

Oregon Traffic Control Devices Committee

Meeting Minutes

(corrected)

January 18, 2002

Marion County Public Works, Salem, Oregon

Members Present: Charles Radosta, Chair, ITE/Kittelson & Associates; Rob Burchfield, City of Portland; Gordon Renskers, OSP; Robin Lewis, City of Bend; Stephen Wilson, ODOT Region 4; Cynthia Schmitt, Marion County; Randall Wooley, City of Beaverton

Members Absent: Joseph Marek, Clackamas County; Gary Judd, Deschutes County; Ed Fischer, Secretary, ODOT State Traffic Engineer

Others Present: Orville Gaylor, Rick Wood, Doug Bish, Jan Gipson, June Ross, Paul Davis, ODOT Traffic Management Section; Robert Morast, Washington County; Lew Garrison, City of Salem, Ed Chastain, Lane County, Eric Niemeyer, Jackson County; Rick Braden, Oregon State Parks; John Replinger, Multnomah County

Introduction/Approval of October 24, 2001 Meeting Minutes

New Chairperson Charles Radosta called the meeting to order and attendees introduced themselves. Rick Wood then announced that subsequent to the October OTCDC meeting the draft Red Light Running (RLR) Camera Guidelines were revised and sent out via email to cities involved in red light running for approval. Rick said the OTC approved the guidelines for use by ODOT on January 16, 2001. Copies were provided to meeting attendees. The Committee then voted approval of the October 24, 2001 meeting minutes.

Old Business

MUTCD Administrative Rule Update

Doug Bish informed the committee that the draft Oregon Supplements to the MUTCD and the draft OAR adopting them had passed internal ODOT review. Oregon's Attorney General has also reviewed and approved it. The public notice has been filed with the Secretary of State's office and will be published in the Oregon Administrative Review Bulletin. The requirement for public notice will be fulfilled by publication on February 21st. The requirement for legislative notice will be fulfilled March 12th. After those two deadlines are met and in the absence of any comments or requests for meetings, it will be put on the OTC agenda, tentatively scheduled for April 10th, 2002. Approval is anticipated for that date. There was a minor change to the school speed supplement involving the word, "LIMIT" in school speed limit signs.

Jan reported on the status of the MUTCD itself. She said Ed Fischer has discussed this with FHWA and saw some of the errata. There are supposed to be changes on nearly every page although no major changes in substance. It will be published in the Federal Register in due time, perhaps June, as a change in the MUTCD. Jan said the committee should be aware that the Attorney General has come out with an opinion that every change to the MUTCD published in the Federal Register will require a revised OAR to include it. This is a change from previous practice of simply adopting the MUTCD of whatever year and just adopting any errata in committee as it comes out. The MUTCD is becoming a more fluid document so it's going to be pretty much an annual revision to the OAR.

This also affects mass purchase of hard copies of the MUTCD. Updating loose leaf copies will be problematic enough with substantial changes; updating bound copies will be virtually impossible. There's no point in holding out the OAR for the next change in the MUTCD since it will be an annual event and the procedure won't be complete after publication of changes in the Federal Register until December of 2002 or January of 2003. Jan said ODOT will notify jurisdictions when the OAR is adopted.

Guidelines for the Operation of Highway Advisory Radio on State Highways

June Ross updated the committee on the history of the draft guidelines including changes reflected in the current draft and said that ODOT is ready for OTCDC approval. She said ODOT specifically decided against focusing more generally on HAR devices and to concentrate on their use as traffic control devices by ODOT and other agencies.

June went over some of the highlights to the final draft for the committee. Included in the guidelines is the approval process for HAR's operated by ODOT to have an initial review of the proposed HAR by the State Traffic Engineer (with some initial work done at the region level) prior to applying for an FCC license. Following issuance of the license, the State Traffic Engineer will give final approval including approval of advance sign locations.

There is also a provision that temporary HAR and associated signage won't need approval from the State Traffic Engineer.

Supplement A consists of a reprint/revision that will be incorporated in the Sign Policy and Guidelines stating a specific process for signs associated with HAR's operated by other agencies.

Another change in the final draft is that while the main intent for the use of HAR's is critical messages related to traffic, it will remain up to local operators whether they might be used for a weather broadcast. At that point, signs that have flashing beacons would not be lit. Notification of the weather message would have to be communicated through some other means.

If the message is about a route diversion, the Guidelines suggest that advance work be done to coordinate with local agencies. Consideration should be given to detour signing.

If the HAR's are used for information about special events, this should be specifically about travel and parking, not what is happening in the events.

Under System Monitoring, there is a requirement that systems be monitored at least quarterly to maintain operational quality.

Supplement B, the list of sample messages, is just general guidance with the realization that more messages will be developed in continued operation of HAR's.

Questions arose about the requirement to avoid mention of commercial names or business establishments and how that was defined. This is particularly problematic as commercial entities have their names attached to places and events. It was agreed that avoiding the name may be impossible in some cases but that the intent is to do so when it isn't necessary to effective communication.

