

National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices Bicycle Technical Committee Meeting of January 7-8, 2009

Minutes prepared by John S. Allen (substituting for Secretary James Mackay)

January 7 session -- attendance

Members: John Allen (acting secretary), John Ciccarelli, Shawn Dikes, Cindy Engelhart, David Gleason, Michael Jackson, Dwight Kingsbury, John LaPlante (vice chair), Richard Moeur (chair), Tim Oliver, Theo Petritsch, John Schubert, Bill Schultheiss, Ron Van Houten

Guests: Keri Caffrey, Bruce Friedman, Kit Keller, Joe Stafford

The meeting was convened at 1:05 PM EST.

Approval of June 2008 Minutes

We consider the docket submittal to be the minutes, as secretary Mackay was not present and the docket submittal was pretty much the entire agenda. Also, Moeur took chair's notes. Both of these are available on the BTC website. Therefore there was no formal vote on the minutes.

Membership

At the June meeting in Mobile, Mike Colety was accepted as a member of the BTC. The Saturday session in Mobile was the longest in NCUTCD history, from 8AM to 6PM.

Membership issues: ratio is currently 14 government members, 8 non-government according to Bob Garrett. Moeur counts 13 and 9. All NCUTCD committees must maintain a minimum of 50% government membership per the bylaws. Members should attend 2 meetings per year. Missing three consecutive meetings is grounds for removal from a technical committee. Most committees have trouble making a quorum in January, but our problem is in June.

Chair must approve all prospective members. Criteria; get along with others, commitment and participation, professional background, credentials. BTC recruitment is somewhat "on hold" due to anticipated travel issues for prospective members. Financial restrictions are an issue, and many people come at their own expense.

Announcements

After the Friday general session, there is to be a discussion on the future of NCUTCD.

(Update: Gene Hawkins has convened a working group - no action yet.)

The Research Committee will meet at the Turner-Fairbank Lab at 5:30 on Thursday. LaPlante will attend. *(report?)*

Experimental updates

Hari Kalla of the FHWA gave experimental approval to the Portland bike box experiment generally based on our criteria, but we haven't heard anything since June. Jennifer Dill of Portland State University and her staff have been contracted to do the experimental evaluation. John Allen has video and photos of Portland bike boxes, which he will share with the BTC after editing them. We need more bike box studies before developing a proposal.

We hope to get a good experiment on colored pavements and enhanced bike lane markings from San Francisco once the injunction is lifted. We need to test the elements of design separately, as these have significant cost and operational impacts.

We have no update from Mackay on his bicycle signal experiment. (report?)

Petritsch: St. Petersburg study of separated path in right of way is questionable due to problems with experimental procedure.

Addressing the pace of innovation

John Ciccarelli – current pace of innovation is 10 times faster than our pace of proposal development due to interest in improving bicycling and adapting non-US practice. Several cities are just going ahead with installations without evaluation. Allen, Schubert, Ciccarelli visited New York City to see some of these installations (separated 1-way paths on a 1-way street, colored bike lanes, etc.)

Ciccarelli showed a PowerPoint presentation about these issues. Allen or Ciccarelli may also post studies and reports from the 1970s, when some of these ideas were first suggested.

Question: what is the BTC going to do about this? There is a need for additional discussion & guidance, and coordination with the NCUTCD Pedestrian Task Force. The current BTC project list doesn't correspond with what is hottest in the advocacy or technical community. Also, other documents, such as the the ITE innovative bicycle treatments report and the recent NCHRP Report 500 volume 18 have been used to try to do “end runs” around the MUTCD.

The BTC needs to address prioritization of research and proposal development. Installation of facilities in urban areas is getting ahead of the MUTCD process and being driven by advocacy, not data. We at NCUTCD are being perceived as hostile. That hurts our credibility.

Some issues are simple and don't need research. Example: something that doesn't directly affect operations or safety, such as new guide signs.

Can we standardize things that are complex, such as the 9th Avenue facility in New York City? The group noted that many of the New York City treatments are intended to address extraordinary urban driving & parking behavior, could cause serious problems if installed on two-way streets, and may not be appropriate for other environments.

