U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.
Washington, DC 20590

December 8, 2008

In Reply Refer To: HOTO-1

Edward L. Fischer, P.E., PTOE
State Traffic Engineer
Oregon Department of Transportation
Traffic Engineering and Operations
355 Capitol Street, NE., 5th Floor
Salem, OR 97301-3871

Dear Mr. Fischer:

Thank you for your August 5 letter requesting approval to use Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) on a blanket basis at uncontrolled pedestrian and school crosswalk locations statewide in Oregon, including State highways and all local jurisdictions' roadways. Your request is made under the provisions of Section 1A.10 of the 2003 edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and our Interim Approval memorandum IA-11 dated July 16.

Your request is approved. Please develop and periodically update a list of all locations where RRFB are installed in Oregon. Local jurisdictions in Oregon who install RRFBs under this Interim Approval should inform your office of such installations so you can maintain a comprehensive list of locations. Your specific approval has been numbered IA-11-12 "RRFB – Oregon statewide." Please reference this number in any future correspondence.

Thank you for your interest in improving pedestrian safety. If we can be of further assistance on this matter, please feel free to contact Mr. Scott Wainwright by e-mail at **scott.wainwright@dot.gov** or by telephone at 202-366-0857.

Sincerely yours,

Hari Kalla
Acting Director, Office of Transportation
Operations

MOVING THE
AMERICAN
ECONOMY

Oregon
Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Department of Transportation
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August 5, 2008

File Code:
TRA 16-06-09-02

Anthony T. Furst
Acting Associate Administrator for Operations
Federal Highway
Administration HOTO Room 3401
400 Seventh Street SW
Washington, DC 20590

RE: MUTCD – Interim Approval for Optional Use of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) [IA-11]

Dear Mr. Furst,

On behalf of all road authorities in the State of Oregon, the Oregon Department of Transportation requests interim approval for the optional use of the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) as warning beacons to supplement standard pedestrian and school crossing warning signs across uncontrolled approaches.

If approved, all installations of the RRFB in Oregon will follow the Conditions of Interim Approval as outlined in FHWA's notice for Interim Approval dated July 16, 2008. ODOT will maintain a record of all locations in the state where RRFB are installed under this Interim Approval.

Sincerely,

for Edward L. Fischer, P.E., PTOE
State Traffic Engineer

Courtesy Copies To:
Phillip Ditzler, FHWA Oregon Division Office
Angela Kargel, ODOT Region 2 Traffic
Sue D'Agnese, ODOT Region 1 Traffic
Sam Sharma, ODOT Region 3 Traffic
Joel McCarroll, ODOT Region 4 Traffic
Tom Kuhlman, ODOT Region 5 Traffic

JG/sa

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Memorandum

Sent via Electronic Mail

Subject: **INFORMATION**: MUTCD – Interim Approval for Optional Use of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (IA-11)

Date: July 16, 2008

From: Anthony T. Furst
Acting Associate Administrator
for Operations

Reply to
Attn. of: HOTO-1

To: Associate Administrators
Chief Counsel
Acting Chief Financial Officer
Directors of Field Services
Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers
Resource Center Director
Division Administrators

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to issue an Interim Approval for the optional use of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) as warning beacons under certain limited conditions. Interim Approval allows interim use, pending official rulemaking, of a new traffic control device, a revision to the application or manner of use of an existing traffic control device, or a provision not specifically described in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Background: The Florida Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the city of St. Petersburg, has requested that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issue an Interim Approval to allow the use of RRFBs as warning beacons to supplement standard pedestrian crossing and school crossing warning signs at crossings across uncontrolled approaches. The RRFB does not meet the current standards for flashing warning beacons as contained in the 2003 edition of the MUTCD, Chapter 4K which requires a warning beacon to be round in shape and either 8 or 12 inches in diameter, to flash at a rate of approximately once per second, and to be located no less than 12 inches outside the nearest edge of the warning sign it supplements. The RRFB uses rectangular-shaped high-intensity LED-based indications, flashes rapidly in a wig-wag "flickering" flash pattern, and is mounted immediately between the crossing sign and the sign's supplemental arrow plaque.

