State of California

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CALIFORNIA TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting
May 13, 2021

Committee Members in Attendance:
David Fleisch, Chair
Robert Bronkall, Vice-Chair
Pratyush Bhatia
Lt. Noah Hawkins
Bryan Jones
Marianne Kim
Monica Kress-Wooster
Xavier Maltese
Mike Sallaberry

Alternate Members in Attendance:
Zoubir Ouadah

Committee Staff:
Johnny Bhullar, Executive Secretary
Hasib Mohabbat, Transportation Engineer

Presenters:
Diane Dostalek, PE, Caltrans District 5
Jonathan Howard, Caltrans District 5 Traffic Operations
Regina McDoniels, Community Outreach Enforcement Section, Enforcement Division, California Air Resources Board

Public Comment:
Steve Pyburn, FHWA MUTCD Liaison for California

ORGANIZATION ITEMS

1. Introduction

Chair Fleisch opened the meeting, held via Zoom, at 9:01 a.m.

The committee, staff, and audience introduced themselves.

2. Membership

Chair Fleisch stated that the CTCDC still needs a member to represent the League of Cities for Southern California. Mr. Bhullar reported that as of two weeks ago, they had said that the League of Cities would offer a nomination soon.

Chair Fleisch noted that a page on the website lists the Committee members and Alternate members. Any updates should be emailed to Mr. Bhullar.

3. Approval of Minutes of the November 5, 2020 Meeting

MOTION: Vice-Chair Bronkall moved to approve the November 5, 2020 California Traffic Control Devices Committee Meeting Minutes as reported. Mr. Sallaberry seconded. The Motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

5. Items under Experimentation

There were no items under experimentation.

AGENDA ITEMS

6. <u>Public Hearing</u>

Information Items

21-01: Request for approval of bike path memorial sign

Mr. Bhullar introduced the item. He explained that bike paths are not among the categories that Caltrans has established for memorial signs. A resolution is needed to formally acknowledge the category.

Mr. Sallaberry suggested adding a statement naming **bikeways** to the CA MUTCD that matches the wording for freeways.

Mr. Bhullar stated that staff would draft a segment and seek formal approval from the Committee at the next meeting.

21-02: Request for approval to modify existing "NO IDLING" sign

Ms. Kress-Wooster introduced the item. Caltrans had received a request for the sign from the Air Resources Board.

Regina McDoniels, representing the Community Outreach Enforcement Section in the Enforcement Division of the California Air Resources Board, gave a presentation explaining the proposal. It was a request for the addition of a phone number to existing Caltrans-approved **NO IDLING** road signs.

The request stemmed from AB 617, a law enacted in 2017 that requires that the Air Resources Board and local air districts work together to come up with a plan to reduce air pollution and improve public health in communities that have been disproportionately burdened by air pollution. Currently 14 communities across California have been identified and selected as environmental justice communities. Each has a steering committee comprised of local stakeholders and members of the community. They assess their major air pollution concerns and propose strategies to the Air Resources Board and the air districts.

The air district is responsible for developing a Community Emissions Reduction Plan. One of the major concerns in many of the communities is the harmful emissions from idling diesel trucks and buses. An increase in enforcement of illegal truck idling has been requested.

Communities in southeast L.A. and south central Fresno have requested that a contact number be added to the **NO IDLING** signs. It would allow for swifter enforcement action from the appropriate authorities.

The Air Resources Board requested flexibility in the contact number that is added for the benefit of each separate community.

Ms. McDoniels displayed an image of the proposed sign.

Questions and Discussion

Vice-Chair Bronkall asked what the enforcement process would look like, were someone to call one of the numbers. Ms. McDoniels explained that the enforcement agency would go to the location of the report to try to observe the idling truck. It is challenging – trucks may idle for 5-10 minutes and be gone by the time the enforcement agency arrives. The idea is that a direct number to local law enforcement or the air district could shorten the hour to hour-and-a-half time it takes for someone to arrive.

