

Traffic Control Devices: Improper Use Can Cause Confusion For Motorists

By Christi Duncan

I have a fun job. It allows me to travel throughout Tennessee, where I see all kinds of beautiful scenery and, of course, a bunch of traffic control devices. Most of the time I understand them, but occasionally I run across devices that are confusing. Here are a few pictures showing what I mean:



1 Stop sign at traffic signal. What does the motorist do if the light is green?



2 Two speed limits on one sign. Enforceable?



3 Three signs on one post. Information overload?



4 Unreadable sign. New sign needed?



5 Right turn warning sign. Used for a left turn?

It is easy to see the problems and understand why these traffic control devices are confusing. Not only do these devices confuse the motorist, but they also cause problems for the police. How can these examples be enforced? Who is liable if there is an incident?

The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* is where the standards for all traffic control devices can be located. This manual has been adopted by the State of Tennessee [TCA 54-5-108 (b), and chapter 1680-3-L in the Rules of Tennessee Department of Transportation], and any traffic control device located on any street or highway in Tennessee must conform to the provisions in this manual. Each of the pictured examples is covered in the *MUTCD*. Though some of the pictures show several problems, I am basically trying to show that the *MUTCD* is easy to use and that improper installations can be avoided.

Picture 1 shows a stop sign at a traffic signal. Page 2B-2, section 2B-5 (Warrants for Stop Sign) says, "Stop signs shall not be erected at intersections where traffic control signals are operating. The conflicting commands of two types of control devices are confusing."

Picture 2 has two speed limit signs

Continued on page 5

ROADTALK

is a publication of the Tennessee Transportation Assistance Program (TTAP). TTAP is part of a nationwide effort financed jointly by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). Its purpose is to translate into understandable terms the latest state-of-the-art technologies in the areas of roads, bridges, and public transportation to local highway and transportation personnel.

The views, opinions, and recommendations contained within this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FHWA and TDOT.

Zach Zacharia, Director TTAP

Frank Brewer, Training Coordinator

Matt Cate, Technical Assistant Coordinator

Lawrence Perry, Research Assistant

Solomon Caviness, Research Assistant

Christi Duncan, Research Assistant

Jenny Jones, RoadTalk Editor

Mollie Mitchell, Secretary

Jean Spangler, Course Registration

FIELD REPRESENTATIVES

Carl Damewood, Region 1

Harold Ralson, Region 2

Darnell Hester, Region 3

Tommy Stutts, Region 4

Darcy Sullivan, Technical Assistance

E-mail: TTAP@utk.edu

Web: ctr.utk.edu/ttap



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From the Director

As we come to the end of another year, it is again time to review the TTAP program. The year 2000 was again a good year for the TTAP program, with its emphasis on training, technical assistance, and technology transfer. We had 71 training courses with more than 1,857 participants learning about topics ranging from basic roadway surveying to site impact analysis. In this issue of "Roadtalk," we have included the 2001 Training Schedule. As you all know, our classes are aimed at local transportation providers at all levels of the organization. Please look through the schedule and pre-register for any of the workshops that are of interest, as we are limiting some of the workshops to a maximum of 35 participants.

In 2000 technical assistance was emphasized; we received more than 56 requests, many of which required field visits. The topics that required the most help included speed data collection, intersection analysis, and signal warrant analysis. Next year we intend to continue this high level of support in providing responsive technical assistance, and we encourage you to call us for your transportation assistance needs.

Also in 2000 we developed a new video catalog that garnered a lot of positive feedback, which we appreciate. The two most popular technology transfer requests were the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* and the *Commercial Driver's License Video*.

Our advisory board met December 14 to discuss the TTAP program in 2000 and plan for the TTAP program in 2001. An article on the meeting is on page 5. An important program that was approved was the plan to launch a Circuit Rider Training Program to local road authorities. This is a 3-hour course on work-zone traffic control that will be held in local county garages and limited to a maximum of 15 participants. If you would like more information on the Circuit Rider program, please call us at 1-800-252-ROAD.

