



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 25, 2002

Mr. Greg Blonder
120 Woodland Avenue
Summit, NJ 07901

Dear Mr. Blonder:

Thank you for your December 17, 2001, letter requesting a change in the Federal standards for pavement markings. Federal Highway Administrator Mary E. Peters has asked me to reply to your letter.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD) is the national standard that governs the design, application, and placement of traffic control devices in all jurisdictions nationwide. The 2000 edition of the MUTCD is published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on the website <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov> and you are encouraged to review it there, especially Part 3, which deals with pavement markings. The angled arrow being used by the New Jersey Highway Authority in some of the merge situations on their facilities is shown in Figure 3B-20, as item "f. Lane Reduction Arrow." There is currently no provision in the MUTCD for "angled" longitudinal lane lines such as you have suggested. Because there has been no experimentation or research to evaluate such angled lane lines, there is no basis on which to make a change to the NMTCD at this time. For reference purposes, we have assigned your request for a change the following number and title: "3-153 (C)--Angled Markings." Please refer to this number in any future correspondence on this subject.

Providing for improved safety conditions on the Nation's streets and highways is an extremely important goal, and we at the FHWA are always interested in new ideas that might help achieve the goal. Experimentation with new traffic control devices is encouraged so that their utility and effectiveness can be properly evaluated. I am enclosing an excerpt from the NWTCD, specifically Section IA.10, which addresses the experimentation process. If the New Jersey Highway Authority, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, or any other public jurisdiction or private toll road authority would like to experiment with your idea of an angled lane line for merge areas, they should submit an official request for approval of experimentation to the FHWA, as called for in Section 1 A.10. Upon receipt of such a request with the necessary information, we will be happy to review the request and consider granting experimentation approval.

Thank you again for your letter, and we look forward to hearing further from any jurisdictions that would like to experiment with your idea. Meanwhile, if there is any question, please call Mr. Scott Wainwright at 202-366-0857. Your interest in improving traffic safety is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Christine M.
Program Manager, Operations
Director, ITS Joint Program Office

Support:

Provisions of this Manual are based upon the concept that effective traffic control depends upon both appropriate application of the devices and reasonable enforcement of the regulations.

Section 1A.09 Engineering Study and Engineering Judgment

Standard:

This Manual describes the application of traffic control devices, but shall not be a legal requirement for their installation.

Guidance:

The decision to use a particular device at a particular location should be made on the basis of either an engineering study or the application of engineering judgment. Thus, while this Manual provides Standards, Guidance, and Options for design and application of traffic control devices, this Manual should not be considered a substitute for engineering judgment.

Engineering judgment should be exercised in the selection and application of traffic control devices, as well as in the location and design of the roads and streets that the devices complement. Jurisdictions with responsibility for traffic control that do not have engineers on their staffs, should seek engineering, assistance from others, such as the State transportation agency, their county, a nearby large city, or a traffic engineering consultant.

Section 1A.10 Interpretations, Experimentations, and Changes

Standard:

Design, application, and placement of traffic control devices other than those adopted in this Manual shall be prohibited unless the provisions of this Section are

followed.

Support:

Continuing advances in technology will produce changes in the highway, vehicle, and road user proficiency; therefore, portions of the system of traffic control devices in this Manual will require updating. In addition, unique situations often arise for device applications that might require interpretation or clarification of this Manual. It is important to have a procedure for recognizing these developments and for introducing, new ideas and modifications into the system.

Guidance:

Requests for any interpretation, permission to experiment, or change should be sent to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Office of Transportation Operations, 400 Seventh Street SW, HOTO, Washington, DC 20590.

Support:

An interpretation includes a consideration of the application and operation of standard traffic control devices, official meanings of standard traffic control devices, or the variations from standard device designs.

Guidance:

Requests for an interpretation of this Manual should contain the following information:

- A. A concise statement of the interpretation being sought-
- B. A description of the condition that provoked the need for a revised interpretation;
- C. Any illustration that would be helpful to understand the request; and
- D. Any supporting research data that is pertinent to the item to be interpreted.

Support:

Requests to experiment include consideration of testing or evaluating a new traffic control device, 's application or manner of use, or a provision specifically described in this Manual.

