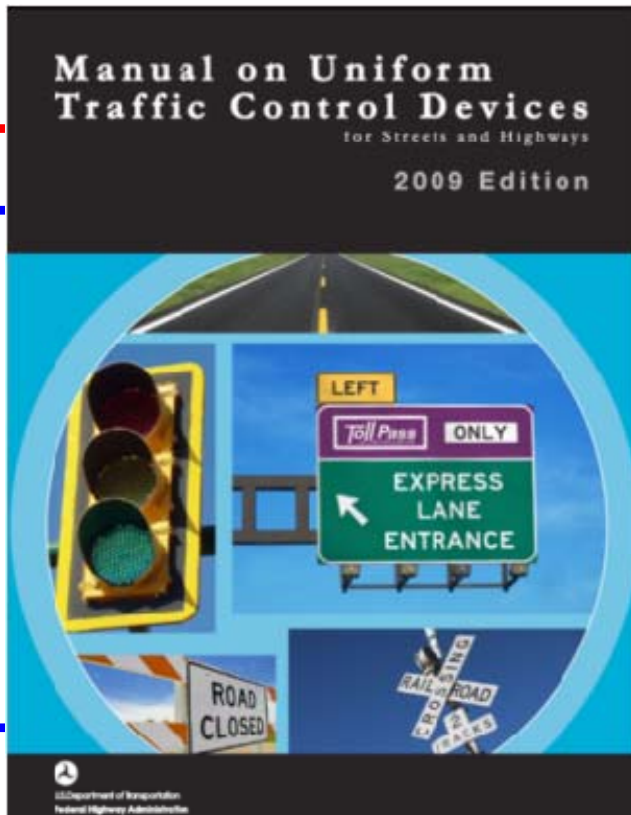


Preliminary Thoughts on a Long-Range Vision for the MUTCD



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Presented at
ITE Annual Meeting
Atlanta, Georgia
August 2012



Purpose of Presentation

- Provide information on strategic planning process
 - ~ *20 minutes*
- Provide opportunity for comment and discussion
 - ~ *50 minutes*



MUTCD History

- There have been 10 MUTCDs





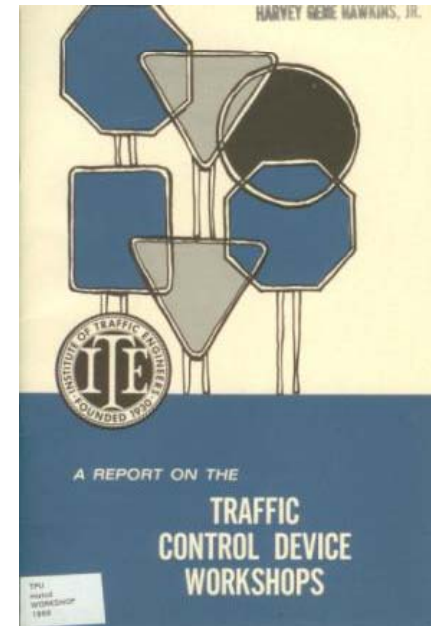
MUTCD Challenges

- **MUTCD is large and complex**
 - *Has more detail than ever before*
 - *Less flexibility to use engineering judgment*
- **Unclear audience**
 - *Not sure who it is written for*
- **Desire to avoid litigation – more specific details in the MUTCD**
 - *Limits ability to use engineering judgment*
- **It is time to reexamine MUTCD future**



Planning for MUTCD Future

- Previous efforts to define a future for the MUTCD
 - *Mid-1960s by ITE*
 - *FHWA/NCUTCD meetings*
 - 2001 & 2005
- Current effort
 - *NCUTCD MUTCD Strategic Planning Task Force*
 - *NCHRP 20-7/323 project*





Objectives

- Develop a long-range vision of what the MUTCD should be in 20-30 years
 - *Purpose, structure, target audience, user audience, form of content, level fo detail, communication technology, updates, etc.*
 - *Not addressing specific technical content*
- Develop a strategic plan for transitioning the current MUTCD to that envisioned in the long-range plan



