



Public Works Department Transportation Engineering Division

Policy Guidelines for Minor Road Stop Applications

Adopted by the Traffic Advisory Committee
Last Update on **September 30, 2004**

INTRODUCTION:

The Stop sign shall be used where traffic is required to stop except at signalized intersections. A Stop sign is not a “cure-all” and is not a substitute for other traffic control devices. Many times the need for a Stop sign can be eliminated if the sight distance is increased by removing obstructions.

The City of Napa’s policy guideline on minor road stop applications is based on the exact language from California Vehicle Code (CVC) ¹, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) ², and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Traffic Manual ³.

I. General Policy on Traffic Signs

The California Vehicle Code (CVC) provides that “(a) Except as provided in Section 21374 [relating to directional signs for tourists] only those official traffic control devices that conform to the uniform standards and specifications promulgated by the Department of Transportation shall be placed upon a street or highway...” Hence, the City of Napa Public Works Department follows standard professional engineering practices as prescribed in the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Traffic Manual. The Manual has the following provisions, among others, that guide the City's policy and procedures for sign installation:

- A. Excessive use of signs should be avoided.
- B. Signs should be used where warranted by facts and field studies.
- C. No traffic sign or its support shall bear any message that is not essential to traffic control.
- D. Effective traffic control depends not only on appropriate application of devices, but on reasonable enforcement of regulations as well.
- E. Data obtained from traffic engineering studies of physical and traffic related factors should be used in determining where signs are necessary.

¹ State of California 2001 Vehicle Code Through the 2000 Legislative Session

² *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, Millennium Edition, Part 2 - Signs, U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2001.

³ California Department of Transportation *Traffic Manual*, Chapter 4 - Signs, January, 1996

- F. Care should be taken not to install too many signs. A conservative use of regulatory and warning signs is recommended as these signs, if used to excess, tend to lose their effectiveness.

II. Legal Authority for Stop Sign Installation

The California Vehicle Code (CVC) includes the following excerpts regarding local authority on stop signs.

- A. *Local Authority, CVC §21351*: Local authorities in their respective jurisdictions shall place and maintain or cause to be placed and maintained such traffic signs, signals and other traffic control devices upon streets and highways as required hereunder, and may place and maintain or cause to be placed and maintained such appropriate signs, signals and other traffic control devices as may be authorized hereunder or as may be necessary properly to indicate and to carry out the provisions of this code or local traffic ordinances or to warn or guide traffic.
- B. *Stop Signs on Local Highways, CVC §21354*: ...a local authority may designate any highway under its jurisdiction as a through highway and may erect stop signs at entrances thereto or may designate any intersection under its exclusive jurisdiction as a stop intersection and erect stop signs at one or more entrances thereto.
- C. *Stop Signs, CVC §21355*: ...The Department of Transportation and local authorities in their respective jurisdictions may erect stop signs at any location so as to control traffic within an intersection.
- D. *Stop Requirements, CVC §22450(b)*. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a local authority may adopt rules and regulations by ordinance or resolution providing for the placement of a stop sign at any location on a highway under its jurisdiction where the stop sign would enhance traffic safety.

III. Specific Policy on Stop Signs

The Caltrans Traffic Manual provides the following general policies with respect to the installation of Stop signs, which the Public Works Department will uphold:

- A. Stop signs should not be used for speed control.
- B. Stop signs shall not be erected at any entrance to an intersection when such entrance is controlled by an official traffic control signal, nor at any railroad grade crossing which is controlled by automatic signals, gates, or other train-actuated control devices except as provided in *CVC §21355, Stop Signs*. The conflicting commands of two types of control devices are confusing.
- C. Where two main highways intersect, the Stop sign(s) should normally be posted on the minor street to stop the lesser flow of traffic. Traffic engineering studies,

however, may justify a decision to install Stop sign(s) on the major street, as at a three-way intersection where safety considerations may justify stopping the greater flow of traffic to permit a left turning movement.

- D. Stop signs may be installed at any highway-rail grade crossing without automatic traffic control devices with two or more trains per day traversing the crossing, which is interpreted as the average crossings per day for a period of one year prior to the installation of the Stop sign.
- E. Portable or part-time Stop signs shall not be used except for emergency purposes.

IV. Minor Road Stop Installation Warrants

The MUTCD recommends that the decision to install minor road stop control should be based on an engineering study. The Public Works Department will conduct or sponsor an engineering study to determine the appropriateness of minor road stop control based on the Caltrans warrants described and modified below.

The Caltrans Traffic Manual specifies that because the Stop sign causes a substantial inconvenience to motorists, it should only be used where warranted. A Stop sign may be warranted at an intersection where one or more of the following conditions exist:

- A. On the less important road at its intersection with a main road where accident history justifies the placement of Stop signs (e.g. as indicated by 3 or more reported accidents within a 12-month period of a type susceptible of correction by a two-way stop installation. Such accidents include right- and left-turn collisions as well as right-angle collisions.)**
- B. On a county road or city street with its intersection with a State Highway
- C. At the intersection with two main highways. The highway traffic to be stopped depends on approach speeds, volumes, and turning movements
- D. On a street entering a legally established through highway or streets and local arterials or collector streets**
- E. On a minor street where the safe approach speed to the intersection is less than 16 km/h (10mph)
- F. At an unsignalized intersection in a signalized area
- G. At other intersections where a combination of high speed, restricted view and accident record indicates a need for control by the Stop sign
- H. At minor local-street approaches with lower volumes where assignment of right-of-way would potentially improve the traffic safety at the intersection of two local streets**