



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

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

AUG 31 2010

In Reply Refer To: HOTO-1

Mr. Robert J. Burns
John Thomas, Inc.
1560 Lovett Drive
Dixon, IL 61021

Dear Mr. Burns:

Thank you for your June 24 letter requesting an official interpretation of the provisions in the 2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices that relate to the combined use of temporary traffic control signals and a pilot car to control traffic through a lane closure on a two-lane, two-way road. You specifically requested in your letter that the use of a pilot car be added as an Option to the notes for Typical Application 12 (Figure 6H-12).

Despite the absence of such an Option statement in the notes for Typical Application 12, there are no provisions in the 2009 MUTCD that would prohibit the use of a pilot car in conjunction with temporary traffic control signals for the application shown in Typical Application 12.

However, Paragraph 4 of Section 6C.13 requires that a flagger be stationed on the approach to the activity area where a pilot car is being used to guide a queue of vehicles through a temporary traffic control zone. This Standard statement does not prohibit the use of a temporary traffic control signal (or an AFAD as described in Section 6E.06) in this operation, but it does require the use of a flagger in addition to the temporary traffic control signal or AFAD. This requirement has been in the MUTCD for 50 years or more, as Section 5B-40 of the 1961 Edition contains the sentence, "A flagman must be stationed on every approach to a project on which a pilot car is used, to hold traffic as necessary until the pilot car is available to lead."

The reason that Paragraph 4 of Section 6C.13 requires the flagger is that lane closures where a pilot car is used are usually quite lengthy, which results in long waiting times for queued traffic. Road users are assured by the presence of the flagger that they have encountered an active work zone and that they will eventually be given an opportunity to travel through the lane closure zone. A several-minute wait at a temporary traffic control signal displaying a red signal indication with no flagger in sight and no sign of oncoming traffic might result in road users mistakenly assuming that the signal has malfunctioned and that it will never turn green, in which case they might become impatient and decide to proceed into the work zone. Another important



function of the flagger is to alert the work crew and the pilot car operator if anyone violates the stop control and proceeds into the work zone.

It is therefore the FHWA's official interpretation that a pilot car may be used in conjunction with temporary traffic control signals for the application shown in Typical Application 12 provided that a flagger is also stationed on each approach to the activity area as required by Paragraph 4 of Section 6C.13.

For recordkeeping purposes, we have assigned the following official interpretation number and title: "6(09)-5 (I) – Use of Pilot Car with Temporary Traffic Control Signals." Please refer to this number in any future correspondence regarding this topic.

Thank you for your interest in improving the clarity of the provisions contained in Part 6 of the MUTCD. Please contact Mr. Ken Wood at ken.wood@dot.gov if you have any further questions concerning this matter.

Sincerely yours,

for

Mark R. Kehrli
Director, Office of Transportation
Operations