In re Docket FHWA-202-0001

It has come to my attention that in the proposed revision of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the section dealing with four-way stop sign locations have be changed. My comments pertain to section 2B.06, Stop Sign rules, Speed Limit Signs and Plaques in the marked up change proposal of the 2009 edition.)

The criterion for four-way stop sign placement relies on the number of accidents that in a period of time have taken place at intersections governed stop signs in only one direction, or even having no signage at all. The annual number of accidents counted for this would be reduced by more than half, unnecessarily doubling the number of intersections as candidates for this signage. The potential negative effect on the free flow of traffic is obvious.

Furthermore, the proposed re-write of this section would allow for four-way stops to be mandated where pedestrian and bicycle activity seems to warrant this. This seems to imply that pedestrians and cyclists are incapable of observing traffic before safely crossing the intersection.

The implication is that when a vehicle stops at a stop sign, a walker or bicyclist is then entitled to cross in front of the car. This impression may well cause them injury as the motorist cannot be expected to anticipate when a person will decide to start to cross in front of him. Moreover, since other vehicles are waiting at the intersection, there is no certainly that they will all remain stationary while the crossing is made. It would appear that the for-way stop situation does nothing to protect the pedestrian or cyclist and can even occasion their harm.

Furthermore, this proposed rule change devalues the benefit of actual observation by the Traffic Engineer of the intersection is question and substitutes only statistical and even unsubstantiated information to prompt sign installation with no need to actually study the traffic flow involved.

As a driver of motor vehicles for over six decades I am pleased to be able to input my concerns in regard to The Federal Highway Administration’s proposed changes to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. It has been my personal observation that at a four-way stop, all traffic comes to a standstill while motorists try to determine who will go next. There may be intersections where this obstruction and delay does not outweigh other safety concerns, but those factor should be taken into consideration before the signs are put into place.

For these reasons I respectfully submit that whatever other changes to the MUTCD may be appropriate, the criteria for the determination of stop sign placement should be realistic and not perfunctory.

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