



National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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Item Number: 25B-GMI-01

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

COMMITTEE / TASK FORCE: Guide and Motorist Information Signs Technical Committee
ITEM NUMBER: 25B-GMI-01
TOPIC: Removal of “Shall Be / Shall Not Be Permitted” Statements
ORIGIN OF REQUEST: Guide and Motorist Information Signs TC
AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD: 2A.11, 2D.08, 2E.18, 2E.40, 2I.03, 2K.02

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:

Approved by GMITC:06/12/2025, 01/07/2026
Approved by RWSTC:06/12/2025, 10/21/2025
Approved by NCUTCD Council:01/08/2026

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 phrases “shall be permitted” and “shall not be permitted” are awkward phrases that conflate a requirement (as implied by the word “shall”) with an option (as implied by the word “permitted”). This proposal removes all instances of these phrases from MUTCD Chapters for which the GMI Signs and RW Signs Technical Committees are responsible.

DISCUSSION:

There are five instances of the phrases “shall be permitted” or “shall not be permitted” throughout Chapters under GMI Signs responsibility and one instance in a RW Signs Chapter. This phrasing appears to identify required or prohibited practices, through the use of the Standard statement, “shall”. However, in effect, they are all permissive practices, but without the Option statement “may”.

This proposal includes changes to six MUTCD Sections. The proposal removes the six phrases and either provides alternative text (avoiding the use of the word “permitted”) or changes the affected language into an Option statement. This proposal will remove all instances of “shall be permitted” or “shall not be permitted.” from Part 2.

Council approved proposal 25A-SIG-01 in June 2025, which removed the use of “shall be permitted” and “shall not be permitted” from Part 4. This proposal (25B-GMI-01) extends this concept to Part 2.

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40 The Regulatory and Warning Signs Technical Committee has approved the proposed change in
41 Section 2A.11.

42
43 **RECOMMENDED MUTCD CHANGES:**

44 The following present the proposed changes to the current MUTCD within the context of the
45 current MUTCD language. Proposed additions to the MUTCD are shown in blue underline and
46 proposed deletions from the MUTCD are shown in ~~red strikethrough~~. Changes previously
47 approved by NCUTCD Council (but not yet adopted by FHWA) are shown in green double
48 underline for additions and ~~green double strikethrough~~ for deletions. In some cases,
49 background comments may be provided with the MUTCD text. These comments are indicated
50 by [bracketed white text in shaded green].

51
52 **PART 2**
53 **SIGNS**

54
55 **CHAPTER 2A. GENERAL**

56
57 **Section 2A.11 Enhanced Conspicuity for Standard Signs**

58 **Standard:**

59 04 **Strobe lights shall not be used to enhance the conspicuity of highway signs.**

60 05 **If a strip of retroreflective material is used on the sign support, it shall be at least 2 inches in**
61 **width, it shall be placed for the full length of the support from the sign to within 2 feet above the**
62 **near edge of the roadway, and its color shall match the background color of the sign, except that the**
63 **color of the strip for the YIELD and DO NOT ENTER signs shall be red. The retroreflective strip**
64 **shall not display any legend or other information.**

65 06 **For a post-mounted sign installation, ~~placing~~ a duplicate sign in the same assembly facing the**
66 **same direction of traffic ~~shall not be permitted~~ shall not be used as a method of enhancing**
67 **conspicuity.**

68 [For brevity, only paragraphs 04 to 06 of Section 2A.11 are shown. The changes proposed
69 in paragraph 06 have no effect on paragraphs 01 to 03.]

70
71 **CHAPTER 2D. GUIDE SIGNS – CONVENTIONAL ROADS**

72
73 **Section 2D.08 Arrows**

74 **Support:**

75 01 **Arrows are used for lane assignment and to indicate the direction toward designated routes or**
76 **destinations. Figure 2D-3 shows the various standard arrow designs that have been approved for use on**
77 **guide signs. Detailed drawings are shown for these arrows in the "Standard Highway Signs" publication**
78 **(see Section 1A.05).**

79 **Standard:**

80 02 **Except for Overhead Arrow-per-Lane signs (see Section 2D.37), on overhead signs where it is**
81 **desirable to indicate a lane to be followed, a down arrow shall be positioned over the approximate**
82 **center of the lane and shall point vertically downward toward the approximate center of that lane.**
83 **Down arrows shall be used only on overhead guide signs that restrict the use of specific lanes to**
84 **traffic bound for the destination(s) and/or route(s) indicated by these arrows. Down arrows shall not**

85 be used unless an arrow can be located over and pointed to the approximate center of each lane that
86 can be used to reach the destination displayed on the sign.