Our "On the Road" column, by Darnell Hester, our Region 3 representative, features Mike Williams, Rutherford County road supervisor. We have also included articles on interesting traffic signs, the Transportation Research Board Conference, Snow-Fighting Training Materials, a Safety and Operations CD-ROM, and life in the fast lane.

Happy New Year and New Millennium everyone.

Zach Zacharia

Mike Williams, Rutherford County Road Supervisor

Rutherford County is a large county in the middle of Tennessee. In fact, the geographical center of the state is located about one-quarter of a mile from the Middle Tennessee State University campus in Rutherford County. A monument marks the spot beside old Lascassus Road.

Mike Williams was elected county road supervisor in 1992 and took office on September 1 of that year. Talk about working your way up, Mike started with the Rutherford County Highway Department in 1968 as a laborer. When he ran for office, Mike was a road crew supervisor.

Between April 1 and December 1 of each year, the Rutherford County Highway Department does a lot of hot mix asphalt paving. Of the 930 miles that the department is responsible for, 80 to 90 miles are repaved each year. All roads are repaved on a 10-year cycle, and Mike's trying to get at that last two miles of gravel road.

Few highway departments are as large as Rutherford County's. Their yearly budget is \$6.5 million, with \$2.5 million spent on asphalt paving. Through improved efficiencies, Mike

has reduced the number of employees from 74 to 65, and the work force is divided into six crews.

Not many county highway departments have their own rock crusher, but Rutherford does. Mike says this is a



handy and less-expensive source of stone. All this sounded great until Mike mentioned the dust permit, the water-pollution permit, and the EPA inspection. There is always a downside.

Funding for the Rutherford County Highway Department could be a little unusual—they get one-third of the gross receipts from the county wheel tax, and they get a severance tax of 15 cents on every ton of crushed rock sold in the county.

Although the department has many mundane jobs to do, Mike insists that each call is responded to within 24 hours of receipt. This is how Mike builds good public relations.

Mike is a well-regarded family man, whose modesty won't let him brag about what an efficient and smooth-running department he operates, so "RoadTalk" will do it for him.

SNOW-FIGHTING TRAINING MATERIALS

By Solomon Caviness

Training is essential for proficiency in winter operations. That is why the Tennessee Transportation Assistance Program (TTAP) has made available a CD-ROM, "Snow-Fighting Training Materials," by the Salt Institute. Developed by a partnership between the Salt Institute and winter operations specialists at five LTAP centers, this CD is designed to help local governments become better in all aspects of winter operations.

The materials consist of two training programs—managerial training and technical training. The programs may be presented together as half-day sessions, or each can be a stand-alone presentation to inform and prepare local government officials for winter operations. Two technical information sheets are provided as handouts or as stand-alone articles. The package offers valuable information and provides recommendations that participants can take back for implementation.

The first program, "Winter Operations: Survival Lessons for Public Officials," is directed to elected officials and managers in local governments. The session emphasizes the value of an effective, efficient, and safe snow-fighting program and the problems, concerns, and potential devastation caused by winter storms. It also provides 10 lessons for winter survival that participants can use to enhance their snow-fighting program.

The second program, "Winter Planning and Organization," is directed at local government's public-works technicians. It reviews the importance of winter operations and the necessity for planning and organizing for winter operations. This program puts an emphasis on the need for a comprehensive winter plan, providing key elements to be included in such a plan.

For more information, contact TTAP at 1-800-252-ROAD.

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION WEEK MAY 13-19, 2001

National Transportation Week (NTW) needs your support and participation to make the week a success. For more information, you can visit the NTW Web site at www.ntweek.org or call them toll free at 1-877-558-6874 about how you can become involved.

Life in the Fast Lane

[Reprinted with permission from "Illinois Interchange," Winter 2000, Vol. 8, No. 5]

Are you tired of slow drivers blocking the fast lane? Do you believe it is the slow driver in the fast lane, not the aggressive driver, who is the real menace to society?

