




U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Highway  
Administration**

# Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION:** MUTCD – Interim Approval  
for Use of Clearview Font for Positive Contrast  
Legends on Guide Signs (IA-5) - TERMINATION,  
Response to Federal Register Notice

Date:

MAR 14 2016

From: Mr. Mark R. Kehrl   
Director, Office of Transportation Operations

In Reply Refer To:  
HOTO-1

To: Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers  
Division Administrators

**Purpose:** Through this memorandum, the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Transportation Operations (HOTO) provides clarification on feedback that was submitted in response to the January 25, 2016, Federal Register notice officially terminating the subject Interim Approval. The notice discontinued the provisional use of an alternative lettering style in traffic control device applications. Please provide this information to the State DOT and other interested transportation stakeholders in your State.

**Background:** The Federal Register notice provided a synopsis of considerations that led to the termination of the Interim Approval. A memorandum and Technical Brief were distributed to the Federal-Aid divisions immediately following the publication of the notice and made available on the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD) Web site. These documents contained information on how the termination was expected to be implemented and detailed technical information related to the termination of the Interim Approval. While the response to this action has generally been supportive, some of the feedback received indicates that certain aspects of the termination warranted clarification. Therefore, we are taking this opportunity to clarify three specific issues that have been brought to our attention.

1. 30-day Effective Date in the Federal Register.

The 30-day effective date for the termination of the Interim Approval should not be interpreted or characterized as a "compliance date" that is, the date by which existing signs and/or standards, specifications, and similar documents must be revised to comply with the termination. The effective date is simply the date on which the Interim Approval is officially rescinded and is no longer valid for new starts. From a practical perspective, the 30-day effective date affects only those efforts commenced after that date; agencies have a degree of discretion on how to implement the change for projects or signs that were in some process of design or fabrication. Further, agency design manuals, standard plans, and other specifications do not immediately need to be revised; instead, memoranda, directives, or similar means of communication to design units or other entities can be used to provide notice of the

change until such time that the published documents undergo revision. Examples from two States that have taken this approach are attached.

2. Implementation.

The January 28 memorandum stated that (1) existing signs could remain in place as long as they are serviceable; (2) signs ordered or fabricated could still be installed; and (3) agencies had a degree of discretion in determining whether construction documents in progress would be revised, depending on the extent to which they had already been developed. Similarly, it is the intent that design specifications and related documents would be updated to reflect this change in a practicable manner, which in some States might extend well beyond the effective date of the notice.

3. Future Research on Sign Legibility.

Some commenters expressed concern that the FHWA does not intend to consider further investigations into sign legibility and related human factors issues due to a statement in the Conclusion of the Federal Register notice. Our intent was to clarify that, based on the research to date, and what is now known about legibility, recognition, contrast, and daytime and nighttime visibility, we do not believe it is necessary to pursue a new letter style that is unrelated to the FHWA Standard Alphabets. Instead, any future FHWA research in this area will focus on improvements to and optimization of the existing system of the Standard Alphabets. We will, of course, continue to give consideration to all research funded and conducted by others on sign legibility and visibility issues

Two examples of directives issued by States to implement the termination of the Clearview letter style are included with this memorandum for informational purposes. Individual State policies for implementing this change will vary based on the extent to which the alternative letter style was implemented and the stage of projects or contracts in progress.

**Conclusion:** We reiterate that the 30-day effective date of the Federal Register notice does not require immediate change to any sign that has already been installed or is in the process of fabrication. Further, agencies may determine how to address signs that are in the design process. Lastly, the FHWA continues to be interested in practical methods of improving sign legibility and visibility.

Attachments:

January 25, 2016 Federal Register notice  
 January 28, 2016 Information and Action Memorandum  
 and Technical Brief  
 PennDOT and VDOT Implementation Memoranda

cc:

Interim Approval Recipients  
 Mr. Frederick Wright, AASHTO  
 Mr. Scott Grayson, APWA  
 Mr. Brian Roberts, NACE  
 Mr. Lee Billingsley, NCUTCD  
 Mr. Martin Pietrucha, Larson Institute

LTAP Centers  
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