

May 16, 2003

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. Murray Bodin
Concerned Grandparents
Dewey, Cheetem, and Howe Consultants
101 Joyce Road
Hartsdale NY 10530

Dear Mr. Bodin:

Thank you for your email of May 1 to Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta proposing a design for a "new" stop sign. For record keeping purposes, we have entitled this as a Request for Change 2-517(C)–"New STOP Sign Design."

Stop signs and their design are detailed in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The MUTCD is adopted by reference in accordance with Title 23, United States Code, Section 109(d) and Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 655.603, and is approved as the national standard for all traffic control devices installed on any street, highway, or bicycle trail open to public travel. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is responsible for developing the standards contained in the Manual with input from traffic and safety experts, and the general traveling public.

The process for a change to the design of the stop sign, a traffic control device, is set forth in the MUTCD in Section 1A.10 Interpretations, Experimentations, and Changes. A copy of this process is enclosed for your information. Please note the requirement that a request to experiment must be submitted by a public agency or private toll authority responsible for the operation of the road or street on which the experiment is to take place.

Our review of the example "new" stop sign design, which you submitted, identified the following parameters, which differ from the design of a standard stop sign:

1. Smaller letter height (7") for a 24" x 24" Stop sign than the 8" letter height for the letters "STOP" on a standard design 24" x 24" Stop sign.
2. Significantly diminished separation of the letters "STOP" from the border of the "new" design Stop sign, which may reduce recognition of the legend of "STOP."
3. Enlarged border about twice the width of the standard stop sign design.

From the above information, we do not feel that the sign design you submitted will improve the current sign design. From our current information, the design changes you recommended will be less effective. However, we suggest you develop research, which supports the advantage of your proposed "new" design as compared to the current stop sign design. This research should evaluate the increased recognition and understanding of the STOP condition. If the research is positive, then you should work with a public agency responsible for highways and streets to develop and submit a request to experiment.

Thank you for forwarding examples of your "new" stop sign design so that we could review it and thank you for taking the time to contact us; the MUTCD team at FHWA appreciates your interest in the vital role that traffic signs serve in supporting safe driving. Please feel free to contact Mr. Fred Ranck of the MUTCD team at fred.ranck@fhwa.dot.gov or by telephone at 708-283-3545.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Shelley Row

Shelley J. Row, P.E.
Director, Office of Transportation
Operations

Enclosure

Section 1A.10 Interpretations, Experimentations, and Changes

Standard:

Design, application, and placement of traffic control devices other than those adopted in this Manual shall be prohibited unless the provisions of this Section are followed.

Support:

Continuing advances in technology will produce changes in the highway, vehicle, and road user proficiency; therefore, portions of the system of traffic control devices in this Manual will require updating. In addition, unique situations often arise for device applications that might require interpretation or clarification of this Manual. It is important to have a procedure for recognizing these developments and for introducing new ideas and modifications into the system.

Guidance:

Requests for any interpretation, permission to experiment, or change should be sent to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Office of Transportation Operations, 400 Seventh Street SW, HOTO, Washington, DC 20590.

Support:

An interpretation includes a consideration of the application and operation of standard traffic control devices, official meanings of standard traffic control devices, or the variations from standard device designs.

Guidance:

Requests for an interpretation of this Manual should contain the following information:

- A. A concise statement of the interpretation being sought;
- B. A description of the condition that provoked the need for a revised interpretation;
- C. Any illustration that would be helpful to understand the request; and
- D. Any supporting research data that is pertinent to the item to be interpreted.

Support:

Requests to experiment include consideration of testing or evaluating a new traffic control device, its application or manner of use, or a provision not specifically described in this Manual. A request for permission to experiment will be considered only when submitted by the public agency or private toll facility responsible for the operation of the road or street on which the experiment is to take place.

A diagram indicating the process for experimenting with traffic control devices is shown in Figure 1A-1.

Guidance:

The request for permission to experiment should contain the following:

- A. A statement indicating the nature of the problem.
- B. A description of the proposed change to the traffic control device or application of the traffic control device, how it was developed, the manner in which it deviates from the standard, and how it is expected to be an improvement over existing standards.
- C. Any illustration that would be helpful to understand the traffic control device or use of the traffic control device.
- D. Any supporting data explaining how the traffic control device was developed, if it has been tried, in what ways it was found to be adequate or inadequate, and how this choice of device or application was derived.
- E. A legally binding statement certifying that the traffic control device is not protected by a patent or copyright.
- F. The time period and location(s) of the experiment.
- G. A detailed research or evaluation plan that must provide for close monitoring of the experimentation, especially in the early stages of its field implementation. The evaluation plan should include before and after studies as well as quantitative data describing the performance of the experimental device.
- H. An agreement to restore the site of the experiment to a condition that complies with the provisions of this Manual within 3 months following the end of the time period of the experiment. This agreement must also provide that the agency

sponsoring the experimentation will terminate the experimentation at any time that it determines significant safety concerns are directly or indirectly attributable to the experimentation. The FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations has the right to terminate approval of the experimentation at any time if there is an indication of safety concerns. If, as a result of the experimentation, a request is made that this Manual be changed to include the device or application being experimented with, the device or application will be permitted to remain in place until an official rulemaking action has occurred.

I. An agreement to provide semiannual progress reports for the duration of the experimentation, and an agreement to provide a copy of the final results of the experimentation to the FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations within 3 months following completion of the experimentation. The FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations has the right to terminate approval of the experimentation if reports are not provided in accordance with this schedule.

Support:

A change includes consideration of a new device to replace a present standard device, an additional device to be added to the list of standard devices, or a revision to a traffic control device application or placement criteria.

Guidance:

Requests for a change to this Manual should contain the following information:

- A. A statement indicating what change is proposed;
- B. Any illustration that would be helpful to understand the request; and
- C. Any supporting research data that is pertinent to the item to be reviewed.

Support:

A diagram indicating the process for requesting changes to this Manual is shown in Figure 1A-2.

Procedures for revising this Manual are set out in the Federal Register of June 30, 1983 (48 FR 30145).

For additional information concerning interpretations, experimentation, or changes, write to the FHWA, 400 Seventh Street, SW, HOTO, Washington, DC 20590, or visit the MUTCD website at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>.

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