Perhaps no other aspect of road travel is so laden with myth as "the fast lane." The truth is, life in the fast lane can be deadly unless everyone knows the rules. So here's the scoop:

The posted speed limit is a law that applies to all lanes.

Thus, technically speaking, there is no "fast lane" or "slow lane." Slower traffic generally is expected to keep right, but only emergency vehicles are permitted to exceed the posted speed limit and only when their lights and sirens are operating.

Speed surveys indicate that the majority of drivers are exceeding the posted speed limit. The "slow driver" in your way may, in fact, be obeying the speed limit. Check your speedometer.

Your speed even when passing should not exceed the posted speed limit.

If you are driving the speed limit, and the vehicle in front of you is driving the speed limit, there is no need to pass.

Generally speaking, it is safest to stay out of the left lane except when passing. Twenty states have laws that reserve the left lane [for] passing, although states vary as to the types of roads and vehicles for which the restriction applies. Thirty states and the District of Columbia have no such law. Do you know the law in your state?

Test your knowledge

True or False

1. The speed limit applies to all lanes, including the far left lane on a multilane highway.

2. The left lane on divided highways is for passing only.
3. The left lane on divided highways is for left-handed drivers.
4. Motorists who drive the speed limit in the left lane are breaking the law.
5. Your speed, even when passing, should not exceed the posted speed limit.
6. The left lane is reserved for motorists who wish to drive faster than the posted speed limit.
7. Drivers should pass on the left because it is safer than passing on the right.

Answers:

1. True
2. The following states reserve the left lane for passing: Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. However, restrictions vary from state to state. Check with your motor vehicle department.
3. False
4. In states that reserve the left for passing only and apply the restriction to all vehicles, no one is permitted to cruise in the left lane, regardless of speed. In states that allow motorists to cruise in the left lane, no one is permitted to exceed the speed limit.
5. True
6. False. The speed limit applies to all lanes.
7. True. Passing on the right is more risky because it places you in the blind spot of the vehicle you are passing.

FOUR TDOT EMPLOYEES RECEIVE TATE CERTIFICATES

Steve Richards, executive director of the Center for Transportation Research, and Zach Zacharia, director of the TTAP program, traveled to Nashville to present the Tennessee Academy for Transportation Engineering (TATE) certificates to TDOT personnel **Mirsad Kulovic, Sandra Lowry, Dewey Patton, and Darrell Ken-Moore**. The awards were handed out at the TDOT Headquarter Fall Symposium held on November 16, 2000. Tommy Hart, the deputy commissioner of TDOT; Bill Moore, chief engineer; and immediate supervisors of the graduates were on hand to congratulate them on their achievements.

In order to receive the TATE certificate, students must complete 144 professional development hours (PDHs) on selected courses conducted by TTAP across the state, then successfully pass a written test over the material in those courses. Students are further required to attend the two core courses, "Traffic Engineering I" and "Traffic Engineering II." The optional courses are based on topics taken from the Institute of Traffic Engineers' *Traffic Engineering Handbook*. Courses may last one, two, or three days, with six PDHs awarded per day. If you would like to find out more about the TATE program, please call us at 1-800-252-ROAD.

Congratulations to the graduates!



FHWA's Safety and Operations Electronic Reading Room

By Solomon Caviness

During the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) restructuring process in 1999, core business units and cross-cutting service business units were created. These units were developed to demonstrate the importance of highway safety and operations relative to business practices. The mission of the FHWA's Office of Highway Safety Infrastructure is to improve mobility and productivity, as well as safety. The objective is to ensure that roadways are designed and constructed so that every highway user arrives at his or her destination safely.

The Operations Core Business Unit, or CBU, focus is to provide leadership for the management and operations of the nation's surface transportation system. This system includes the U.S. DOT's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Program and an intermodal approach to freight operations. In an effort to improve highway safety, mobility, and productivity, the CD-ROM, "Safety Operations: Electronic Reading Room," was released by the FHWA.

