



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

Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION AND ACTION:**
MUTCD – Interim Approval for Use of
Clearview Font for Positive Contrast
Legends on Guide Signs
(IA-5)—TERMINATION

Date: January 28, 2016

From: Mark R. Kehrli 
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) issues guidance to the Federal-Aid Divisions regarding the January 25, 2016, Federal Register notice officially terminating the subject Interim Approval, issued September 2, 2004. The notice discontinues the provisional use of an alternative lettering style in traffic control device applications. The result of this termination rescinds the allowance of the use of letter styles other than the FHWA Standard Alphabets on traffic control devices except as provided otherwise in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD) and herein. Existing signs that use the provisional letter style and comply with the Interim Approval are unaffected by this action and may remain as long as they are in serviceable condition. This action does not create a mandate for the removal or installation of any sign. The requirement of the MUTCD to display destination and street names using upper- and lower-case lettering is unchanged by this action. State agencies should disseminate this message to local jurisdictions for further action.

Background: The Federal Register notice provides a synopsis of considerations that led to the termination of the Interim Approval. The attached Technical Brief provides additional detailed information regarding the synthesis of research studies and resulting practices that support this action.

Conclusion: Based on the findings outlined in the Federal Register notice and in the attached Technical Brief, the FHWA does not intend to pursue further consideration, development, or support of an alternative letter style. Accordingly, further implementation of an alternative letter style is discontinued, subject to the following:

- Those agencies that have signs already in the process of fabrication or contracts awarded may fabricate and install those signs with the alternative alphabets as specified, subject to the terms of the Interim Approval and the FHWA's policy.

- Projects or signs currently in the design stage shall be amended, to the extent practicable, to specify the Standard Alphabets. This change should not affect overall sign sizes because the alternative alphabets consistently require sign sizes that are at least equal to, and in most cases larger than, signs that use the Standard Alphabets. A simple substitution in specification should sufficiently effect this change. In compliance with the MUTCD, freeway and expressway signs shall continue to display destination and street name legends composed of upper- and lower-case letters using Series E(modified). Other legends that are composed of all upper-case letters, such as cardinal directions, exit numbers, and action or distance messages, are displayed using Series E. For conventional roads, Series D is desirable, though Series C may be considered for unusually long legends.
- The discontinuation of the provisional letter style does not affect the requirement to display street and destination names using a combination of leading upper-case and following lower-case letters (see MUTCD Section 2A.13).
- Community wayfinding signs (see MUTCD Section 2D.50) may continue to use a lettering style other than the Standard Alphabets as long as it provides at least equivalent legibility as provided in the referenced Section of the MUTCD.
- Agencies whose specifications or standards specify the provisional lettering style should issue revisions to these policies in a timely manner. Signs that are ordered after the effective date of this termination are not authorized under the former Interim Approval and must comply with the provisions of the MUTCD regardless of jurisdiction or funding source. State agencies that requested and were granted Interim Approval on behalf of all jurisdictions in that State shall notify those agencies of the rescinding of the subject Interim Approval.

Attachments:

January 25, 2016 Federal Register notice
Technical Brief

cc:

Associate Administrators
Chief Counsel
Chief Financial Officer
Directors of Field Services
Director of Technical Services