
Oregon Traffic Control Devices Committee

May 19, 2000

Red Lion Inn, Salem, Oregon

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Rob Burchfield, City of Portland; Ed Fischer, Secretary, ODOT State Traffic Engineer; Gary Judd, Chair, Deschutes County; Gary Ludeke, City of Eugene; Joseph Marek, Clackamas County; Charles Radosta, ITE/Kittelson & Associates; Lt. Gordon Renskers, OSP; Cynthia Schmitt, Marion County; Mike Wilson, City of Bend; Stephen Wilson, ODOT Region 4.

Others Present: Walt Clay, Lancaster Engineering; Ali Eghtedari, Multnomah County; Lew Garrison, Ralph Lambert, City of Salem; Tori Kinne, FHWA; Nathaniel Price, Bill Kloos, Willie Rotich, City of Portland; Vaughn Lewis, Bob Morast, Washington County; Robert Kortt, City of Medford; Gary McKenney, McKenney Engineering; Keith Rudisil, David Evans & Associates; Orville Gaylor, Doug Bish, Paul Davis, Jan Gipson, ODOT Traffic Management Section; Craig Black, ODOT Region 2.

Approval of January 2000 Minutes

Gary Ludeke moved and Ed Fischer seconded approval of the January meeting minutes. The Committee voted approval without dissent.

Old Business

Draft MUTCD comments

Jan Gipson presented handouts on draft MUTCD comments, noting previous rounds of comment

and that the opportunity for comment ends in the next couple weeks. The comments provided were relatively minor as listed in her hand-out on Parts 2D, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8. Additional comments about study concerns in Part 4 regarding signal arrows will be added at Bill Kloos' request. Tori Kinne noted that many other states commented against removing red arrows. She said the National Committee didn't review the study before it went into the handbook.

Action Item: Jan Gipson will add comments addressing concerns on the red arrow signal study.

Possible Legislation

Ed Fischer updated the Committee on possible proposals to the next Legislature.

Power failure at signalized intersections: Do we need legislation to require motorists to treat unlit signals as all-way stop as some states have done? It was discussed but not considered enough of a problem to be worth trying to get legislative action. Lew Garrison questioned this since citizens are advised to do so even though it's not in State law. Lt. Renskers said the consensus of drivers seemed to be that this is a common sense way to treat the problem, already and pointed out problems enforcing such a law. He noted no crashes when Klamath Falls had a power outage. Garrison said it shouldn't be that difficult. Fischer agreed but noted recent legislative experience has been that when such "common sense" legislation is introduced others take the opportunity to add amendments which convolute the outcome. Practically speaking it's preferable to pick your battles. Fischer said he was the one who originally thought this area needed a legislative fix but changed his mind after input from others. Rob Burchfield noted that local government can enact such ordinances if they desire.

4-way Stops: Is legislation needed on how motorists should traverse 4-way stops? Ed Fischer noted that State law is relatively silent on the subject. In practice it's pretty much first arrive, first leave, as a common courtesy type behavior. Most don't see this as a big problem. Bob Morast thought it was only in cases of simultaneous arrival, that drivers are to yield to vehicle on the right, but otherwise it's first in, first out. Fischer said this is not in law but there's no indication that it's a problem at this point.

Graffiti Removal: Should we propose legislation to fund graffiti removal from traffic control devices? Nobody wanted to touch that one. A dedicated funding source is difficult to identify, and therefore not easily handled through legislation.

Studded Tires: Should we ban the use of studded tires or have a fair share referendum putting excise tax on studs? There may be an effort put out by some legislators to do so. ODOT will not by itself introduce but will help any legislators who might craft such legislation. Joe Marek brought up his experience and the Committee agreed that the spacing of grooves proves it passenger car studs, not trucks doing the majority of damage.

Speed Limits/Speed Laws: Where do speed limits/speed laws apply? Ed Fischer said there's some cleanup needed in Oregon law. Reference to Federal Maximum Speed, which no longer exists, is an example. Fischer noted that when on State highways within urban areas, violation of basic rule is difficult to enforce even when the speed is clearly posted. Rob Burchfield says that's the difference between speed limit and speed zone.