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Research on the RRFB: The city of St. Petersburg has completed experimentation with the RRFB at 18 pedestrian crosswalks across uncontrolled approaches and has submitted their final report. In addition to "before" data, the city collected "after" data at intervals for 1 year at all sites and for 2 years at the first 2 implemented sites. For the first 2 sites, the city collected data for overhead and ground-mounted pedestrian crossing signs supplemented with standard round yellow flashing beacons, for comparison purposes, before the RRFBs were installed. The data show very high rates of motorist "yield to pedestrians" compliance, mostly in the high 80s to close to 100 percent, in comparison to far lower rates (in the 15 to 20 percent range) for standard beacons. The very high yielding rates are sustained even after 2 years in operation, and no identifiable negative effects have been found. The RRFB's very high compliance rates are previously unheard of for any device other than a full traffic signal and a "HAWK" hybrid signal, both of which stop traffic with steady red signal indications. The St. Petersburg data also shows that drivers exhibit yielding behavior much further in advance of the crosswalk with RRFB than with standard round yellow flashing beacons. These data clearly document very successful and impressive positive experience with the RRFBs at crosswalks in that city.

In addition to the St. Petersburg locations, experimentation is underway at 3 sites in Miami-Dade County, FL, 4 sites in Largo, FL, and 2 sites in Las Cruces, NM, and RRFBs are being installed at 3 sites in northern Illinois. Additionally, the District of Columbia has installed RRFBs at one crosswalk and plans to request experimentation with RRFB at several sites. Data from locations other than St. Petersburg is limited but does show results very similar to those found in St. Petersburg. A study of 2 RRFB locations in Miami-Dade County, FL, reported in a TRB paper, found that evasive conflicts between drivers and pedestrians and the percentage of pedestrians trapped in the center of an undivided road because of a non-yielding driver in the second half of the roadway were both significantly reduced to negligible levels. Data so far from the one RRFB site in DC shows driver yielding compliance rates increased from 26 percent to 74 percent after 30 days in operation and advance yielding distances also increased comparable to the St. Petersburg results.

FHWA Evaluation of Results: The Office of Transportation Operations has reviewed the available data and considers the RRFB to be highly successful for the applications tested (uncontrolled crosswalks). The RRFB offers significant potential safety and cost benefits, because it achieves very high rates of compliance at a very low relative cost in comparison to other more restrictive devices that provide comparable results, such as full midblock signalization. The components of RRFB are not proprietary and can be assembled by any jurisdiction with off-the-shelf hardware. The FHWA believes that the RRFB has a low risk of safety or operational concerns. However, because proliferation of RRFBs in the roadway environment to the point that they become ubiquitous could decrease their effectiveness, use of RRFBs should be limited to locations with the most critical safety concerns, such as pedestrian and school crosswalks across uncontrolled approaches, as tested in the experimentation.

At a recent meeting of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the Signals Technical Committee voted to endorse the future inclusion of the RRFB for uncontrolled crosswalks into the MUTCD and recommended that FHWA issue an Interim Approval for RRFB. The FHWA believes this indicates a consensus in the practitioner community in support of optional use of RRFB. This Interim Approval does not create a new mandate compelling installation of RRFB but will allow agencies to install this type of flashing beacon, pending official MUTCD rulemaking, to provide a degree of enhanced pedestrian safety at uncontrolled crosswalks that has been previously unattainable without costly and delay-producing full traffic signalization.

Conditions of Interim Approval: The FHWA will grant Interim Approval for the optional use of the RRFB as a warning beacon to supplement standard pedestrian crossing or school crossing signs at crosswalks across uncontrolled approaches to any jurisdiction that submits a written request to the Office of Transportation Operations. A State may request Interim Approval for all jurisdictions in that State. Jurisdictions using RRFB under this Interim Approval must agree to comply with the technical conditions detailed below, to maintain an inventory list of all locations where the devices are placed, and to comply with Item F at the bottom of Page 1A-6 of the 2003 MUTCD, Section 1A.10 which requires:

> "An agreement to restore the site(s) of the Interim Approval to a condition that complies with the provisions in this Manual within 3 months following the issuance of a Final Rule on this traffic control device. This agreement must also provide that the agency sponsoring the Interim Approval will terminate use of the device or application installed under the Interim Approval at any time that it determines significant safety concerns are directly or indirectly attributable to the device or application. The FHWA's Office of Transportation Operations has the right to terminate the interim approval at any time if there is an indication of safety concerns."

1. General Conditions:

   a. An RRFB shall consist of two rapidly and alternately flashed rectangular yellow indications having LED-array based pulsing light sources, and shall be designed, located, and operated in accordance with the detailed requirements specified below.

   b. The use of RRFBs is optional. However, if an agency opts to use an RRFB under this Interim Approval, the following design and operational requirements shall apply, and shall take precedence over any conflicting provisions of the MUTCD for the approach on which RRFBs are used:

2. Allowable Uses:

a. An RRFB shall only be installed to function as a Warning Beacon (see 2003 MUTCD Section 4K.03).

b. An RRFB shall only be used to supplement a W11-2 (Pedestrian) or S1-1 (School) crossing warning sign with a diagonal downward arrow (W16-7p) plaque, located at or immediately adjacent to a marked crosswalk.

c. An RRFB shall not be used for crosswalks across approaches controlled by YIELD signs, STOP signs, or traffic control signals. This prohibition is not applicable to a crosswalk across the approach to and/or egress from a roundabout.

d. In the event sight distance approaching the crosswalk at which RRFBs are used is less than deemed necessary by the engineer, an additional RRFB may be installed on that approach in advance of the crosswalk, as a Warning Beacon to supplement a W11-2 (Pedestrian) or S1-1 (School) crossing warning sign with an AHEAD: (W16-9p) plaque. This additional RRFB shall be supplemental to and not a replacement for RRFBs at the crosswalk itself.