87 03 ~~If down arrows are used, having more than one down arrow pointing to the same lane on a~~
88 ~~single overhead sign (or on multiple signs on the same overhead sign structure) shall not be~~
89 ~~permitted.~~ On an overhead sign or sign assembly, there shall not be more than one down arrow
90 pointing to the same lane.

91 [For brevity, only paragraphs 01 to 03 of Section 2D.08 are shown. The changes proposed
92 in paragraph 03 have no effect on paragraphs 04 to 26.]

93

94 CHAPTER 2E. GUIDE SIGNS – FREEWAYS AND EXPRESSWAYS

95

96 Section 2E.18 Arrows for Interchange Guide Signs

97 Standard:

98 01 Arrows used on interchange guide signs shall be of the types shown in Figure 2D-3 and shall
99 comply with the provisions of this Section and Section 2D.08.

100 02 Except on Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide signs (see Section 2E.40) and on Exit Direction
101 signs for lane drops (see Section 2E.28), and except as provided in Paragraph 5 of this Section,
102 directional arrows on all overhead and post-mounted Exit Direction signs shall point diagonally
103 upward. Directional arrows on overhead Exit Direction signs shall be located on the side of the sign
104 consistent with the direction of the exiting movement. Directional arrows on post-mounted Exit
105 Direction signs shall be located at the bottom portion of the sign and centered under the legend.

106 Option:

107 03 On overhead Exit Direction signs that are located fully over the tapered portion of the exit ramp at the
108 theoretical gore, and where a directional arrow to the side of the legend farthest from the roadway might
109 create an unusually wide sign that limits the road user's view of the arrow, the directional arrow may be
110 placed at the bottom portion of the sign, centered under the legend.

111 Standard:

112 04 Directional arrows on guide signs for multi-lane exits shall be positioned below the legend over
113 the approximate center of each lane to which the arrow applies (see Figure 2E-38).

114 05 Down arrows shall only be used on overhead signs to indicate a lane to be followed and shall be
115 positioned over the approximate center of each lane pointing vertically downward toward the
116 approximate center of that lane. Down arrows shall be used only on overhead guide signs that
117 restrict the use of specific lanes to traffic bound for the destination(s) and/or route(s) indicated by
118 these arrows. Down arrows shall not be used unless an arrow can be located over and pointed to the
119 approximate center of each lane that can be used to reach the destination displayed on the sign.

120 06 ~~If down arrows are used, having more than one down arrow pointing to the same lane on a~~
121 ~~single overhead sign (or on multiple signs on the same overhead sign structure) shall not be~~
122 ~~permitted.~~ On an overhead sign or sign assembly, there shall not be more than one down arrow
123 pointing to the same lane.

124 Support:

125 07 Directional and down arrows for use on guide signs are shown in Figure 2D-3. Detailed drawings and
126 standardized sizes based on ranges of letter heights for these arrows are provided in the "Standard
127 Highway Signs" publication (see Section 1A.05). Information on the dimensions for arrows used in
128 Overhead Arrow-per-Lane and Diagrammatic Advance guide signing is also provided in the "Standard
129 Highway Signs" publication (see Section 1A.05).

130

131 **Section 2E.40 Design of Overhead Arrow-per-Lane Guide Signs for Option Lanes**

132 Support:

133 01 Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide signs (see Figure 2E-35) are used where an option lane is present at
134 freeway and expressway multi-lane exit interchanges and splits. They display an upward-pointing arrow
135 above each lane that conveys the direction(s) of travel that the lane serves at the point of departure. At
136 locations where an option lane is present at a multi-lane exit or split, Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide
137 signs have been shown to be superior to other guide sign designs because they convey positive direction
138 about which destination and direction each approach lane serves, particularly for the option lane, which is
139 otherwise difficult to clearly sign.

140 **Standard:**

141 02 **Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide signs as provided in Section 2E.39 shall be used at all new or**
142 **reconstructed freeway and expressway locations and at freeway and expressway locations where**
143 **replacement of existing sign support structures is necessitated by reconstruction. The Overhead**
144 **Arrow-per-Lane guide sign at the exit or split shall be located at or in the immediate vicinity of the**
145 **point where the exiting lanes begin to diverge from the through lanes or, for a split, at the point**
146 **where the approach lanes begin to diverge from one another, preserving the relation of the arrows**
147 **displayed on the sign to their respective lanes. The Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide sign at the exit**
148 **shall not be located at or near the theoretical gore.**

149 Option:

150 03 At existing or non-reconstructed locations where an overhead Exit Direction sign exists at the
151 theoretical gore, and the existing sign support structure is retained, an overhead Exit Direction sign may
152 continue to be used on the existing sign support structure in conjunction with a replacement of the advance
153 signs using the Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide sign design.