Jan Gipson said ODOT tried to get legislation enacted in last legislative session but when speed is brought up in the Legislature, all kinds of other amendments get attached, including 75 mph rural interstate speed. Ed Fischer said the rest of the bill cleaned up other problems well but the Governor was going to veto anything that raised speeds on the highways.

Rob Burchfield suggested it's our job to bring needed fixes to the Legislature, and Legislators' job to decide if/how to act. He said such legislation might fail three or four times but at some point it may get through. Ed Fischer asked for Committee consensus. Joe Marek talked about enforcement problems in Clackamas County with proof of violation of basic rule being tougher than violation of a set speed limit.

Lt. Renskers says he pays attention to which judge/county jurisdiction he's in before writing tickets, knowing what each will generally allow. In Eastern Oregon, Renskers said they're looking at the middle to upper 70's before ticketing. Ed Fischer pointed out that eliminating the basic rule in favor of strict speed limits would need recognition that in some places the speed needs to be more than 55, which the current governor may not accept. Steve Wilson added that variations on route/road type need to be considered, whether or not it's an interstate route.

Ed Chastain mentioned the need for more signs if basic rule were done away with since many roads now don't need any signing under basic rule but probably would if it were eliminated. Rob Burchfield suggested a possible compromise was not to end violation of basic rule law but to set more speed limits. Ed Fischer has a note in to Joan Plank on the subject and is waiting for her to get back to him.

ODOT's Safety Division is in a difficult position because the Governors' Safety Council is adamantly opposed to anything raising speed limits. Rob Burchfield suggested they need to be educated that 55 is not a limit. Ed Fischer said it's not that we're not going to do anything just yet, but that he doesn't know what the answer is yet.

Action Item: Ed Fischer will revisit the issue with Joan Plank when she returns from vacation.

U-turn Law: Should we try to change the U-turn law to be consistent with neighboring states? Ed Fischer said the question of who's got money to go out and fix all the signing argued against legislation. Lt. Renskers noted no enforcement problems with out of state drivers making a lot of illegal U-turns. Again, this is a case of "might be nice" but is not currently affordable in the absence of a clearly great need.

Pedestrian Safety: Does the law need clarification of when motorists must stop for pedestrians? Ed Fischer said Mike Ronkin has discussed this and was told that ODOT would not initiate the proposal, but would support if others want to. Rob Burchfield wanted to know what present law is. Fischer wasn't sure. Bob Morast noted Portland has a specific law for mid-block crossings. He thought Oregon law now says you don't have to stop for pedestrians unless they're in your half of the roadway. Burchfield said this is an issue where we need to show leadership. The duty of drivers isn't clear, leaving drivers too much latitude. Fischer said he will again raise the issue with Ronkin. He asked if Portland would be interested in introducing legislation. Burchfield said yes. He said the City also needs a coalition to get support downstate. Fischer said that if OTCDC/etc. can create a coalition then maybe ODOT will support efforts. Burchfield noted that previous efforts didn't get out of committee in Legislature.

Action Item: Ed Fischer will talk to Mike Ronkin again about legislation clarifying when motorists must stop for pedestrians. Rob Burchfield/City of Portland will work on/introduce legislation for the next Legislature.

New Business

SMARTS Van

Tori Kinne passed out some copies of a SMARTS Van handout. The SMARTS Van is a research-type van that FHWA has put together starting several years back. SMARTS stands for

Sign Management and Record Reflectivity Tracking System. It takes pictures of signs, flashes a strobe at it thereby getting a black and white photograph and theretroreflectivity values off of the picture. The data can also be placed into a sign management system to so signs can be kept track of by GPS position, type of sign, etc.

Tori Kinne will be with the van at AASHTO and NCUTCD meetings in San Diego in June, and will bring it up through Oregon and Washington at the end of June. She must have it in Seattle on July 12th to be ready to go to Alaska, but hopes to get it up here the last Monday in June. The plan is to stop at least one day at each of the ODOT region offices along I-5. There will be a half day briefing on the van, and selected folks will have the opportunity for some hands on experience.

