Background

The decision where and when to use stop control at an intersection is one that is regulated nationally by the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices or MUTCD, which defines the standards for use of all traffic control devices. There is specific guidance regarding the use of “Multiway Stop Applications” in the 2003 MUTCD. Until recently, extensive NJDOT review and approval was required for all proposed stop sign installations, including multiway stop conditions.

Under the recently revised statute [N.J.S.A. 39:4-8b(1)], a municipality may without approval of the Commissioner of Transportation “designate any intersection as a stop or yield intersection and erect appropriate signs” on any street fully under municipal jurisdiction. It also allows for designation of a stop intersection within 500 feet of a school, playground or youth recreation facility. It further requires the stop street be contiguous to the facility.

However, this enabling legislation does not supersede the provisions of the MUTCD, which still apply. What the legislation does is provide for a more streamlined review by NJDOT and it recognizes that engineering judgment can and should be exercised in assessing conditions unique to particular locations; specifically those near schools and other facilities where children are more likely to be present as pedestrians.

Requirements

According to the new statute, there are specific steps required for implementation of multiway stops as follows:

1. Conduct an engineering study, which must include traffic counts and crash data. Speed data is optional. Other criteria to be considered are the need for additional control for left turns or vehicle-pedestrian conflicts.

2. If the multiway stop is recommended, the Municipal Engineer shall, under their seal as a licensed professional engineer, certify to the Township Council that the multiway stop has been approved.

3. The traffic ordinance establishing the stop condition is then submitted (along with the letter report and certification) to the Township Council for approval.

4. Once the ordinance is approved by Township Council, the Township Clerk must within 30 days forward the following documents to NJDOT by certified mail, return receipt:

A. Two certified copies of the ordinance

B. The Municipal Engineer's signed and sealed certification.

C. The Municipal Engineer's letter report summarizing the investigation

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D. Traffic counts

E. Accident data

F. Speed monitoring data, if applicable

G. Plan showing proposed signage and markings in conformance with MUTCD 2B.04

5. NJDOT has 90 days to review, unless the location is within the 500 ft. school or youth facility criteria. In this zone, the Township can install signs and markings immediately on passage of the ordinance (including temporary advance warning signs). For other locations, we must wait for NJDOT approval. If no action is taken by NJDOT within the 90 days, the ordinance is considered approved.

Recommendations

It is my recommendation that multiway stop applications be considered for only those intersections within the area of special consideration that has been established by the Legislature; i.e. within 500 ft. of a school, playground or youth recreational facility. Accordingly, enclosed is the proposed procedure for use when multiway stop intersections are requested.

This procedure has been developed to formalize the steps to be taken in determining when multiway stops may be implemented on municipal streets.

Definitions:

"School" - a public or private school, serving children grades Kindergarten through 12.
"Playground" – an outdoor recreation area for children that is open to the public, typically associated with a school or within a public park.

"Youth recreation facility" - a place regularly used by children ages 5 through 17 for recreational purposes. It does not have to be for the exclusive use of this age group, e.g. public parks, YMCA, Clary Anderson arena, public library, etc.

Steps:

I. Is the intersection within the area of special consideration (500 ft. radius) surrounding a school, playground or youth recreation facility?

A. If it is, then go to step II.

B. If it is not, no further consideration shall be given.

II. Is the street to which stop control is to be applied contiguous to the school, playground or youth recreation facility?

A. If it is, then go to step III.

B. If it is not, no further consideration shall be given.

III. Collect and summarize crash data and traffic counts. Per MUTCD, the location should meet at least one of the following conditions.

A. Average approaching volume (both directions) on the major street exceeds 300 vehicles per hour for any eight hours of an average day

B. The combined vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle approaching volume (both directions) on the minor street averages at least 200 units per hour for the same 8 hours, with an average delay to minor street vehicular traffic of at least 30 seconds per vehicle during the highest hour,

C. 5 or more crashes susceptible to correction by a multiway stop have occurred over a 12

month period.

D. Criteria A, B or C are each satisfied to 80 percent of the value.

Other considerations may include the need to control left-turn conflicts; need for control of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts; impaired sight distance at the corners that cannot reasonably be corrected by other means; and intersections of two similar streets where multiway stop control may improve traffic operational characteristics.

IV. The Township Engineer shall prepare a letter report summarizing the findings of the investigation and indicating whether the multiway stop meets the criteria for approval.

V. If the location is approved, the Township Engineer shall certify same to the Township Council and draft the ordinance establishing the new stop condition.