

Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St. SW  
Washington, DC 20590

April 3, 2003

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. Jim Lasswell  
903 West Perrine Street  
Johnston City, IL 62951

Dear Mr. Lasswell:

Thank you for your recent letter requesting a change in the Federal standards for pavement markings. You suggested that the first few feet of freeway entrance ramps be colored green and the last few feet of freeway exit ramps be colored red, to help drivers distinguish between these ramps when seeking to enter the freeway from other roads and streets.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD) is the national standard that governs the design, application, and placement of traffic control devices in all jurisdictions nationwide. The 2000 edition of the MUTCD is published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on the website <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov> and you are encouraged to review it there, especially Part 3, which deals with pavement markings. In Chapter 3E of the MUTCD, there are standards governing the use of colored pavements as traffic control devices to guide or regulate traffic. There is currently no provision in the MUTCD for the use of colored lines or colored pavement at freeway exit and entrance ramps such as you have suggested. The color red for pavement is specified to be limited to use only on the approach to a Stop sign that is in use 24 hours a day, and there is no provision for green pavement to convey a particular traffic control message. Because there has been no experimentation or research to evaluate the use of red and green lines or pavement colors at freeway exit and entrance ramps, there is no basis on which to make a change to the MUTCD at this time. For reference purposes, we have assigned your request for a change the following number and title: "3-158(C)—Colored Pavement at Ramp Terminals." Please refer to this number in any future correspondence on this subject.

Providing for improved safety conditions on the Nation's streets and highways is an extremely important goal, and we at the FHWA are always interested in new ideas that might help achieve the goal. Experimentation with new traffic control devices is encouraged so that their utility and effectiveness can be properly evaluated. I am enclosing an excerpt from the MUTCD, specifically Section 1A.10, which addresses the experimentation process. If the Illinois

Department of Transportation or any other public jurisdiction or private toll road authority would like to experiment with your idea of using red and green colors to distinguish between exit and

entrance ramps, they should submit an official request for approval of experimentation to the FHWA, as called for in Section 1A.10. Upon receipt of such a request with the necessary information, we will be happy to review the request and consider granting experimentation approval.

Meanwhile, there is a wide variety of traffic control devices already contained in the MUTCD that can be used by States and other jurisdictions to help drivers distinguish between entrance and exit ramps. "Do Not Enter," "Wrong Way," "One-Way," "Keep Right," and other regulatory signs (see Chapter 2B) as well as arrow pavement markings (see Chapter 3B) are very commonly used to deter drivers from entering an exit ramp. Also, careful placement of the route marker and destination signs guiding drivers to the entrance ramp is important to prevent inadvertent confusion about which ramp to enter. Most States have programs to regularly review the signing and markings at freeway ramp terminals to assure that wrong-way movements are effectively discouraged and prevented.

Thank you again for your letter, and we look forward to hearing further from any jurisdictions that would like to experiment with your idea. Meanwhile, if there is any question, please call Mr. Scott Wainwright at 202-366-0857. Your interest in improving traffic safety is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Shelley Row

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

Enclosure