U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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

October 26, 2026

In Reply Refer to:
HOTO-1

Will MacDonald, PTMP, CPP, Director
Parking Department
City of Miami Beach
1755 Meridian Avenue, Suite 200
Miami Beach, Florida 33139

Dear Mr. MacDonald:

Thank you for your September 1, 2026, e-mail requesting an interpretation of the 11th Edition of the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD) on the design of parking signs for freight and alley loading zones and the use of purple for the legend or background of the signs. The example provided in your request contains a header panel with a white legend "FREIGHT/ALLEY PERMIT REQUIRED" on a purple background; followed by a section displaying the day, time period, and time limit in a black legend on a white background; followed by a section displaying the zone number in a black legend on a white background and a green legend "PAY BY APP" with mobile application logos and "ALL OTHER TIMES" on a white background; followed by a final section that displays "TOW-AWAY ZONE" in a red legend on a white background. The entire sign has a purple border and purple horizontal separators between each legend group.

The FHWA has determined that the proposed sign design, specifically the use of purple as a color for a loading zone sign, is not consistent with the applicable provisions of the MUTCD. In accordance with Section 1D.05 of the MUTCD, purple is restricted to use on signs only for vehicles with registered electronic toll collection (ETC) accounts to convey a mandatory requirement to possess a registered ETC account for traveling on toll roads or facilities. A municipal on-street loading zone or alley permit program—even one managed electronically through mobile applications or "smart" permitting—is not a highway ETC facility as established under Chapters 1C and 2F of the MUTCD. Rather, these zones represent conventional parking, standing, and stopping regulations where a payment is required for storing a stationary vehicle in a designated space for a period of time. Further, Section 2F.03 requires that purple shall only be used as a background color on portions of signs displaying information associated with a registered ETC account. Purple shall not be used as a background color to display a destination, action message, or other legend that is not a display of the requirement for all vehicles to have a registered ETC account.

Section 2B.53 of the MUTCD establishes the design of all regulatory parking, standing, and stopping (R7 and R8 series) signs. The standards in paragraphs 3 through 5 contain the requirements for colors used on such signs. As stated previously, there are no provisions that allow for the use of a purple legend or background on a parking sign. In addition, the MUTCD provides a standard Mobile Parking Payment (R7-21aP) plaque specifically for locations where mobile application-based parking payments are accepted.

Your request further asked for information on whether requesting experimentation would be appropriate. The restriction on the use of the color purple to where a registered ETC account is required is designed to minimize motorist confusion and aid in recognition on ETC facilities. FHWA would not consider a proposal to experiment with the use of a restricted color for other purposes as it would dilute its specific meaning.

By restructuring the sign using the standard colors as outlined in Section 2B.53, the City can operate its electronic permit/metered loading zone while maintaining alignment with national MUTCD standards. An example design is attached for illustrative purposes, and we suggest coordinating with the City, County, and State traffic engineering and public works departments in consideration of any State laws, regulations, or directives.

For recordkeeping purposes, we have assigned your request for interpretation the following Official Ruling number and title: "2(11)-15 (I) – Use of Purple on Parking Signs."

Sincerely,

Mark Kehrli
Director, Office of Transportation Operations

cc: FHWA Florida Division
Mark Mathes, Florida Department of Transportation

Attachment

ATTACHMENT

Federal Highway Administration
MUTCD Official Ruling No. 2(11)-15 (I)

Example of Permissive Parking Sign for Metered or Permit Parking