A request for permission to experiment will be considered only when submitted by the public agency or private toll facility responsible for the operation of the road or street on which the experiment is to take place.

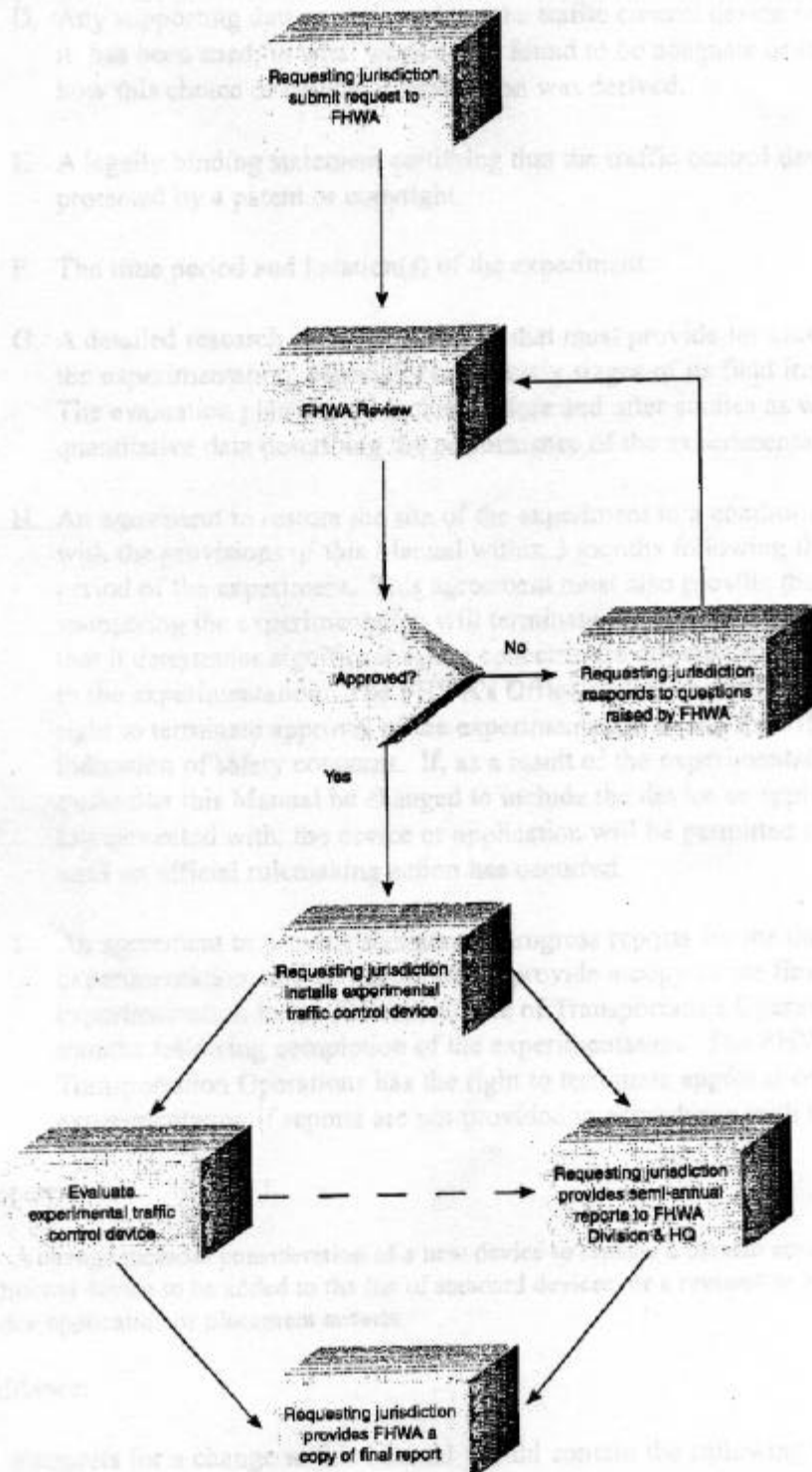
A diagram indicating the process for experimenting with traffic control devices is shown in Figure 1A-1.