Ms. Kress-Wooster asked if using the signs in sensitive-receptor locations (i.e., homes and schools) would mean that with low speeds in these areas, people would be able to read the signs. Ms. McDoniels answered that the Air Resources Board is still receiving feedback from the communities of where they notice the idling. The idea is to place the signs there.

Mr. Sallaberry noted that the symbol on the sign looks like no buses or trucks are allowed. Was there any possibility of adding a black cloud or something like that? Ms. McDoniels answered that signs for school idling have the black cloud. To simplify the process as much as possible, the Air Resources Board was only requesting a space at the bottom for that phone number. However, she liked the idea of a black cloud.

Public Comment

Steve Pyburn, FHWA MUTCD Liaison for California, stated that phone numbers are prohibited on signs except in very limited cases of parking lots and low-speed roads. Some text should be added to 2B.46, Paragraph 62, which describes the use of the sign. Mr. Pyburn added that unfortunately, symbols cannot be modified without a Request to Experiment approved by the FHWA team in Washington.

Questions and Discussion

Ms. Kim commented that at AAA, they have a campaign on distracted driving. Would the expectation be that drivers seeing cars idling on the side would call these numbers, potentially encouraging dialing while driving? Vice-Chair Bronkall suspected that these signs are for use by pedestrians and residents in the area. Passing motorists probably wouldn't have sufficient time to observe that a vehicle has been idling for any length of time. Ms. McDoniels stressed that the Air Resource Board would not want to encourage distracted driving at all. The majority of sign locations are parking lots, schools, houses, warehouses – places where trucks and buses can park and idle. The locations will not be busy roads with cars speeding past.

Mr. Bhullar stated that in Section 2A.06 there is a guidance and an option. The guidance recommends not including telephone numbers of more than four characters, with the intent that the sign should be in a location where it can be read by a pedestrian or someone in a parking area.

Ms. Kress-Wooster asked for confirmation that adding text to a sign does not require approval or experimentation from the FHWA. Mr. Bhullar confirmed.

The group compared 2A.06 and 2B.46. Ms. Kress-Wooster observed that the proposal was consistent with the paragraphs. The issue concerned making it clear that when the signs are installed, they need to be in compliance with paragraphs 15 and 16.

Mr. Pyburn stated that the paragraph in 2A.06 that prohibits telephone numbers was #14. Mr. Bhullar was correct: they are allowed in guidance under #16. He reiterated his suggestion regarding 2B.46: just add a reference back to compliance with 2A.06, which is the placement of the signs. It will allow the signs to be placed at the low-speed locations. The likelihood of conflict was low, but was possible.

Vice-Chair Bronkall felt the sign to be fairly ineffective because of time delays in getting enforcement people to the locations.

> **MOTION**: Vice-Chair Bronkall moved to allow an optional phone number to be added to the sign (Section 2B.46); the optional language would direct back to Section 2A.06 for when the phone number could be added to the sign. Mr. Bhatia seconded. The Motion passed unanimously.

Request for Word Message Signs Approval

21-03: Request for approval of two new word message signs

Ms. Kress-Wooster introduced the item.

Diane Dostalek, PE, Caltrans District 5, presented the item. The request was to install non-standard word message signs to replace existing non-standard word message signs. The location is US 101 in Santa Barbara County between Santa Barbara and Buellton. There is little to no shoulder available for bicycles, who are forced to share the lane with high-speed traffic for a short period of time. Ms. Dostalek showed photos of the two locations: the Arroyo Quemada Bridge and the Gaviota tunnel. The ability of drivers to see the bicyclists is limited in both locations.

Signs were installed in 2013 at the bridge and tunnel in conjunction with beacons that flash when a bicyclist rides over a detector loop in the shoulder. The beacons can also be activated by a push button.

