

California MUTCD 2026 (Draft)

(FHWA's National MUTCD 2023 - As Amended for use in California)



The National MUTCD 2023 is published by Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) under 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 655, Subpart F. On December 19, 2023, a Final Rule adopting the National MUTCD 2023 was published in the Federal Register with an effective date of January 18, 2024. States must adopt the National MUTCD as their legal State standard for traffic control devices within two years from the effective date.

Caltrans began the process to review National MUTCD 2023 for adoption in California by soliciting CA MUTCD practitioners statewide to form Subject Matter Expert (SME) Workgroups based on the individual Parts of the MUTCD.

This document has been prepared by Caltrans as an initial draft to revise current California MUTCD to be in substantial conformance with FHWA's National MUTCD 2023 (11th Edition). This document was developed pursuant to SME Workgroup members review of their respective MUTCD part in the weekly/bi-weekly meetings, when comparing the new National MUTCD 2023 with California revised contents of the National MUTCD 2009 (10th Edition) in the current CA MUTCD 2014 Revision 8. The SME Workgroup meeting reviews and discussions focused on assessing potential impacts of adopting these National MUTCD 2023 changes in California and provided comments and recommendations to Caltrans, which were used by Caltrans to finalize this draft document.

This draft document is now being shared with the traffic control device practitioners in California for review and open to the public to provide comments. All comments received will be discussed with the respective SME Workgroup members for resolution and response, as appropriate, and will be used to prepare the final draft. The final draft will then be prepared as an agenda item for the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) meeting (public hearing) and made open to public for review and comment, using CTCDC established process and in compliance with California Vehicle Code (CVC) 21400 provisions.

This document combines the National MUTCD 2023 and current California MUTCD 2014 Revision 8 (effective January 11, 2024). Though every effort has been made by Caltrans to ensure accuracy of this document, the inherent variances between National MUTCD and California MUTCD, along with moving of contents and reorganization undertaken by FHWA in the National MUTCD 2023, there may be unintentional errors or omissions in this document or some contents may have been overlooked.

The official versions of the National MUTCD 2023 and California MUTCD 2014 Revision 8 are available on the following websites:

- National MUTCD 2023 - <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>
- California MUTCD 2014 Revision 8 - <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/safety-programs/camutcd>

This document uses the current California MUTCD format, which is similar to the National MUTCD format. It incorporates National MUTCD in its entirety and explicitly shows which portions thereof are applicable or not applicable in California as follows:

- **Unedited black text** - The unedited National MUTCD text is shown in "Times New Roman" font and black color
- **Strikethrough black text** - Text portions of the National MUTCD content that are not applicable in California are shown with a strikethrough of the black text and a blue margin line on the right side.
- **Blue text** - The California text additions, including new paragraphs, and enhancements are incorporated into the combined document at appropriate locations and shown in "Arial Narrow" font and blue color with a blue margin line on the right side.
- **California topics with no corresponding National MUTCD section** – Sections are given a number that begins with number 101 and increases in sequence, followed with a "(CA)" to indicate that this is a California created section.

PART 7

TRAFFIC CONTROL FOR SCHOOL AREAS

CHAPTER 7A. GENERAL

Section 7A.01 Introduction

Support:

- 01 Part 7 sets forth basic principles and prescribes standards for the design, application, installation, and maintenance of all traffic control devices (including signs, signals, and markings) and other controls (including adult crossing guards) for the special pedestrian conditions in school areas.

Section 7A.02 School Route Plans and School Crossings

Guidance:

- 01 *A school route plan for each school serving elementary to high school students should be prepared in order to develop uniformity in the use of school area traffic controls and to serve as the basis for a school traffic control plan for each school.*
- 02 *The school route plan, developed in a systematic manner by the school, law enforcement, and traffic officials responsible for school pedestrian safety, should consist of a map (see Figure 7A-1) showing streets, the school, existing traffic controls, established school walk routes, and established school crossings.*
- 03 *Bicycle use as a mode of transportation, as applicable, should also be considered if students biking to and from school are not allowed to use the sidewalks along the pedestrian route.*
- 04 *The type(s) of school area traffic control devices used, either warning or regulatory, should be related to the volume and speed of vehicular traffic, street width, and the number and age of the students using the crossing.*
- 05 *School area traffic control devices should be included in a school traffic control plan.*

Support:

- 05a *The words “School Pedestrians”, “Children”, and “Students” are used interchangeably and could include student bicyclists for the purpose of determining appropriate cross protection measures.*
- 06 *To establish a safer route to and from school for schoolchildren, the application of planning criterion for school walk routes might make it necessary for children to walk an indirect route to an established school crossing located where there is existing traffic control and to avoid the use of a direct crossing where there is no existing traffic control.*
- 07 *The frequency of gaps in the traffic stream that are sufficient for student crossing is different at each crossing location. When the delay between the occurrences of adequate gaps becomes excessive, students might become impatient and endanger themselves by attempting to cross the street during an inadequate gap. In these instances, the creation of sufficient gaps needs to be considered to accommodate the crossing demand.*

Guidance:

- 08 *School walk routes should be planned to take advantage of existing traffic controls.*
- 09 *The following factors should be considered when determining the feasibility of requiring children to walk a longer distance to a crossing with existing traffic control:*
- A. The availability of adequate sidewalks or other pedestrian walkways to and from the location with existing control,*
 - B. The number of students using the crossing,*
 - C. The age levels of the students using the crossing, and*
 - D. The total extra walking distance.*

Support:

- 10 *A School Crossing signal warrant is provided in Section 4C.06.*
- 11 *Engineering and traffic studies will determine the appropriate measures to be developed at school crossings. The devices and treatments described herein are for use in school zones and do not preclude use of other devices and treatments described elsewhere in this document. Types of school pedestrian measures that can be considered can include:*
- A. Warning signs and markings.*

- B. School speed limits.
- C. Intersection stop signs.
- D. Flashing yellow beacons.
- E. Traffic signals.
- F. Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons.
- G. Remove visibility obstructions.
- H. School Safety Patrol.
- I. Adult Crossing Guard.
- J. Pedestrian separation structures.
- K. Pedestrian walkways along the roadway.
- L. Pedestrian walkways separated from the roadway.
- M. Parking controls and curb-use zones.

Support:

- 12 Refer to CVC 21373 for school board request for traffic control devices.
- 13 Upon request of the local school district, responsible traffic authorities investigate all locations along the school route and recommend appropriate traffic control measures. Refer to CVC 21373.
- 14 The following references from the California Vehicle Code relate to traffic controls for school areas:
 - A. Section 377 – Limit Line.
 - B. Section 627 – Engineering and Traffic Survey.
 - C. Section 21102 – Local Authority to Close Streets.
 - D. Section 21368 – Crosswalks Near Schools.
 - E. Section 21372 – Guidelines for Traffic Control Devices Near Schools.
 - F. Section 21373 – School Board Request for Traffic Control Devices.
 - G. Section 21458 – Curb Markings.
 - H. Section 21949 through 21971 – Pedestrians' Rights and Duties.
 - I. Section 22350 – Basic Speed Law.
 - J. Section 22352 – Prima Facie Speed Limits.
 - K. Section 22358.4 – Decrease of Local Limits Near Schools or Senior Centers.
 - L. Section 22504 – Unincorporated Area Parking; School Bus Stops.
 - M. Section 40802 – Speed Traps.
 - N. Section 42200 – Disposition by Cities and Other Local Entities.
 - O. Section 42201 – Disposition by County.