meaning when the school speed limit is in effect for all drivers, driving automation systems (see Section 5B.01) and enforcement.

07b Laws, regulations, and ordinances can inform school speed limit sign and plaque applications.

[07a and 07b added to address message clarity to road users, including automated vehicles.]

Standard:

08 If used, the static School Speed Limit assembly (see Figure 7B-1) shall consist of a top plaque (S4-3P) with the legend SCHOOL, a Speed Limit (R2-1) sign, and a bottom plaque (S4-1P, S4-2P, or S4-1P with a S4-6P). The bottom plaque(s) shall indicate the conditions specifying when the school speed limit is in effect.

09 Fluorescent yellow-green pixels shall be used when the “SCHOOL” message is displayed on a changeable message sign for a school speed limit.

Option:

10 Changeable message signs may use blank-out messages or other methods in order to display the school speed limit only during the periods it applies.

11 A Vehicle Speed Feedback (W13-20aP) plaque that displays the speed of approaching drivers (see Sections 2B.21 and 2C.13), that is part of a School Speed Limit assembly or a School Speed Limit When Flashing (S5-1) sign, may be used in a school speed limit zone.

Guidance:

12 *If used, the Vehicle Speed Feedback (W13-20aP) plaque should only be used during the time period when the school speed limit is in effect.*

13 *A Reduced School Speed Limit Ahead (S4-5 or S4-5a) sign (see Figure 7B-1) should be used to inform road users of a reduced speed zone where the speed limit is being reduced by more than 10 mph, or where engineering judgment indicates that advance notice would be appropriate.*

Standard:

14 **If used, the Reduced School Speed Limit Ahead sign shall be followed by a School Speed Limit sign or a School Speed Limit assembly.**

15 **The speed limit displayed on the Reduced School Speed Limit Ahead sign shall be identical to the speed limit displayed on the subsequent School Speed Limit sign or School Speed Limit assembly.**