Project managers in highway sections don't have research money. It is in the research or planning sections. The people working on projects may not have the research money or know that it exists.

An international scan team sponsored by AASHTO and FHWA will travel to Europe in May 2009. Engelhart, Mackay, and Moeur are traveling from this committee. (Update: Moeur had to resign from the tour at request of his employer.)

Specific issues:

- “Protected” or “buffered” bike lanes (better term may be “barrier-separated”?)
- Bike Boxes
- Perceived vs. actual safety

John Allen: We see a progression from the concept of orderly traffic with rules of the road, to the idea of accommodating bicyclists who can't or won't follow them, and "safety in numbers," to the concept of the streets as a playground.

Should the BTC be a clearinghouse for information on proposed devices / treatments, or is there another group (ITE? APBP?) that should fulfill this role?

NCUTCD & BTC could try outreach to professionals to offer technical assistance on these issues, and to raise awareness of NCUTCD's role in improving US traffic control. We can't commit to always providing expert review due to workload and liability, but will try to help when we can. If FHWA asks, we definitely try to make an effort.

Update on the next MUTCD and AASHTO guide

Bruce Friedman from the FHWA MUTCD Team addressed the BTC. FHWA received 1925 letters containing 15200 comments on the draft MUTCD issued in January 2008, and is on target to do rulemaking in second half of 2009. This could be either a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Amendment (SNPA), or a Final Rule leading into a new edition of the MUTCD, but it's not known yet. An SNPA would delay then next edition a couple of years. Comments on Part 9 were generally very favorable. Comments on the shared-lane marking were generally on details, not the basic concept. FHWA will give the BTC a list of comments specifically directed to bicycle issues. (Update: The BTC provided commentary and responses to FHWA on these comments in February 2009)

Jennifer Toole of Toole Design Group gave an update on the rewrite of the AASHTO Guide for Bicycle Facilities. Moeur and Kingsbury from the BTC are on the NCHRP panel reviewing the draft, and several other BTC members are on the consultant team developing the Guide. The first draft was mostly text, with only a few placeholder figures. The NCHRP panel will see a second draft, with graphics, in spring 2009. The current draft is nearly triple the length of the previous (1999) edition. Revisions to the AASHTO guide and MUTCD will need coordination; it may be good if the MUTCD is ahead of the AASHTO Guide.

There were discussions of details of the several examples of graphics which Toole showed. The third draft is anticipated to be available for review by the NCHRP panel and selected professionals (including AASHTO committees and the BTC) in mid-2009. Mr. Moeur requested from Toole a list of any figures in Part 9 that might conflict with proposed new AASHTO Guide figures, along with suggested changes.

The BTC adjourned for the day at 4:55 PM to make room for the NCUTCD Pedestrian Task Force.

January 8 session -- attendance

Members: John Allen (acting secretary), John Ciccarelli, Shawn Dikes, Cindy Engelhart, David Gleason, Michael Jackson, Dwight Kingsbury, John LaPlante (vice chair), Richard Moeur (chair), Tim Oliver, Theo Petritsch, John Schubert, Ron Van Houten

Guests: Keri Caffrey, Andy Clarke, Steve Elkinton, Bruce Friedman, Rachel Garren, Kit Keller, Joel McCarroll, Don Meeker, Jeff Springer

Don Meeker presentation

Don Meeker gave a presentation on his proposals for revising the design of signs and markings in Part 9 of the MUTCD.

For the benefit of Meeker and guests, Bruce Friedman walked the group through the timetable of the MUTCD update process. Proposed items were sent to FHWA until January 2007. The NPA was issued on Jan. 2, 2008. The comment deadline was July 31, 2008, but comments were received through November 2008. Now FHWA is in the analysis process. We then go to either a final rule or a SNPA (see Wednesday discussion). The MUTCD is currently on a 5 year update cycle. The deadline for adding items to the current draft is long past, and so there is probably no rush to do research and develop new proposals. However, if there's a SNPA, we have only this meeting and the June meeting to submit anything new. - but FHWA has indicated that issuing a SNPA is unlikely. Any new proposals from the BTC would have to follow the NCUTCD process and obtain concurrence from other committees as well.