In January 2021 there was a collision in which a vehicle hit three bicyclists riding together across the Arroyo Quemada Bridge. There were no fatalities, but Caltrans has opened an investigation to see if additional improvements are possible. It was noted in the investigation that the FHWA MUTCD allowed the **When Flashing** phrase, but it is not allowed in the California MUTCD. Also, the current message does not adequately convey to the motorist what action to take if the beacon is flashing.

Unless the CTCDC is willing to allow the continued use of the **When Flashing** phrase at these locations, and the sign can be modified to give drivers a clear message of what to do

when the beacon is flashing, Caltrans was asking for CTCDC approval to replace the **When Flashing** phrase with a **Watch For** phrase. Caltrans was proposing to make the signs fluorescent yellow-green.

Caltrans' second request concerns the wording on the small sign directing the bicyclist to push the button to activate the flashers. Ms. Dostalek explained the changes.

Questions and Discussion

Mr. Sallaberry suggested using a bike symbol rather than the word **bike**. If all the drivers see is a bike symbol and flashing lights, that might be enough to get their attention. Ms. Dostalek asked if the symbol can be used with any word message that Caltrans wants. Mr. Bhullar responded that the request would need to be made to the FHWA. Mr. Pyburn agreed: new combinations of words and symbols do require a Request for Experimentation.

Vice-Chair Bronkall expressed concern with the signs' lack of direction that motorists should be taking when the lights are flashing. Should they merge to the left or slow down because of the narrow shoulder? That verbiage could be added to the existing sign: **When flashing, Bicyclists on bridge. Merge left or slow down.**

Ms. Kress-Wooster supported the proposal to stop using **When Flashing**. There is the risk that someone pushes the button but the lights do not go on – we should not rely on the electronics to work in order for the motorists to be careful. To the point about exact instructions, her concern was that drivers need to use due care depending on the situation. If a bicyclist is using the lane and is not over to the side, slowing will not be enough.

Chair Fleisch commented that the change in wording to **Watch For** is the action expected of the driver.

Mr. Bhullar explained why all instances of the phrase **When Flashing** had been removed from the manual: because of the possibility of electronic failure, that meaning could have become opposite to what was intended.

Mr. Sallaberry suggested that in the spirit of having very legible signs at high speeds, and having existing approved sign designs, a W11-1-type warning sign could be used with a placard underneath saying **On Bridge** or **In Tunnel** with the flashing lights. He was not in favor of using wordy signs to warn of potentially hazardous situations.

Lt. Hawkins agreed. The more simplified message would have a greater impact on the desired behavior.

Mr. Pyburn said that given the high speed of these roadways and the risks involved, the conspicuity of the larger rectangular sign (displayed on the meeting's Zoom screen) has much value. If the bicycle sign is used, it should be on both sides of the roadway for visibility, supplemented with the beacons and plaque.

Mr. Pyburn explained that the bike symbol W11-1 with a plaque underneath would not require an Experiment. Putting the bike symbol on the rectangular sign would require an Experiment, but the word message sign proposed on the rectangular sign would not require an experiment.

Mr. Bhullar asked if the W11-1 sign had a larger size that might be more visible. Chair Fleisch was familiar with the two locations, and commented that there is a lot going on there,

and the signs even without the lights flashing do get the driver's attention. The request to add the words **Watch For** made good sense to him.

Mr. Bhullar pointed out that Section 2A-15 of the CA MUTCD deals with increasing the conspicuity of signs through a series of sequences.

Ms. Kress-Wooster noted that **Watch For** conveys the proper message to drivers – that bicyclists may or may not be on the bridge.

Vice-Chair Bronkall stated that he preferred the existing signage, as it provides better education to motorists: there is a hazard of a pedestrian or a bicyclist in the tunnel or on the bridge that should be looked for, versus the due prudence that should be exercised at all times by motorists. He felt that the removal of **Watch For** is moving us backwards because we are trying to reduce liability, but at the same time we are increasing risk to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Ms. Kress-Wooster commented that bicyclists may not always stop to push the button to activate the flashers. However, there are detector loops in the shoulder in advance of the bridge that also activate the flashers. She noted that in the collision report that involved the three bicyclists, it was not clear if the flashers were still going by the time the bicyclists reached the end of the bridge; this could be a concern.