Another question regarded whether the ADA was an issue with HAR. June said that ODOT envisions HAR as supplemental information--possibly more detailed, but not the only method of delivering the information.

The use of multiple languages on HAR was discussed, and ODOT decided that the broadcast could refer to another source such as another radio station in a foreign language but that the guidelines would be silent on the issue.

A suggestion to add contact information to the Guidelines brought out the fact that there is a link to ODOT Traffic Section's website. June agreed to add a general phone number to that data. Discussion of publications availability on the website included the Traffic Manual with general information on all the functions of ODOT's Traffic Section. This was seen as a potentially useful resource to other jurisdictions and it was requested that a link to the manual be placed in these minutes. That link is directly below:

Click on Link → [Traffic Manual](#)

Decision: Steve Wilson moved, Rob Burchfield seconded, and the committee approved the draft guidelines as modified and with the contact information discussed.

New Business

Guidelines for the Operation of Variable Message Signs on State Highways

June Ross then went on to introduce the revised Guidelines for the Operation of Variable Message Signs on State Highways, stating that this was the first time the proposed revision has been brought to the committee since they were approved about two years ago. The current changes were initially considered due to a change in the new MUTCD regarding how messages were displayed. This encouraged a closer look at other aspects of the guidelines.

June pointed out a new section on siting permanent VMS signs that's based on what's in the MUTCD and what other states are doing. There's also a VMS approval process, replacing a more ad hoc procedure that's been used previously. Any requests for new permanent signs on state highways have to be approved by the State Traffic Engineer.

Steve Wilson said he'd like to see something on portable VMS signs in the same section or a new section that says signs placed for more than a week will be protected in some fashion. June said they'd take a further look at this but there is no distinction given in the MUTCD regarding period of placement.

There was discussion on the applicability of the publication to local jurisdictions. It was clarified that it's just advisory to them. It was also clarified that there is a difference between sign visibility and legibility. The committee agreed that some textual clarification would help on this issue.

There was discussion regarding the need to explicitly include the consideration of appropriateness of VMS signs in some areas such as historic districts in the sign approval process, June and Rick Wood agreed to take a look at whether more guidance is needed in the Guidelines.

The committee agreed that the provision that excludes speed radar boards from the guidelines should exclude wording that says "placed by state or local police", in case some are placed by local authorities other than police.

Section VI has been modified to address requests from other public agencies to allow display of special public safety messages.

A reference to Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) was added under VIII, Operation.

The changes under VIII. Message Selection is mostly meant to clarify who has responsibility to approve messages on all VMS signs. There was discussion about the need for more qualitative guidance on minimum display time. The time needed seems to depend on the message and other variables. Rick said they will consider revisions.

The committee discussed the guidance that VMS signs should be used as advisory/warning signs rather than regulatory signs. They don't have the technology to look like regulatory signs and the MUTCD doesn't authorize their use as such.

The prohibition of message display techniques such as flashing, fading, exploding, dissolving or scrolling brought some opposition. It was pointed out that the MUTCD only actually prohibits fading, exploding, dissolving or moving messages. It was suggested that the guidelines be modified to allow flashing arrows.

June then summarized changes in Supplement B on use of portable variable message signs (PVMS). June pointed out the statement under Placement of PVMS's on the Right-of-Way which says PVMS's should be

delineated with retroreflective temporary traffic control devices or when within the clear zone, shielded with a barrier or crash cushion. She said this was from the MUTCD.

The definition and adequacy of the term, "clear zone" was discussed. It was agreed that conditions on the ground in any situation may preclude following all guidance exactly.

Doug Bish suggested a caveat stating that it may not always be possible to comply with visibility requirements. Jan Gipson said signing tables should be used for guidance.

June will consider all comments and confer with Ed Fischer and others and will prepare a revised draft. She will include information on MUTCD standards and guidance. This will be sent to the committee by email.

ODOT Traffic Line Manual

Jan Gipson said there was a new draft of the Traffic Line Manual that she hopes to have out soon. She will be working further on it and discussing it with Ed Fischer before bringing it before the committee.

Short Term Traffic Control Handbook

Jan Gipson said she hasn't finished the update to this. She said it involves PART VI that is the most extensively revised in upcoming errata to the MUTCD. So this has been set aside until the errata comes out. The current version shouldn't be seriously in conflict with the new MUTCD for the interim. The revision should be more of an update but it's hard to tell exactly how much at this time.

Jan showed an example of Semi-Rigid roll-up signs in the form of STOP/SLOW paddles. Their semi-rigidity is somewhat questionable but the FHWA is letting the states interpret the definition. She said the signs appear to be adequate for the conditions they will be used in and will be included in the updated handbook.

Other Items

Jan said ODOT is now involved in reviewing issues for the next legislative session including cleaning up speed zone statutes. The first proposal is to get rid of federal maximum wording and redundant language without doing any changes that might be controversial.