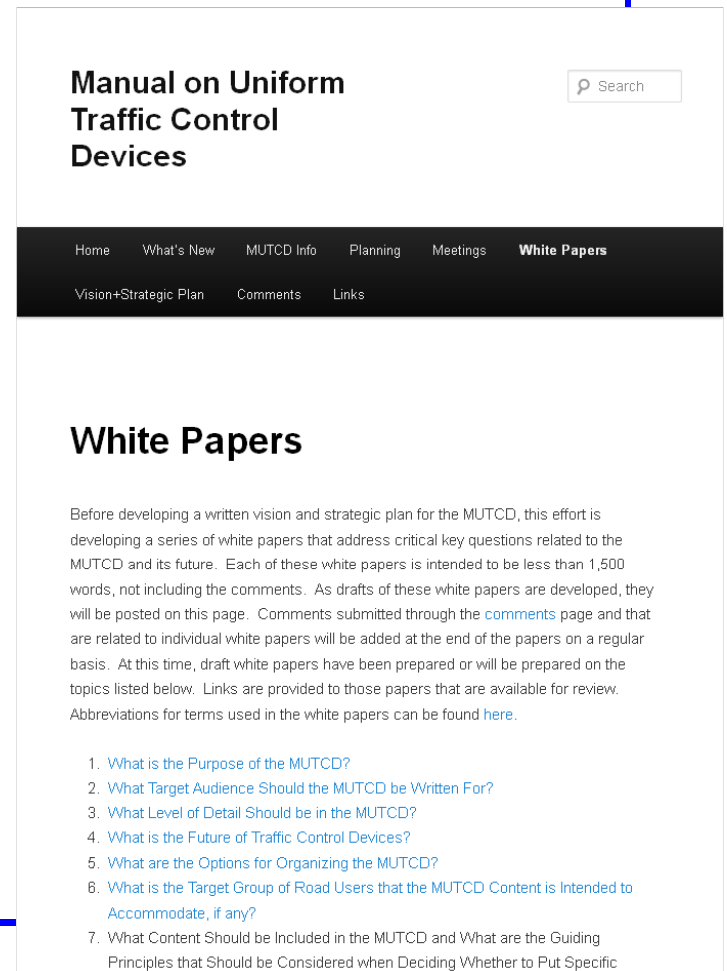
Presentation Level

- Dealing with the MUTCD from 100,000 feet
- Focusing on strategic issues
- Not concerned with specific content in the MUTCD
 - *Not looking for comments on technical content*



Planning Effort Website

- MUTCD planning website
 - <http://mutcd.tamu.edu>
- Presents:
 - *Planning information*
 - *Meeting presentations*
 - *White papers*
 - *Comments*

A screenshot of the website titled "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices". The page has a white background with a dark navigation bar. The main content area is titled "White Papers" and contains a paragraph of introductory text followed by a numbered list of seven questions related to the MUTCD. A search box is visible in the top right corner of the page.

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

Home What's New MUTCD Info Planning Meetings **White Papers**

Vision+Strategic Plan Comments Links

White Papers

Before developing a written vision and strategic plan for the MUTCD, this effort is developing a series of white papers that address critical key questions related to the MUTCD and its future. Each of these white papers is intended to be less than 1,500 words, not including the comments. As drafts of these white papers are developed, they will be posted on this page. Comments submitted through the [comments](#) page and that are related to individual white papers will be added at the end of the papers on a regular basis. At this time, draft white papers have been prepared or will be prepared on the topics listed below. Links are provided to those papers that are available for review. Abbreviations for terms used in the white papers can be found [here](#).

1. [What is the Purpose of the MUTCD?](#)
2. [What Target Audience Should the MUTCD be Written For?](#)
3. [What Level of Detail Should be in the MUTCD?](#)
4. [What is the Future of Traffic Control Devices?](#)
5. [What are the Options for Organizing the MUTCD?](#)
6. [What is the Target Group of Road Users that the MUTCD Content is Intended to Accommodate, if any?](#)
7. [What Content Should be Included in the MUTCD and What are the Guiding Principles that Should be Considered when Deciding Whether to Put Specific](#)



Public Comments

- Comments are welcome on the strategic planning process
 - *Comments are moderated*
 - *No anonymous comments*
- Should focus on strategic issues
 - *Not accepting comments on specific technical detail*
- Comments offered in meetings are not preserved
 - *You must submit comments on-line for them to be considered*

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

Comment



Stakeholder Presentations

- **Meetings:**
 - *NACE, April 2012*
 - *AASHTO SCOTE, June 2012*
 - *NCUTCD, June 2012 and January 2013*
 - *ITE, August 2012*
 - *ATSSA, August 2012*
 - *TRB Traffic Control Devices Committee, January 2013*
- **Presentations posted on website**



Webinars

- **Future webinars:**
 - *APWA Transportation Committee, Nov*
 - *AASHTO SCOTE, ~Nov*
- **Others to be scheduled with selected stakeholder organizations**
 - *Organizations to be determined*
 - *Welcome suggestions on what organizations should be invited*



Basic Approach

- Define critical questions
- Prepare white papers on questions
 - *Papers 500-1500 words long*
 - *Papers posted on website*
- Stakeholders comment on white papers
- Papers revised and used to prepare long-range vision and strategic plan



Initial White Papers

- What is the purpose of the MUTCD?
 - *Ranges from defining meaning and appearance to rules for all aspects of TCDs*
- What target audience should the MUTCD be written for?
 - *Flexibility for use by experienced engineers or detailed instructions for inexperienced individuals?*
- What level of detail should be in the MUTCD?
 - *Lots of specific instructions or general principles?*
- What is the future of traffic control devices?
 - *What will the TCD environment/use be in 20-30 years?*
- What are the options for organizing the MUTCD?
 - *Should it be divided into multiple volumes, some of which may not be formally defined as the MUTCD?*
- What is the target group of road users that the MUTCD content is intended to accommodate, if any?
 - *Should TCDs accommodate all road users, including groups such as those that impaired, distracted, or operating illegally?*



Typical White Paper

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1 **What is the Target Group of Road Users that the MUTCD Content is Intended to**
2 **Accommodate, if any?**

3 **White Paper #6**, version #01, prepared July 17, 2012

4 Author: Gene Hawkins

5 Contributors: None to date

6

7 White paper #2 addresses the target user audience for who the MUTCD is written for. A similar
8 issue can be applied to the users that traffic control devices (TCDs) are intended to serve. The
9 issue of who TCDs are intended to serve is important as it addresses the extent to which agencies
10 should try to accommodate the needs of a wide variety of road users. It would be simple to say
11 that TCDs should accommodate all users on roadways. However, this is not a practical
12 expectation. There are some road users that agencies may not be able to accommodate.