The CD is a compilation of publications that premiere FHWA's recent research accomplishments in highway safety and operations. "Our purpose in this CD is to disseminate this information to facilitate the safety and operations efforts of highway officials, engineers, and researchers in the United States and around the world."

Eleven functional areas of research are represented on the CD:

- Advanced Traveler Information Systems
- Driver and Human Performance
- Driver Information Systems
- Intelligent Vehicle/In-Vehicle
- ITS Capabilities
- Older Drivers
- Pedestrian/Bicyclist Safety
- Roadway and Roadside Safety
- Safety Management
- Traffic Management Systems

For a copy of the CD, call the TTAP Office at (865) 974-5255. Specific questions and comments may be directed to the appropriate researchers or to

TFMRC.Webmaster@fhwa.dot.gov.

Confusion, continued from page 1

on one post. Page 2B-8, section 2B-13 (Location of Speed Limit Sign), tells how speed limit signs should be located. Also, Part VII (Traffic Controls For School Areas), section 7B-12 (School Speed Limit Signs), Page 7B-4, covers speed limit signing for school zones.

Picture 3 shows three signs on one post. Page 1A-1, section 1A-2, talks about the five requirements for a traffic control device to be effective; item number 3 says, "Convey a clear, simple meaning."

Picture 4 is an unreadable sign. Page 2A-12, section 2A-30 (Maintenance), discusses the maintenance, inspections, and replacing of signs.

Picture 5 is an upside-down right turn warning sign. Page 2C-2a, section 2C-4 (Turn Sign), covers turn signs. Page 2a-12, section 2A-30 (Maintenance), could also apply to this case. Just because a sign is in stock does not mean that it should be improperly installed. The correct sign should be ordered and installed properly.

The *MUTCD* provides clear guidance and standards to follow when working with traffic control devices. The information for this article came from the 1988 edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. A new edition is in the works and can be referenced at this Web site: <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

Editor's note: Christi Duncan travels the Tennessee's roadways and performs the inventory on city and counties who have applied for the sign grant program. To find out more about the sign grant program, please call Connie Gilliam (TDOT), (615) 253-2423.

TTAP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING RESULTS

This year, we again met with the TTAP advisory board to review TTAP's accomplishments for the past year and plan the program for next year. The advisory board—Dennis Cook, Ralph Comer, and Mike Presley, all from TDOT, and Roger Port and Shane Belcher from FHWA—met with TTAP staff on December 14. Overall, the TTAP program was commended for meeting its objectives in training, technical assistance, and technology transfer for the year 2000.

Due to the success of the Circuit Rider Program, geared toward TDOT road personnel, the advisory board recommended that TTAP provide to local road agencies a similar program targeted to local needs.

The TTAP staff would like to express their thanks to the advisory board for its guidance; we look forward to the next year-end meeting.



Education and training opportunities are available through the University of Tennessee Center for Transportation Research (CTR), Southeast Transportation Centers (STC), and Tennessee Transportation Assistance Program (TTAP).

This listing of courses currently available includes both TTAP and TATE courses that are offered in conjunction with the University of Tennessee Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the Tennessee Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Local roadway departments can benefit from all of the workshops. Because of this, we ask that you please share this listing with others who might be interested in our workshops. The Center for Transportation Research is always eager to meet your research and training needs. If you have a special course in mind or would like a course held on site especially for your employees, please contact Jean Spangler at 1-800-252-ROAD.

*CEU and PDH credit hours available.