A limitation is the van needs sunny days and dry weather, for best results. The van sometimes doesn't capture both color and black and white pictures or link them to each other, and capturing the data at highway speeds can be tricky. Only when back at the office is one able to check the quality of data captured. Steve Wilson asked how the data is captured. Tori Kinne said the developer set it up to be put in a comma-delineated program so the data can be downloaded in any spreadsheet or database program. She is unsure if anybody has actually tried to do that yet.

Rob Burchfield said his maintenance shop is concerned about standards coming down the line for retro-reflectivity. Tori Kinne said FHWA came out with research values in December that have gone to AASHTO/ATSSA for review and report last month but she hasn't seen anything yet. That's part of the presentation that will be available. Burchfield asked if this would be in the next MUTCD or future amendment to the MUTCD. Kinne said any changes would be future amendments to the new issue coming out at the end of this year. Adjustment to sections will be made as needed. It could still be years. Issues still to be resolved include liability, differences in geographical areas wet/dry etc.

Joe Marek asked if the new MUTCD has guidelines, not requirements. Tori Kinne said it might be mentioned in there but is a precursor to what numbers come out due to congressional mandate. For pavement markings they haven't come out with anything definite yet because circumstances differ. National proposals for pavement markings and signs will be out for comment before something happens.

Gary Judd asked for the van's schedule to be published when available. Tori Kinne said she will, as soon as next week, put the schedule out on FHWA Oregon Division's web page and let Ed Fischer know it's been done.

Action Item: A copy of the SMARTS Van handout will be attached to the minutes for this meeting. Tori Kinne will put the van's schedule on FHWA's Oregon Web Page, and let Ed Fischer know when it comes out. Fischer will be sure OTCDC Members get a copy.

Speed-Activated Curve Warning Signs

After a break, Gary Ludeke reported on how Eugene is handling a problem dealing with sharp curves in residential areas resulting in multiple spectacular nighttime accidents and some minor property damage accidents. A multitude of strategies to improve the situation had been tried (while trying not to damage the neighborhood ambiance) but nothing seem to work well or for long. Age and alcohol didn't seem to be an issue. They even moved the handicapped ramp that acted as a catapult ramp at it's original location, which made room for guardrail they later installed at one of the locations.

The City's experience is that static devices tend to be tuned out by motorists. They originally wanted to use photo-radar that would illuminate a blank-out sign instead of snapping a picture. Using Camera Controlled Incident Detection Sensor Technology (CCIDS) Video Image Processor (VIP), which when hooked to camera will put out alarm output when criteria is exceeded. Triggered by speed, on 25 mph advisory sign a shade above 35 mph. The intent was not to reduce overall speed but to clip the top speed. They went to flashers instead of signing because of question of wording and it was easier to get going. The City has tried the system in two locations so far.

Installation was done by City crew at about \$10,000 per installation, breaking down to about 50% hardware and 50% labor. The flashers remain on for about 3 seconds upon activation.

In the first location on 18th Avenue, statistics show an 9% increase in vehicles traveling below 30 mph after installation of the flashers, as well as an 6% drop in those going over 35 mph.

In the second location on Garfield Street, statistics show an 11% increase in vehicles traveling below 35 mph after installation, as well as an 18% drop in those going over 35 mph. Above 40 mph speed went to 0 in the "after" study. The City concludes that traffic speeds entering the curve were reduced significantly after the installation of the speed-activated warning flashers.

It remains to be seen if drivers eventually tune out dynamic devices. The City will continue to do

studies on the performance of the new device.

Policy Statement for Cooperative Traffic Control Projects

Ed Fischer went over the history of the policy statement between the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), League of Oregon Cities (LOC), and ODOT. The document defined shares/splits of installation, maintenance and power costs, primarily of traffic signals, and also illumination. Last year when Fischer became Traffic Engineer, he had Traffic staff pointing out to him that agreements coming to him for signature did not comply with the 1984 rewrite of the policy splits. Several other issues with the current statement (doesn't cover everything, still refers to the defunct signal priority list, etc.) needed cleaning up. ODOT started working on rewrite in late 1999, and after timing difficulties precluded getting together with AOC/LOC. Fischer went to the Local Officials Advisory Council (combined AOC/LOC group) a couple months ago. He proposed we revisit the 1984 document to the LOAC and they suggested contacting OTCDC members to form a subcommittee that would review and help come up with a new policy statement. Cindy Schmidt, Joe Marek, Gary Judd, and Bill Kloos volunteered.