13 Examples include:

14

- 15 • Road users who are not operating a vehicle in a legal manner. This includes:
 - 16 • Drivers who are intoxicated or otherwise legally impaired,
 - 17 • Drivers who do not have a drivers license,
 - 18 • Drivers who are not operating their vehicle in accordance with the law or that are not
 - 19 complying with TCDs, and/or
- 20 • Road users who are not properly trained to operate a vehicle. This includes:
 - 21 • Drivers who may have a license in another country but who are not familiar with
 - 22 driving practices in the U.S.,
 - 23

24 The 2009 MUTCD recognizes these limitations and includes the following statement:

25

26 *"The proper use of traffic control devices should provide the reasonable and prudent*
27 *road user with the information necessary to efficiently and lawfully use the streets,*
28 *highways, pedestrian facilities, and bikeways."*¹

29

30 The capabilities of a driver cannot be understated. Driving is a learned process. The driver must
31 possess a minimum level of knowledge and skill in order to safely operate a vehicle. The drivers
32 licensing process provides a means of confirming the competence level of a driver. The Uniform
33 Vehicle Code (UVC) states that an applicant be tested for the following capabilities in order to
34 obtain a drivers license:

35

- 36 • Visual acuity,
- 37 • Ability to read and understand official traffic control devices used in the state,
- 38 • Knowledge of safe driving practices,
- 39 • Knowledge of the traffic laws, and
- 40 • Ability to exercise ordinary and reasonable control in the operation of a vehicle.

41

¹ 2009 MUTCD, Section 1A.02, paragraph 06.

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42 In possessing these capabilities, a driver should have a basic knowledge of the types of potential
43 situations which may be present in the roadway environment and the type of responses that are
44 appropriate for a given situation. However, the driver is not required to anticipate extraordinary
45 dangers, impediments, or obstructions to which his or her attention has not been directed, or of
46 which he or she has not been warned.

47

48 Although transportation agencies are responsible for a roadway, they cannot be "an insurer of the
49 road or a guarantor of absolute safety."² Courts have recognized that "it is impossible to design
50 and construct a highway that is always free from [hazards]."³ The responsibility of an agency is
51 to maintain roadways "in a way that is reasonably safe for travel."² The driver is required to use
52 reasonable care for his or her own safety. It is only an alert, attentive, and unimpaired driver that
53 can use the roadway in a safe and efficient manner.

54

55 Given the information described above, for the purposes of the MUTCD strategic planning
56 effort, the target group of road users that the MUTCD is intended to address is described below.

57

58 **Traffic control devices are intended to provide a reasonable and prudent road user, who is**
59 **functioning in an alert, attentive, and unimpaired manner, with the information necessary**
60 **to function in a safe and efficient manner that is consistent with applicable traffic and**
61 **vehicle laws and regulations. An alert, attentive, and unimpaired road user is defined as a**
62 **person who possesses the basic knowledge and capabilities necessary for traveling on the**
63 **facility, is not traveling with an impairment which limits the operation of the vehicle or the**
64 **individual, and uses ordinary care appropriate to the circumstances present at any given**
65 **moment.**

66

67 **Comments:**

- 68 • None
- 69 • Commentors:
- 70 •

² S.I. Pivnik and J.B. Humphreys, *Traffic Improvements - Legal Aspects and Liability*. Institute of Transportation Engineers, Washington, D.C., 1980.

³ *Hampton v. State Highway Commission*. 200 Kansas 565. 498 P.2d 236 (1972).



Potential Papers (1/2)

- What should be in the MUTCD (content)?
 - *Standards, guidelines, options, best practices, ...*
 - *Meaning, appearance, operation, installation, maintenance, ...*
- Should some of the MUTCD content be separated from the rulemaking process?
- What are the critical factors (guiding principles) that should be considered when deciding whether to put specific content in the MUTCD?
- How and how often should the MUTCD be revised?



Potential Papers (2/2)

- What level of research is needed to add new language or revise existing language?
- What is the desirable process for incorporating new technologies and new devices into the MUTCD/other documents?
- What publication or information sharing technologies are desirable for improving the usability of the MUTCD?



Vision and Strategic Plan

- **Draft vision developed in late fall**
 - *Expected to define what the MUTCD should be and should not be*
 - *Expected to define guiding principals that will guide future content development*
 - *Will be posted on website for comment*
- **Draft strategic plan**
 - *Recommend actions to transition from current document to that describe in the vision*
 - *Will be posted on website for comment*



Questions?