3. Sign/Beacon Assembly Locations:

a. For any approach on which RRFBs are used, two W11-2 or S1-1 crossing warning signs (each with RRFB and W16-7p plaque) shall be installed at the crosswalk, one on the right-hand side of the roadway and one on the left-hand side of the roadway. On a divided highway, the left-hand side assembly should be installed on the median, if practical, rather than on the far left side of the highway.

b. An RRFB shall not be installed independent of the crossing signs for the approach the RRFB faces. The RRFB shall be installed on the same support as the associated W11-2 (Pedestrian) or S1-1 (School) crossing warning sign and plaque.

4. Beacon Dimensions and Placement in Sign Assembly:

a. Each RRFB shall consist of two rectangular-shaped yellow indications, each with an LED-array based light source. Each RRFB indication shall be a minimum of approximately 5 inches wide by approximately 2 inches high.

b. The two RRFB indications shall be aligned horizontally, with the longer dimension horizontal and with a minimum space between the two indications of approximately seven inches (7 in), measured from inside edge of one indication to inside edge of the other indication.

c. The outside edges of the RRFB indications, including any housings, shall not project beyond the outside edges of the W11-2 or S1-1 sign.

d. As a specific exception to 2003 MUTCD Section 4K.01 guidance, the RRFB shall be located between the bottom of the crossing warning sign and the top of the supplemental downward diagonal arrow plaque (or, in the case of a supplemental advance sign, the AHEAD plaque), rather than 12 inches above or below the sign assembly. (See attached example photo.)

5. Beacon Flashing Requirements:

a. When activated, the two yellow indications in each RRFB shall flash in a rapidly alternating "wig-wag" flashing sequence (left light on, then right light on).

b. As a specific exception to 2003 MUTCD Section 4K.01 requirements for the flash rate of beacons, RRFBs shall use a much faster flash rate. Each of the two yellow indications of an RRFB shall have 70 to 80 periods of flashing per minute and shall have alternating but approximately equal periods of rapid pulsing light emissions and dark operation. During each of its 70 to 80 flashing periods per minute, one of the yellow indications shall emit two rapid pulses of light and the other yellow indication shall emit three rapid pulses of light.

c. The flash rate of each individual yellow indication, as applied over the full on-off sequence of a flashing period of the indication, shall not be between 5 and 30 flashes per second, to avoid frequencies that might cause seizures.

d. The light intensity of the yellow indications shall meet the minimum specifications of Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) standard J595 (Directional Flashing Optical Warning Devices for Authorized Emergency, Maintenance, and Service Vehicles) dated January 2005.

6. Beacon Operation:

a. The RRFB shall be normally dark, shall initiate operation only upon pedestrian actuation, and shall cease operation at a predetermined time after the pedestrian actuation or, with passive detection, after the pedestrian clears the crosswalk.

b. All RRFBs associated with a given crosswalk (including those with an advance crossing sign, if used) shall, when activated, simultaneously commence operation of their alternating rapid flashing indications and shall cease operation simultaneously.

c. If pedestrian pushbuttons (rather than passive detection) are used to actuate the RRFBs, a pedestrian instruction sign with the legend PUSH BUTTON TO TURN ON WARNING LIGHTS should be mounted adjacent to or integral with each pedestrian pushbutton.

d. The duration of a predetermined period of operation of the RRFBs following each actuation should be based on the MUTCD procedures for timing of pedestrian clearance times for pedestrian signals.

e. A small light directed at and visible to pedestrians in the crosswalk may be installed integral to the RRFB or push button to give confirmation that the RRFB is in operation.

7. Other:

a. Except as otherwise provided above, all other provisions of the MUTCD applicable to Warning Beacons shall apply to RRFBs.

Any questions concerning this Interim Approval should be directed to Mr. Scott Wainwright at **scott.wainwright@dot.gov** or by telephone at 202-366-0857.

Example of RRFB with W1-2 sign and W16-7p plaque at crosswalk across uncontrolled approach. [Photo courtesy of City of St. Petersburg, Florida]