



## **Real traffic: Developers, owners and operators need to comply with MUTCD regulations**

December 04, 2009 - Owners Developers & Managers

As a traffic planning and engineering firm, our staff is involved in myriad development projects ranging from large scale retail sites to sports arenas. The characteristics of each site varies significantly but they always include access roadways, parking lots and other vehicular and pedestrian elements. Developers, owners and managers of these sites are often unaware that these features are governed by federal standards for traffic control. Specifically, the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, commonly referred to as the MUTCD, is a federal (and state) standard and serves as a fundamental guide for traffic engineers.

Somewhat recent revisions to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, as well as the Code of Federal Regulations, dictate the MUTCD "shall be recognized as the national standard for all traffic control devices installed on any street, highway, or bicycle trail open to public travel." While "open to public travel" does not mean a private driveway of a one family home, it does specifically relate to roadway and parking networks usually associated with large scale development. Oftentimes these private spaces that are open to the public do not conform to the standards set forth in the MUTCD. Common examples of nonconformance that we see in private spaces involve simple elements such as the color of lane markings, the width of these markings and the spacing between them. Others relate to signs that control traffic - whether a stop sign is the proper size and has the proper lettering, if a yield sign is placed at the right height, and whether the sign has a reflective coating. Even traffic signals and whether they are warranted at a certain location fall under the jurisdiction of the MUTCD.

It is important to ensure that certain elements fall within this compliance. As an example, simple items such as the word "STOP" written on pavement without the accompanying "STOP" sign can be confusing to motorist but are not obvious to an owner or operator. Making sure that a stop sign does not conflict with a traffic signal and that markings are appropriately colored (a stop bar should be white, not yellow) are all common elements that should be in compliance.

Developers, owners and operators should take stock of their current inventory and review projects currently underway to make sure they are in compliance with MUTCD regulations. Proper compliance will promote public safety, avoid potential litigation and improve overall site circulation.

Erich Arcement, P.E., PTOE, is senior vice president for Sam Schwartz Engineering, New York, N.Y.