Public Comment

Jonathan Howard, Caltrans District 5 Traffic Operations, suggested that the wording **Watch for Bicyclists in Lane** might be a more direct way of addressing what driver behavior should be.

Zoubir Ouadah, San Diego County Traffic Engineer, felt that it was time for the CTCDC to reconsider the removal of **When Flashing**. Electronics are more dependable now. The CTCDC should make it an option and let the local agency choose whether to use it.

Committee Questions and Discussion

Ms. Dostalek restated the request. Although the request was to change **When Flashing** on the main sign to **Watch For** to be in compliance with the current CA MUTCD, she agreed with the discussion in favor of keeping **When Flashing** and changing the sign to a fluorescent yellow-green. For the smaller bicycle push-button signs, the request was to keep the existing wording as is.

Mr. Bhatia felt that **When Flashing** warns the drivers to look for bicyclists on the bridge in this instance, whereas with **Watch For**, people may not pay as much attention. They are traveling at high speeds. Chair Fleisch responded that the current manual does not allow **When Flashing**.

> **MOTION**: Vice-Chair Bronkall moved to deny the request, and to ask that we bring back a change to allow **When Flashing** to be allowed in the manual.

Mr. Sallaberry commented that during the course of this discussion the group had talked about at least four different sign designs. We have speculated on what is most effective. To have this word-only message sign not require an experiment, where replacement of the word **Bicyclist** by a bike symbol would require an experiment, seemed absurd to him. This all

seemed like a prime opportunity for an experiment. Using an approved sign design would be the cleanest way to go; however, Mr. Sallaberry was not going to second the Motion.

Mr. Jones asked if there was a sense of urgency, or if the Committee could table this item and have Caltrans and FHWA come back with something they both agree on and would like to move forward.

Ms. Kress-Wooster did not feel that the Committee disagrees, and hesitated to postpone in order to wait for a possible beneficial resolution. She did not see anything wrong with the proposal.

> **MOTION**: Mr. Jones moved to accept the proposal, and to ask that we bring back a change to allow **When Flashing** to be allowed in the manual. Mr. Bhatia seconded. The Motion passed with Vice-Chair Bronkall voting to oppose.

Request for Experimentation

21-04: Request for experimentation of regulatory sign for roundabout

Ms. Kress-Wooster introduced the item which concerned extralegal trucks using roundabouts.

Mr. Howard stated that District 5 was actually requesting the CTCDC's guidance regarding existing nonstandard signage located at a roundabout at the junction of Routes 1 and 68 West near Monterey. He described the location which has the problem that larger vehicles such as semis could potentially get stuck in the intersection.

The nonstandard signs in question are located about 100 feet in advance of the roundabout in the Yield lane. The nonstandard symbol tells large vehicles to "take a lap" or use the circle to make a right turn movement. During construction, two trucks had become stuck in the roundabout when using the right-turn bypass.

Since installation of the nonstandard sign, no trucks had become stuck; however, landscaping had also been installed that eliminated the obstruction causing the trailers to become stuck. Still, there was a significant amount of damage to the curbs and landscaping from vehicles off-tracking. There is an additional safety implication because the trailer off-tracks through the pedestrian area.

Some sort of signage is needed. The nonstandard signage is not working effectively.

The District is looking at four options.

- Maintain the existing signage.
- Replace it with black-on-white regulatory signs supplemented with the words **Right Turn**.

  (The first and second options require a Request to Experiment because the symbol is not approved.)

- Replace the signage with a sign that is word text only: **Trucks Use Circle for Turns**.
- Replace the signage with a sign that is word text only: **Trucks Use Left Lane**.