Ed Fischer didn't have copies of draft language to hand out yet but said Paul Davis or Craig Chadwick will provide later to those who ask. Fischer outlined, and the Committee discussed proposed changes between the draft and existing policy in some detail.

The issue of agreements with developers raised considerable discussion. ODOT usually enters agreements only with the local agency, not developers for maintenance and operating costs. Ed Fischer said ODOT wants to highlight in the new document that ODOT will continue to adhere to this policy, as recommended by the Attorney General's office.

It was suggested that the party who allowed the access, ODOT, should be responsible for entering agreement with the developer. Keith Rudisil said the problem is with making sure who holds the bag if they don't pay. He said that ODOT may be part of the process for the access permit but there has to be agreement with the local agency. Joe Marek agreed with the point about the access permit, and said ODOT also has a lot to say about land use. Ed Fischer said it looks like further discussion is needed with the Attorney General and local governments. Steve Wilson asked what to do when a signal is required and ODOT doesn't want one. Fischer said he wouldn't sign an agreement with a developer absent AG approval. Rob Burchfield suggested a three party agreement. Fischer said he might be receptive to that if the AG agrees.

Other issues were discussed and the consensus was that the draft needs more work by the subcommittee and that billing issues needed more work by the Committee. Ed Fischer hopes to get back to the LOAC this summer or no later than the end of fall so we don't get hung up with the next Legislative session.

Action Item: Paul Davis or Craig Chadwick will send copies of the draft language upon request.

Signing & Striping Roundabouts

Gary Judd asked for input on background material he provided, which is proposed MUTCD and Kittleson proposal for Bend roundabout. ODOT proposed these options based on research of what other cities/states are doing. Doug Bish said in Bend we tried to stay with standard signing, did not use diamond shaped yield pavement markings. Rob Burchfield said he understood the yield marking was proposed in new pavement marking. ODOT hasn't used yet but it will be an option in the new Manual.

Rob Burchfield thought we needed something about how to handle bike lanes. It was dropped before reaching the roundabout in the Bend project. Ed Fischer said he would show French usage in bike roundabouts using green markings at the ITE luncheon after the meeting.

Regarding roundabouts, Ed Fischer was intrigued about double lane roundabouts. Heavy through movement a problem. Do we recognize right of way for those already in circle? Fischer is looking for input on overcoming these issues from anybody who has experience etc. Rob Burchfield says he's heard drivers figure it out, but is not sure what the learning curve is. Lt Renskers wanted to know who has right of way in roundabout and who lost it in accidents. There didn't appear to be a consensus.

Non-Agenda Items

Ed Chastain brought up 1-head signal systems, wanted to know if anything has been seen

nationally. He saw in Arizona. It's been heard about but not much beyond that. Ed Fischer said he's seen a 4-head signal that functioned as a 5-head protected/permissive signal.

Ali Eghtedari asked for input on activists in Multnomah County who have started a petitioning effort to get wheel chair signing on bike lanes because sidewalks not always working due to obstacles on sidewalk like poles. They want the signing because they are getting ticketed. Bob Morast and Ed Chastain both agreed it's already legal to use bike lanes in state law/vehicle code. Eghtedari said the activists still want it marked. Chastain asked if GaryLudeke has any on Coburg Road. Ludeke said he didn't know of any such signs, but will check on it (southbound on Coburg Road where the old fire station is).

Ed Fischer noted Steve Wilson's term is over but he is willing to stay on. ODOT needs to formalize the new term since it expired last August.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:55 am

Next Meeting will be held on July 21, 2000 at 9:00 a.m. at Marion County Public Works, 5155 Silverton Road, Salem Oregon.

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