154 **Standard:**

155 04 **If an existing Exit Direction sign is being retained at an interchange as provided in Paragraph 3**
156 **of this Section, an Overhead Arrow-per-Lane guide sign shall not be used at the location of the Exit**
157 **Direction sign at or in the vicinity of the theoretical gore. New installations of Exit Direction and**
158 **Pull-Through signs shall not be ~~permitted~~ used in conjunction with Overhead Arrow-per-Lane**
159 **guide signs on new or reconstructed facilities.**

160 **[For brevity, only paragraphs 01 to 04 of Section 2E.40 are shown. The change proposed in**
161 **paragraph 04 has no effect on paragraphs 05 to 14.]**

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163

164

CHAPTER 2I. GENERAL SERVICE SIGNS

165 **Section 2I.02 General Service Signs for Conventional Roads**

166 **Standard:**

167 08 **General Service signs, if used at intersections, shall be accompanied by a directional message.**

168 Option:

169 09 The Advance Turn (M5 series) or Directional Arrow (M6 series) auxiliary plaques (see Figure 2I-1) with
170 white arrows on blue backgrounds may be used with General Service symbol signs to create a General
171 Service directional assembly.

172 10 The General Service sign legends may be either symbols or word messages.

173 **Standard:**

174 11 **Symbols and word message General Service legends shall not be intermixed on the same sign.**

175 [For brevity, only paragraphs 08 to 11 of Section 2I.02 are shown. There are no changes in
176 Section 2I.02. Paragraph 10 above is shown to provide context for the proposed change
177 in Section 2I.03, below.]

178

179 Section 2I.03 General Service Signs for Freeways and Expressways

180 Support:

181 01 General Service (D9-18 series) signs (see Figure 2I-3) are generally not appropriate at major
182 interchanges (see definition in Section 2E.11) and in urban areas.

183 **Standard:**

184 02 General Service signs shall have a white legend and border on a blue background. Letter and
185 numeral sizes shall comply with the minimum requirements of Tables 2E-2 through 2E-5. ~~All
186 approved symbols shall be permitted as alternatives to word messages, but symbols and word
187 service messages shall not be intermixed on the same sign.~~ If the services are not visible from the
188 ramp of a single-exit interchange, the service signing shall be repeated in smaller size at the
189 intersection of the exit ramp and the crossroad. Such service signs shall use arrows to indicate the
190 direction to the services.

191 Option:

192 02a General Service sign legends may be either approved symbols or word messages.

193 **Standard:**

194 02b Symbols and word message General Service legends shall not be intermixed on the same sign.

195 [For brevity, only current paragraphs 01 to 02 of Section 2I.03 are shown. The changes
196 proposed in paragraphs 02, 02a and 02b have no effect on paragraphs 03 to 26.]

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CHAPTER 2K. TOURIST-ORIENTED DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

199

200 Section 2K.02 Design

201 **Standard:**

202 01 Tourist-oriented directional sign assemblies shall have one or more signs (see Figure 2K-1) for
203 the purpose of displaying the business identification of and directional information for eligible
204 facilities. Except as provided in Paragraph 7 of this Section, each sign shall be rectangular in shape
205 and shall have a white legend and border on a blue background.

206 02 The content of the legend on each sign shall be limited to the identification and directional
207 information for no more than one eligible business, service, or activity facility. The legends shall not
208 include promotional advertising.

209 *Guidance:*

210 03 *Each sign should have a maximum of two lines of legend including no more than one symbol (see
211 Paragraph 4 of this Section), a separate directional arrow, and the distance to the facility displayed
212 beneath the arrow. Arrows pointing to the left or up should be at the extreme left of the sign panel. Arrows
213 pointing to the right should be at the extreme right of the sign panel. Symbols, when used, should be to the
214 left of the word legend or business identification sign panel (see Paragraphs 6 and 9 of this Section).*

215 *Option:*

216 04 The General Service sign symbols (see Section 2I.02) and the symbols for recreational and cultural
217 interest area signs (see Chapter 2M) may be used on tourist-oriented directional signs.

218 05 Based on engineering judgment, the hours of operation may be displayed on the sign.

219 06 Business identification sign panels (see Section 2J.03) for specific businesses, services, and activities
220 may be used in place of word legends on tourist-oriented direction signs.

221 **Standard:**

222 07 **When used, recreational and cultural interest area symbols shall be white on a brown**
223 **background.**

224 08 **When used, symbols shall be an appropriate size (see Section 2K.04).**

225 09 **When used, business identification sign panels shall not exceed 24 inches in width and 15 inches**
226 **in height. ~~Logos resembling official traffic control devices shall not be permitted.~~ A logo that**
227 **resembles an official traffic control device shall not be used.**

228 **[For brevity, only paragraphs 01 to 09 of Section 2K.02 are shown. The changes proposed**
229 **in paragraph 09 have no effect on paragraphs 10 to 12.]**