Questions about Meeker's proposal had to do with specifics of the proposed designs, and whether redesigns are needed. The process of changing or fixing the MUTCD is arduous, and has to be vetted by several levels of NCUTCD & FHWA. Going back to section 1A.02 of the MUTCD and reviewing the five fundamental qualities of a traffic control device may be useful. Performing detailed discussions & analyses and creating multiple iterations of designs takes time, but can result in best overall proposals. Aesthetics are worth something, but less important than comprehension and safety. (Update: The BTC agreed to move forward with suggested new designs for the MI-9 US Bicycle Route marker. The BTC and AASHTO US Bike Route Task Force ranked these designs, and the proposal is now over at GMITC for possible action by that committee.)

No snowmobiles sign

The Regulatory and Warning Sign Technical Committee asked the BTC if we concur with a new No Snowmobiles sign, and to add it to Part 9 as well as Part 2. This would be the fifth selective exclusion sign in part 9. Petritsch moved to accept the sign. Laplante seconded. All voted in favor except Engelhart, who explained that she has seen a placard of no motorized vehicles followed by other plaques for different types and is concerned that ones not included will be assumed to be allowed.

For information: Allen has photos and a discussion of a shared-use path used for snowmobiling in winter at

http://john-s-allen.com/galleries/franconia/phototour/Winter_photos/index.html

US vs. SI units

The Board asked each technical committee to vote on their preferred system for showing dimensions in the MUTCD. The current MUTCD uses metric (actually System(?) International) units, with US (formerly British) customary (also known as "English" units) in parentheses. Three options were offered:

- 1) SI with US in parentheses.
- 2) SI only
- 3) US with SI in parentheses

Discussion: All 50 states have rejected metric but it is important for comparison with foreign documents. The goal of using parentheses is to avoid having to look everything up in a table or do calculations. Use decimal US rather than inches? Yes, that is permitted. Soft conversion is to be permitted. 12 ft lane for example converts as 3.6 meters to avoid multiple decimal places.

The BTC voted to endorse #3.

Priorities, revising BTC to-do list

The BTC returned to the priority list discussion from Wednesday. A long discussion ensued about revisions to the BTC priority list (also see comments from yesterday's session). A couple of highlights:

- Criticality of need (safety and behavior) isn't the same as political pressure.
- This is a safety issue because non-conforming devices are being installed whether we take action or not.
- Some items are more politically urgent than technically urgent.

A revised priority list was developed. Several items still need ranking and assignment of a lead person. New ranking criteria were added for interest in installation/use, need for research, and availability of research. The list will be distributed to the BTC for lead assignments and re-ranking. John Schubert, Michael Jackson, and others will draft outreach materials to go to key organizations and BTC website. Mr. Jackson also offered to develop a proposal on bicycle service signs, which is one of the "easier" items on the list.

Website & e-list: We're still having problems with the Topica list. APBP will look into hosting a new BTC mailing list. Richard Moeur will look into setting up a new ncutcdbtc.org website domain linked to ncutcd.org.

Next Meeting: The next NCUTCD meeting will be from Thursday, June 18 to Saturday, June 20, 2009 (note the day change!) in Manchester, NH right after the AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering and AASHTO Subcommittee on Operations joint meeting. Make hotel reservations early - check the NCUTCD website for updates.

The BTC adjourned on Thursday at 6:45 PM.

Action items before June 2009:

- Provide feedback to FHWA on Part 9 docket comments (Moeur & others)
- Send out survey on BTC priorities (Schultheiss, Van Houten)
- Set up BTC outreach (Schubert & co.)
- Send out project list for assignees & prioritization (Moeur)
- Bike Service Signing - proposal for review (Jackson)
- Set up ncutdbtc.org domain (Moeur)
- Set up new BTC e-list (Keller, Ciccarelli, Moeur)
- Work on revised M1-9 US Bicycle Route marker design (Moeur & group)
- List of Part 9 figures needing revision based on AASHTO Guide (Schultheiss, Kingsbury)