

NCUTCD PEDESTRIAN TASK FORCE

January 7, 2004 Meeting

The NCUTCD Pedestrian Task Force was created at the January 2003 NCUTCD meeting in Savannah, GA. The Task Force is made up of representatives of each Technical Committee, plus some other interested parties, such as the Access Board and ITE Pedestrian/Bicycle Council. The purpose is to provide a forum for discussing potential pedestrian issues for the MUTCD. Those items that are deemed worthy of further discussion are then assigned to the Technical Committee(s) most responsible. The Task Force can also help to coordinate actions between two or more Technical Committees.

The second Task Force meeting took place on Wednesday evening, January 7, 2004, at the Crystal Hilton Hotel in Crystal City, VA. There were 22 attendees, including representatives from all the Technical Committees.

The primary issue carried over from the June meeting was questions regarding the MUTCD current pedestrian walking speed default value of 4.0 fps. Mr. LaPlante reported on the history of the inclusion of this value in the MUTCD and the results of more recent walking speed studies. Most of these studies suggest that the 4.0 fps speed is close to 50th percentile of all crossing pedestrians. The 15th percentile is roughly 3.5 fps and the 5th percentile is closer to 3.0 fps.

[Subsequent to this meeting, a subcommittee of the Signals Technical Committee presented a two-fold pedestrian walking speed proposal for the MUTCD of 3.5 fps for calculating the pedestrian clearance interval and 3.0 fps for calculating the total pedestrian crossing time. This conforms to the current direction of the US Access Board on this issue.]

On a closely related matter, Kay Fitzpatrick, a principal investigator for the Texas Transportation Institute, gave a short presentation on their new joint TCRP/NCHRP research project on midblock pedestrian crossings. This study is designed to recommend selected engineering treatments to improve pedestrian safety at midblock locations, as well as any necessary modifications to the MUTCD pedestrian signal warrants. As a part of this study, their initial research on pedestrian walking speeds to date tends to corroborate the previously described information. They will be collecting further data on midblock pedestrian crossing speeds as their study proceeds.

New issues brought before the Task Force included a question on whether posting a Pedestrian Crossing Prohibition sign at a signalized intersection should be a Guidance or a Standard, as opposed its current designation of an Option.

This item was referred to both the Signal and Regulatory/Warning Sign Technical Committees.

A related issue involved visually impaired pedestrians at these prohibited pedestrian crossing locations that are not able to see the posted signs. It was suggested that various barrier or channelizing devices (such as edging treatments, fencing or landscaping) could be used for this function, similar to the pedestrian channelizing devices found in the Temporary Traffic Control Chapter. This issue was assigned to the Markings Technical Committee for possible inclusion in their Section on Barrier and Channelization Devices.

The following items were also briefly discussed before referring them to the appropriate Technical Committees: (1) the abrupt ending of pedestrian crossing intervals under priority preemption programs (for the Signal Technical Committee); (2) the use of untested pedestrian crossing protection devices at light rail crossing to be considered as Guidance instead of an Option (for the Railroad Technical Committee); and (3) confusion with the placement of Pedestrian Prohibition signing (for the Regulatory/Warning Signs Technical Committee).

The next meeting of this Task Force is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 23, 2004 at 5 pm in Juneau, AL. Interim conversations of the Task Force will be held electronically. Any one wanting to be a participant should contact John LaPlante (jlaplante@tylin.com) to be added to the Task Force e-mail list-serve.