Guidance:

The request for permission to experiment should contain the following:

- A. A statement indicating the nature of the problem.
- B. A description of the proposed change to the traffic control device or application of the traffic control device, how it was developed, the manner in which it deviates from the standard, and how it is expected to be an improvement over existing standards.

Figure 1A-1. Typical Process for Requesting and Conducting Experimentations for New Traffic Control Devices



- C. Any illustration that would be helpful to understand the traffic control device or use of the traffic control device.
- D. Any supporting data explaining how the traffic control device was developed it has been tried, in what ways it was found to be adequate or inadequate, and how this choice of device or application was derived.
- E. A legally binding statement certifying that the traffic control device is not protected by a patent or copyright.
- F. The time period and location(s) of the experiment.
- G. A detailed research or evaluation plan that must provide for close monitoring of the experimentation, especially in the early stages of its field implementation. The evaluation plan should include before and after studies as well as quantitative data describing the performance of the experimental device.
- H. An agreement to restore the site of the experiment to a condition that complies with the provisions of this Manual within 3 months following the end of the time period of the experiment. This agreement must also provide that the agency sponsoring the experimentation will terminate the experimentation at any time that it determines significant safety concerns are directly or indirectly attributable to the experimentation. The FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations has the right to terminate approval of the experimentation at any time if there is an indication of safety concerns. If, as a result of the experimentation, a request is made that this Manual be changed to include the device or application being experimented with, the device or application will be permitted to remain in place until an official rulemaking, action has occurred.
- I. An agreement to provide semiannual progress reports for the duration of the experimentation, and an agreement to provide a copy of the final results of the experimentation to the FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations within 3 months following completion of the experimentation. The FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations has the right to terminate approval of the experimentation if reports are not provided in accordance with this schedule.

Support:

A change includes consideration of a new device to replace a present standard device, an additional device to be added to the list of standard devices, or a revision to a traffic control device application or placement criteria.

Guidance:

Requests for a change to this Manual should contain the following information:

ary E. Peters
FHWA Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
(Nassif Building)
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

December 17, 2001

Dear Administrator Peters,

I am writing to you with a simple request- please reconsider the federal standard that all lane markers be parallel and co-linear. As you know, lane mergers (whether from the left or right or in toll booths) represent a point of increased driver confusion and are a nexus of accidents. These problems can often be traced to the abrupt and often unannounced nature of the lane shift, as well as some uncertainty regarding the proper shift direction. I believe these lane mergers should be marked with "angled" pavement markers, which will be distinctive, unique to this need, effective, and of modest cost. Please review the enclosed correspondence and positive opinion from the Chief Engineer of the New Jersey Highway Authority, but having watched three near accidents and one collision in the last month caused by a poorly marked lane merger, I urge a rapid solution.

Thank you for your assistance and attention.


Greg Blonder
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encl:

NJHA letter
NJHA note to Chairman Gravino

April 5, 2001

Commissioner Ron Gravino
New Jersey Highway Authority

Dear Ron-

New Jersey's roads are among the busiest in the nation, and as such, owe its drivers the safest and simplest traffic environment incorporating the best possible engineering design. One area deserving improvement is the orderly merging of lanes. This note suggests a simple, inexpensive and effective solution to the lane-merging problem.

Typically, a lane merger is unannounced, leading to a last-minute flurry of brake lights and honking as each car tries to claim its place in the one remaining aisle. Lane mergers occur at toll booths, along highways, and unfortunately, from both the left and right side, and even in the middle of a three lane highway. At best a sign announces a lane merger, but these signs are often overlooked or are misleading. Occasionally, a merger is indicated by a series of short, painted lane markers, but these markers are not unique in their meaning, and in any case do not indicate the direction of merger.

A better solution is shown below. Mergers would be indicated by a series of angled painted lane markers, the angles indicating the merger direction. Standard lane painting trucks could be modified to swing the paint nozzle slightly back and forth, simply and inexpensively creating the angled dividing lines.

New Jersey is known for leading the country in adopting or inventing many safe driving innovations. We could once again lead by implementing the angled, lane-merger dividing lines throughout the state, saving lives and money.

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