



## National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

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1 **TECHNICAL COMMITTEE:** Edit Committee

2 **STATUS/DATE OF ACTION:**

3 **Task Force Drafts:** 11/23/10, 01/26/11, 04/12/11

4 **Tech Committee Approval: Edit on 06/22/11**

5 **Transmittal to Sponsors: April 2011**

6 **Council Approval: 06/23/2011**

7 **TOPIC: Traffic Control Device Definition**

8 **SUMMARY:** The traffic control device definition was initially defined in the 1942  
9 MUTCD as “all signs, signals, markings and devices placed or erected by authority of a public  
10 body or official having jurisdiction, for the purpose of regulating, warning or guiding traffic”.

11 This definition was retained in the 1948, 1961, 1971 Manual definitions and the  
12 Introduction to the 1978 and 1988 Manuals.. The 2000 Manual established the definition as a  
13 **Standard** and defined as: “**a sign, signal, marking, or other device used to regulate, warn, or**  
14 **guide traffic, placed on, over, or adjacent to a street, highway, pedestrian facility, or bicycle**  
15 **path by authority of a public agency having jurisdiction”.**

16 The 2003 MUTCD replaced the “bicycle path” with “shared-use path” . The 2009  
17 MUTCD modified the definition by revising the text to address private roads so the definition  
18 now reads as: “**a sign. Signal, marking, or other device used to regulate, warn, or guide**  
19 **traffic, placed on, over, or adjacent to a street, highway, private road open to public travel,**  
20 **pedestrian facility, or shared-use path by authority of a public agency or official having**  
21 **jurisdiction, or , in the case of a private road open to public travel, by authority of the**  
22 **private owner or private official having jurisdiction.”**

23 There has been extensive discussion on what “other devices” included in the MUTCD  
24 are to be considered as traffic control devices. In a limited number of cases, it has been  
25 determined in the MUTCD text that the specific item, although mentioned in the Manual, is not a  
26 traffic control device. Attempts to segregate other devices into either being a traffic control  
27 device or not being a traffic control device has not been successful. There is general agreement  
28 on a selective number of other devices mentioned in the Manual that they are not traffic control  
29 devices. It was decided that a more global definition was needed to encompass the existing  
30 devices, recognize future technological developments and provide a basis interpretation of the  
31 device status.

32 **DISCUSSION:**

33 The revised definition is shown below with the following explanation of the  
34 recommended revisions:

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 35 | 1. Signs, signals, markings,                                      | <b>Channelizing devices</b> added at the request of the |
| 36 | <u>channelizing devices</u>                                       | Markings Tech Comm and concurred in by the              |
| 37 |   | majority of the Edit Committee.                         |
| 38 | 2. other devices  | Other words such as means, methods, measures            |
| 39 |   | have also been considered but rejected.                 |
| 40 | 3. <u>primary purpose of</u>                                      | States the purpose of the device or other measure       |
| 41 | <u>communicating</u>  |   |
| 42 | 4. regulatory, warning, or guidance                               | Editorial change to maintain the correct structure of   |
| 43 | message to <del>traffic</del> <u>road user</u>                    | the sentence. Revised to road user=person vs.           |
| 44 |   | traffic=conveyance.                                     |
| 45 | <del>5. placed on, over or adjacent</del>                         | Deleted as unnecessary since placement does not         |
| 46 |   | define a traffic control device.                        |
| 47 | <del>6. street</del>  | Deleted defined under highway                           |
| 48 | 7. highway, pedestrian facility,                                  | Bikeway replaces shared-use path                        |
| 49 | <u>bikeway</u> , or private road open                             |   |
| 50 | to public travel  |   |
| 51 | 8. <u>that uses colors, shapes, symbols</u>                       | Added to cover the method of communication and          |
| 52 | <u>words, sounds or tactile information.</u>                      | expanded to cover sound and feel because of ADA         |
| 53 |   | provisions and future technological advances.           |
| 54 | <del>9. by authority of a public agency or</del>                  | Deleted since this authority is covered in              |
| 55 | <del>official having jurisdiction, or in the</del>                | Section 1A.08.  |
| 56 | <del>case of a private road open to public</del>                  |   |
| 57 | <del>travel, by authority of the private owner</del>              |   |
| 58 | <del>or private official having jurisdiction</del>                |   |
| 59 | 10. <u>Infrastructure elements that restrict</u>                  | Added to clarify infrastructure items that are not      |
| 60 | <u>the road user's travel path or vehicle</u>                     | considered to be traffic control devices and to         |
| 61 | <u>speeds, such as curbs, speed humps,</u>                        | provide a basis for interpretation of similar items     |
| 62 | <u>and other</u>  | added to the Manual in the future.                      |
| 63 | <u>raised roadway surfaces, are not traffic control devices.</u>  |   |
| 64 |   |   |
| 65 | 11. <u>Operational devices associated with the application</u>    | Added to clarify operational                            |
| 66 | <u>of traffic control strategies and traffic control devices,</u> | devices that are not traffic                            |
| 67 | <u>such as in-vehicle electronics, fencing, roadway lighting,</u> | control devices and to provide                          |
| 68 | <u>barriers, and attenuation devices are shown in the Manual</u>  | a basis for interpretation of                           |
| 69 | <u>for convenience but their design, application, and usage</u>   | similar items added to the                              |

70 are not specified in the Manual since they are not traffic Manual in the future.  
71 control devices.

72  
73  
74 **RECOMMENDED MUTCD PROVISIONS/REVISIONS:**

75 It is recommended that the following revisions shown in **red** to the

76  
77 **Manual Introduction**

78  
79 **Standard:**

80 ⊕ Traffic Control Devices shall be defined as all signs, signals, markings,  
81 channelizing devices and or other devices that use colors, shapes, symbols,  
82 words, sounds and/or tactile information for the primary purpose of  
83 communicating a ~~used to~~ regulatory, warning, or guidance message to road  
84 users, placed on, over, or adjacent to a street, on a highway, pedestrian  
85 facility, bikeway, pathway, or private road open to public travel. (see  
86 definition in Section 1A.13) by authority of a public agency or official having  
87 jurisdiction, or, in the case of a private road, by authority of the private  
88 owner or private official having jurisdiction.——

89 And Section 1A.13 Definitions of Headings, Words and Phrases in this Manual

90 238. Traffic Control Device- a sign, signal, marking, channelizing device or other  
91 devices that use colors, shapes, symbols, words, sounds and/or tactile information  
92 for the primary purpose of communicating a ~~used to~~ regulatory, warning, or  
93 guidance message to roadusers traffic, placed on, over, or adjacent to a street, on a  
94 highway, ~~private road open to public travel~~, pedestrian facility, or ~~shared-use path~~  
95 bikeway, pathway or private road open to public travel. by authority of a public  
96 agency or official having jurisdiction, or, in the case of a private road open to public  
97 travel, by authority of the private owner or private official having jurisdiction.  
98 Infrastructure elements that restrict the road user's travel paths or vehicle speeds,  
99 such as curbs, speed humps, and other raised roadway surfaces, are not traffic  
100 control devices. Operational devices associated with the application of traffic  
101 control strategies such as in-vehicle electronics, fencing, roadway lighting, barriers,  
102 and attenuators are shown in the Manual for convenience but their design,  
103 application, and usage are not specified since they are not traffic control devices.