Course Title	Date	Location	Instructor
Planning and Engineering for New Highways	Jan 31–Feb 1	Nashville	Beckwith/Wallace
Geotechnical Engineering Concepts I	Feb 7	Knoxville	Drumm
Basic Roadway Surveying	Feb 13	Jackson	Kervin
Basic Roadway Surveying	Feb 14	Nashville	Kervin
Basic Roadway Surveying	Feb 15	Chattanooga	Kervin
Basic Roadway Surveying	Feb 16	Knoxville	Kervin
Geotechnical Engineering Concepts I	Feb 21	Jackson	Drumm
Geotechnical Engineering Concepts I	Feb 22	Nashville	Drumm
Work Zone Traffic Control and Flagging	Feb 27	Jackson	Kervin
Workmen Traffic Control and Flagging	Feb 28	Nashville	Kervin
Advanced Work Zone Traffic Control Training	Mar 7–8	Nashville	Lerch
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Mar 12–13	Chattanooga	Kervin
Final Scoping Report Process	Mar 14–15	Nashville	Beckwith/Brisson
Roadway Lighting	Mar 21–22	Nashville	Chalmers/Sullivan
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Mar 27–28	Knoxville	Kervin
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Practices	Apr 9	Knoxville	Smoot
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Practices	Apr 10	Chattanooga	Smoot
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Practices	Apr 11	Nashville	Smoot
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Practices	Apr 12	Jackson	Smoot
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Apr 18–19	Nashville	Kervin
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Apr 26–27	Jackson	Kervin

Fundamentals of Traffic Accident Reconstruction	May 2–3	Nashville	Sullivan/Humphreys
Basics of Road Construction	May 21–22	Knoxville	Hearn
Basics of Road Construction	May 23–24	Jackson	Hearn
Highway Capacity Manual 2000	Jun 5–7	Nashville	Ismart
GPS Usage for Roadway Construction	Jun 12–13	Nashville	Garrett
Urban Transportation Planning	Aug 7–9	Nashville	Wegmann/Chatterjee
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Aug 15–16	Nashville	Kervin
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Aug 29–30	Knoxville	Kervin
Highway Design for the Older Driver	Sep 4	Nashville	Smith/Worrell
Highway Design for the Older Driver	Sep 6	Knoxville	Smith/Worrell
Geotechnical Engineering Concepts II	Sep 7	Knoxville	Drumm
Geotechnical Engineering Concepts II	Sep 10	Nashville	Drumm
Geotechnical Engineering Concepts II	Sep 11	Jackson	Drumm
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Sep 12–13	Chattanooga	Kervin
Highway Design	Sep 19–20	Nashville	Childers/Riggins
Final Scoping Report Process	Sep 26–27	Knoxville	Beckwith/Brisson
Advanced Roadway Surveying	Oct 3–4	Jackson	Kervin
Highway Accident Analysis & Corrective Treatments	Oct 10–11	Nashville	Wegmann/Chatterjee
AASHTO Roadside Design Guide	Oct 16	Nashville	Brunelle
Planning and Engineering for New Highways	Oct 17–18	Nashville	Beckwith/Wallace
Introduction to the MUTCD New Edition	Oct 23	Jackson	Kervin
Introduction to the MUTCD New Edition	Oct 24	Nashville	Kervin
Introduction to the MUTCD New Edition	Oct 25	Chattanooga	Kervin
Work Zone Traffic Control and Flagging	Oct 30	Chattanooga	Kervin
Introduction to the MUTCD New Edition	Oct 31	Knoxville	Kervin
Work Zone Traffic Control and Flagging	Nov 1	Knoxville	Kervin
Utility Accommodations Manual	Nov 7	Nashville	Stutts
Utility Accommodations Manual	Nov 8	Jackson	Status
Storm Water Drainage	Nov 13	Jackson	Kervin
Storm Water Drainage	Nov 14	Nashville	Kervin
Storm Water Drainage	Nov 15	Chattanooga	Kervin
Utility Accommodations Manual	Nov 27	Knoxville	status
Utility Accommodations Manual	Nov 28	Chattanooga	status
Basic Roadway Surveying	Dec 4	Jackson	Kervin
Basic Roadway Surveying	Dec 5	Nashville	Kervin
Basic Roadway Surveying	Dec 6	Chattanooga	Kervin
Basic Roadway Surveying	Dec 11	Knoxville	Kervin
AASHTO Roadside Design Guide	Dec 12	Knoxville	Brunelle

TRB 2001: A Student's Experience

By Solomon Caviness

The 80th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) was held January 7 through 11 in the nation's capital. This event attracts more than 8,000 transportation professionals each year to Washington, D.C. It is an unequalled opportunity for members of the transportation field to share their perspectives and knowledge of current developments in research, policy, and practice. Over the five days of the program, all areas and modes of transportation are explored in more than 2000 presentations divided into 450-plus formal sessions. Specialty workshops, committee meetings, and TRB exhibits offer further opportunities for attendees to share information and interact. TRB is known throughout the

transportation community as an expo of new technologies and developments within the field.