Committee Questions and Discussion

(Vice-Chair Bronkall now conducted the meeting in the absence of Chair Fleisch.)

Mr. Ouadah felt the appropriate sign is probably the R-3 family (in California, the R-61 family). A lane assignment sign could be used. Trucks would notice it because of the low speed at which they are traveling.

Mr. Pyburn stated that FHWA would advocate a word message sign directing trucks around the circle as well as a Request to Experiment for the symbol. He hoped that an agency other than FHWA had requested the sign through the MUTCD Notice for Post-Amendment (NPA) process which is currently underway. In the interim, a word message sign could keep the trucks from off-tracking over the pedestrian area.

Mr. Bhullar noted that Caltrans has added this to one of the comments it is submitting on the NPA.

Ms. Kim was in favor of using both a word message sign and a symbol. There have been no major incidents here, but one could happen at any point.

Ms. Kress-Wooster asked for clarification about the suggestion to use the R-3 sign: was that a **No Right Turn** sign for trucks with the loop sign provided as an alternative? Mr. Ouadah explained that it was the lane assignment signs (in California, the R-61 series): choose the one that best fits the condition and possibly add the **No Trucks** placard to it. It is placed at the approach lane that becomes a right lane as well as a through lane for the roundabout.

Mr. Bhatia asked if the R4-5 sign is also in the MUTCD. Mr. Bhullar confirmed. Mr. Ouadah said it would need to be modified.

> **MOTION**: Mr. Bhatia moved to use a modified R4-5 sign if allowable. Ms. Kress-Wooster seconded.

Mr. Pyburn stated that he would be happy to work with District 5 and/or Mr. Bhullar on the spec. There are a couple of ways to go about this.

Vice-Chair Bronkall noted that it sounded like there may be existing signs within the manual to use without any sort of Committee approval. Mr. Pyburn confirmed.

Mr. Howard added that the right turn movement for larger vehicles is the only legal path they can take. Signage that would explicitly ban the right turn movement may lead to confusion and contribute to trucks taking wrong routes.

Mr. Howard further explained that because of the interchange, Route 68 is only a California legal vehicle route. However, we know that there are larger extralegal vehicles that are accessing the roundabout from the northbound approach. The only legal route they are permitted to take is to connect onto Highway 1 – the freeway. Legally they can only turn right; turning left is not legally permitted for them. Physically they can go around the roundabout, especially making the U-turn movement. District 5's concern was that having a **Trucks No Right Turn** sign at the northbound approach may confuse drivers and lead them to make a true left turn movement, continue on Route 68, and make a U-turn elsewhere.

Vice-Chair Bronkall asked if the Motion on the table satisfied his concerns. Mr. Howard affirmed.

Mr. Ouadah agreed that the **Trucks No Right Turn** sign probably was not the appropriate one. He was leaning more toward the lane assignment sign.

Ms. Kress-Wooster withdrew her second on the Motion, saying that it seemed like there was more work that FHWA and Caltrans could do to come up with an effective option using the existing signs.

Mr. Bhatia felt that a vote was not necessary if FHWA and Caltrans could work together to use some of the existing signs in the MUTCD to come up with the best combination for the sign.

> **MOTION**: Mr. Ouadah moved for the CTCDC to direct Caltrans to work with FHWA to decide upon a sign appropriate for this location based on existing signage in the MUTCD; they would not need to come back to the CTCDC. Mr. Bhatia seconded.

Mr. Howard asked for clarity as to what District 5 should do with the existing non-standard signage in the interim. Mr. Ouadah answered that once District 5 decides what sign they want, they should take out the existing signage and replace it with the new. Ms. Kress-Wooster agreed. Removing the signage without a replacement would be a bigger problem.

> **VOTE**: The Motion passed unanimously.

7. Next Meeting

Vice-Chair Bronkall stated that the next meeting is scheduled for August 12, 2021.

8. Adjourn

Vice-Chair Bronkall adjourned the meeting at 10:47 a.m.