There are still conflicting views on the basis of speed zone enforcement between maximum speed vs. basic rule. Jan asked for committee help in exactly how to define where you go with the maximum speed limit. State Traffic Engineer Ed Fischer would like to see a more operational definition for the maximum speed limit rather than just jurisdiction boundaries. If we have a certain level of development and traffic/community activity, maybe it should be subject to maximum speed limit rather than basic rule.

Cynthia Schmitt expressed the concern that different jurisdictions may be using different standards and if the committee doesn't get involved in firming up some guidelines, the legislature may also get involved with more problematic solutions. She suggested that having a process like that used in the school zone publication was needed to get creative, workable solutions that can be brought to the Legislature. Jan agreed with this in concept and said she'd discuss it with Ed Fischer.

The committee continued to discuss the divide between those who want to replace basic rule law with maximum speeds (while still maintaining basic rule below the maximum speeds). The committee agreed that Jan would take this discussion up with Ed Fischer and bring something back to the March meeting where it could be assigned to a subcommittee to work on. Rob Burchfield said that he thought beyond that, there should be a grass roots effort from AOC/LOC to build consensus and constituency behind a legislative position that may more easily pass through the legislative process.

Update to Sign Policy and Guidelines

Orville Gaylor said he was working on standard signs for use for advance crosswalk stopbars. He presented two versions, one with a pedestrian symbol and one with the word abbreviation "PEDS". Most appeared to prefer the symbol. There was discussion as to whether or not to include parallel lines depicting a crosswalk with the pedestrian figure. However, the lines are not used in the new MUTCD. ODOT is therefore not going to be using them as a rule except for cases of overhead crosswalk signs. Consensus was to use the symbol sign as presented. It is expected to be rarely used and within 30 feet of the crosswalk so it should be associated with the crosswalk in the driver's mind

Other signs were introduced without significant comment except as follows: A question was asked as to whether the fluorescent orange on OTIA signs would be sufficient if reserved for the logo and not the text. It was explained that this was the way the OTC chairman wants it. Also, the committee agreed to remove the words "before removal" from the TRAFFIC CONTROL CHANGE AHEAD signing instructions, and to fix a typo in advance school crossing signing text.

Decision: Rob Burchfield moved, Stephen Wilson seconded, and the committee approved the revisions to the Sign Policy and Guidelines as edited by the committee.

Construction Speed Signs

Orville then briefed the committee on a proposal to use a SPEED XX sign instead of CONSTRUCTION SPEED XX sign from the ODOT Traffic Control Plans Unit (who do construction signage). That might be more consistent with other speed signing, and might get more attention from drivers. These are black on orange (construction color) signs in the rectangular shape of a regulatory sign. This doesn't comply with the MUTCD but the signs have been used since before the Sign Policy and Guidelines was first approved by the Transportation Commission. The committee discussed ongoing confusion as to whether the sign is regulatory (it's not) and the committee discussed discontinuing the rectangular shape and using the MUTCD approved diamond shape.

Decision: Rob Burchfield moved, Randall Wooley seconded, and the committee agreed to reject the proposal to eliminate the word CONSTRUCTION; and further, to research whether the current sign should be modified or eliminated.

Information Item

Orville advised the committee that Ed Fischer has decided to quit using combined bicycle/right turn lane signage and go back to the RIGHT LANE MUST TURN RIGHT with an EXCEPT BICYCLES rider because in several years of testing the combined lane signs there is no proof that they are effective. The dotted lane striping will also no longer be used.

Combining OTCDC Fall Meeting with ACTS Safety Conference

Charles Radosta tabled this decision item until the next meeting

Success of Electronic Mailing

The committee discussed the utility of the new procedure of e-mailing material to committee members and interested others. Consensus was that this is working well. Some still would like a hard copy provided at meetings so the committee agreed to make a more limited amount of copies available at meetings. There will be exceptions for last-minute changes and some documents in Microstation or other less common formats.

Non-Agenda Items

Cynthia Schmitt had three items. First, she asked if the meeting dates were set at the Marion County Shops for the rest of the year and whether there were any other accommodations desired. The dates have, in fact,

been confirmed for the third Friday of every other month at the shops with the next meeting scheduled for March 15th.

Cynthia then made a flyer available and asked for suggestions on how to get the word out on two traffic engineering positions the county is having problems filling. Suggested mailing, publication and e-mailing lists were provided.

Finally, Cynthia asked if anybody knew anything about the advisability/utility of personal flashers/strobes worn on the person of flaggers. She wasn't able to find anything in MUTCD or elsewhere. Jan suggested asking the FHWA for an interpretation as to whether they are traffic control devices and if/how they should be addressed by the committee.

Steve Wilson announced that this was his last meeting and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve. He was thanked for his years of service, invited to continue attending OTCDC meetings any time and encouraged to enjoy his retirement.

The meeting Adjourned at: 12:05 p.m.

Our next meeting is scheduled for March 15th, 2002 at 9:00 a.m. at the Marion County Shops.