The year 2001 marks a new era for the Transportation Research Board, with the exit of the former chairman, Martin Wachs, and the entrance of the new chairman, John M. Samuels. It also marked the end of the Clinton administration and Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater's term in Washington. It is a new day for transportation, and this year's meeting reflected the transportation community's readiness to move into the future.

Many sessions centered on advanced technology and new policies. One frequent topic of discussion was the millennium edition of the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*,

or *MUTCD 2000*. The talk of the meeting was about how changes in *MUTCD 2000* will affect the future of transportation. Though there is controversy about the new manual, reaction to it was generally positive.

MUTCD 2000 contains new features, such as use of the metric system as the measurement standard; measurements are given in both metric and S.I. units. And each section now carries a numeric designation (2) rather than a roman numeral (II). Redesigned text format in columns will help users identify

1. STANDARDS ("shall" conditions),
2. GUIDANCE ("should" conditions),
3. OPTIONS ("may" conditions), and

Continued on page 8

TALK TO TTAP

We are always looking for your comments, ideas and suggestions to help make the TTAP program more useful to you.

1. Please send me more information on the following articles mentioned in this newsletter.

2. Please list any additional training workshops you would be interested in attending.

3. Please list topics for videos you would like TTAP to obtain.

4. Please list any other ideas or suggestions on how TTAP could assist you.

5. Please list your name and organization to verify for TTAP's mailing list.

Name

Address

Title

Organization

Phone

Fax

Email

Are you currently on TTAP's mailing list? yes no

Please fax your form to TTAP at (865) 974-3889 or mail to TTAP; Suite 309 Conference Center Building; Knoxville, TN 37996-4133.

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ROUTING SLIP

Caviness, continued from page 7

4. SUPPORT (descriptive and/or general information for designing, placing, and applying traffic control devices).

Tables, rather than text, now illustrate various aspects of sign size and color. There is also a new fluorescent yellow-green color used for school crossings and school zone signs. These are just a few revisions that have been made to the *MUTCD*. The Federal Highway Administration offers a copy of *MUTCD 2000* online at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>. The Internet version of the *MUTCD* is the primary outreach and education medium for the FHWA to keep the transportation community informed. Hard copies of the *MUTCD* will be available in spring 2001 through national organizations.

As a graduate student at the University of Tennessee in transportation engineering, I am naturally interested

in what the future holds for transportation. The sessions on the new version of the *MUTCD* were of great interest to me; however, TRB hosted fascinating sessions that highlighted innovations in technologies across the country and around the world. One session in particular covered the politics of a magnetic levitation high-speed train in the United States. This project, sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, is an effort to identify possible solutions to commuter-delay problems within congested urban corridors. The maglev technology has been tested in Germany and Japan and is hoped to be in operation around the world within the next five to 10 years.

The maglev train is being considered for six locations in the U.S., which are in competition for funding of this project. Based on each site's feasibility studies and consumer

needs, one location will be chosen for deployment later this year by the FHWA. As an Atlanta native and Knoxville resident, I have a special interest in this project because one of the locations under consideration is the Chattanooga–Atlanta corridor. This project would revolutionized travel in the Tennessee–Georgia region and put this corridor at the forefront of technology in the Southeast and the nation.

I enjoyed TRB and the opportunity it gave me to see the present state of transportation and forecasts of its future. The Transportation Research Board has a Web site (<http://www.nas.edu/trb/>), which details the agenda of this year's meeting and lists the papers presented. It is a great resource for looking up transportation topics of interest.