Comments RE Docket FHWA-2020-0001

In my 50 years of driving experience, I cannot off the top of my head recall a single instance where a stop sign made any more sense than a yield sign would have made. A stop sign is not a magic wand to create safety. A stop sign is an inanimate sheet of metal in the shape of an octagon, which obligates motorists and cyclists alike to come to a complete stop. It does not force people to yield. It does not force people to look both ways. It does not even force motorists to look away from their infernal smartphones. It does, however, lull people into a false sense of security.

Cyclists hate them. I should know. I did more than my share of cycling as a youth. The difference is that I was taught to obey all traffic laws, and I always did. Nowadays, kids pay no attention to traffic laws. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen cyclists roll right through 4-way stop signs without so much as a glance at whoever is about to hit them. As I understand it, this proposal, or some proposals being made in cities across our nation, seek to lift the requirement that cyclists obey stop signs. This is lunacy! What has become of our nation that so many seek government to create special classes of people?

In my own city, I’ve seen our government misleaders erect stop signs in the middle of a block, where there is no intersection and there is no pedestrian crosswalk. This too is utter lunacy. It’s not about safety. It is “traffic calming” gone about in an entirely wrong way, to so frustrate motorists that they will seek alternate routes.

Also, in my city, a great many stop signs have been erected so far from intersections that a prudent motorist such as me must make two stops. The first is to legally comply with the sign. The second stop is to evaluate traffic from a vantage point where I can actually see the traffic. A yield sign has no such pointless double burden, and still serves the interests of safety.

Every time a motor vehicle must come to a complete stop, it adds wear to the tires (and shed microscopic rubber compound particulates which can cause health problems). A compete stop adds wear to the brakes and brake pads (shedding asbestos which is known to cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma). A complete stop requires an internal combustion engine to produce additional torque, and burn more fuel to accelerate back to normal traveling speeds. Stop signs impose a regulatory burden on drivers, regardless of the time of day or night and regardless of traffic that may not even be present. All of these things add to pollution, and decrease the quality of life for citizens. A yield sign is far preferable, because it does not force a complete stop unless one is appropriate for actual traffic conditions, and because unlike a stop sign, compliance with a yield sign forces a driver to look both ways!

This proposal to rewrite the MUTCD seeks to throw logic to the wind, and allow governments to erect stops signs ad infinitum, absent any rational reason to do so. I’m sure the people who think that motorists are responsible for global warming think that stop signs every few feet of every roadway would somehow make our lives better. I’d have more respect for their opinion if they had a rational or constructive suggestion to offer, but so far, I’ve seen no such thing. All I see is people seeking government to impose their horribly distorted views on other people, and use the power of law enforcement as a tool of tyranny.

If you want to be respected, you must behave in a respectable manner. This proposal is not respectable.