

1 **Case Study of an Alternative Merging Sign Design for Temporary Traffic**
2 **Control in Work Zones**

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20
21 **ABSTRACT**

22 Signage plays an important role in work zones to provide guidance to drivers under changed
23 conditions. This study investigated the safety effect of an alternative merge sign configuration in
24 a freeway work zone. In this alternative configuration, the graphical-only lane closed sign from
25 the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) was compared against a
26 MERGE/arrow sign on one side and a RIGHT LANE CLOSED sign on the other side. Although
27 the graphical-only MUTCD signage for work zones has been in use for several years, it is not
28 known if the signage recommended by the MUTCD offers the highest safety for all jurisdictions.
29 The study measured driver behavior characteristics including speeds and open lane occupancies.
30 The measurements were taken at a work zone on Interstate 70 in Missouri. The study found that
31 the open lane occupancy upstream of the merge sign was higher for the test sign in comparison
32 to the MUTCD sign. The occupancy values at different distances between the merge sign and the
33 taper were similar for both signs. The test sign had 11% more traffic in the open lane upstream of
34 the merge sign. In terms of safety, it is desirable for vehicles to occupy the open lane as far
35 upstream from the taper as possible to avoid conflicts due to the lane drop. The analysis of speed
36 characteristics did not reveal substantial differences between the two sign configurations. The
37 85th percentile speeds with the MUTCD sign were only 1 mph and 2 mph lower than the test sign
38 at the merge sign and taper locations, respectively. In considering all the aforementioned
39 performance measures, the alternative sign configuration was not superior, but performed equal
40 to the MUTCD sign configuration.

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42 *A Case Study submitted for publication in the ASCE Journal of Transportation Engineering*

43 **INTRODUCTION**

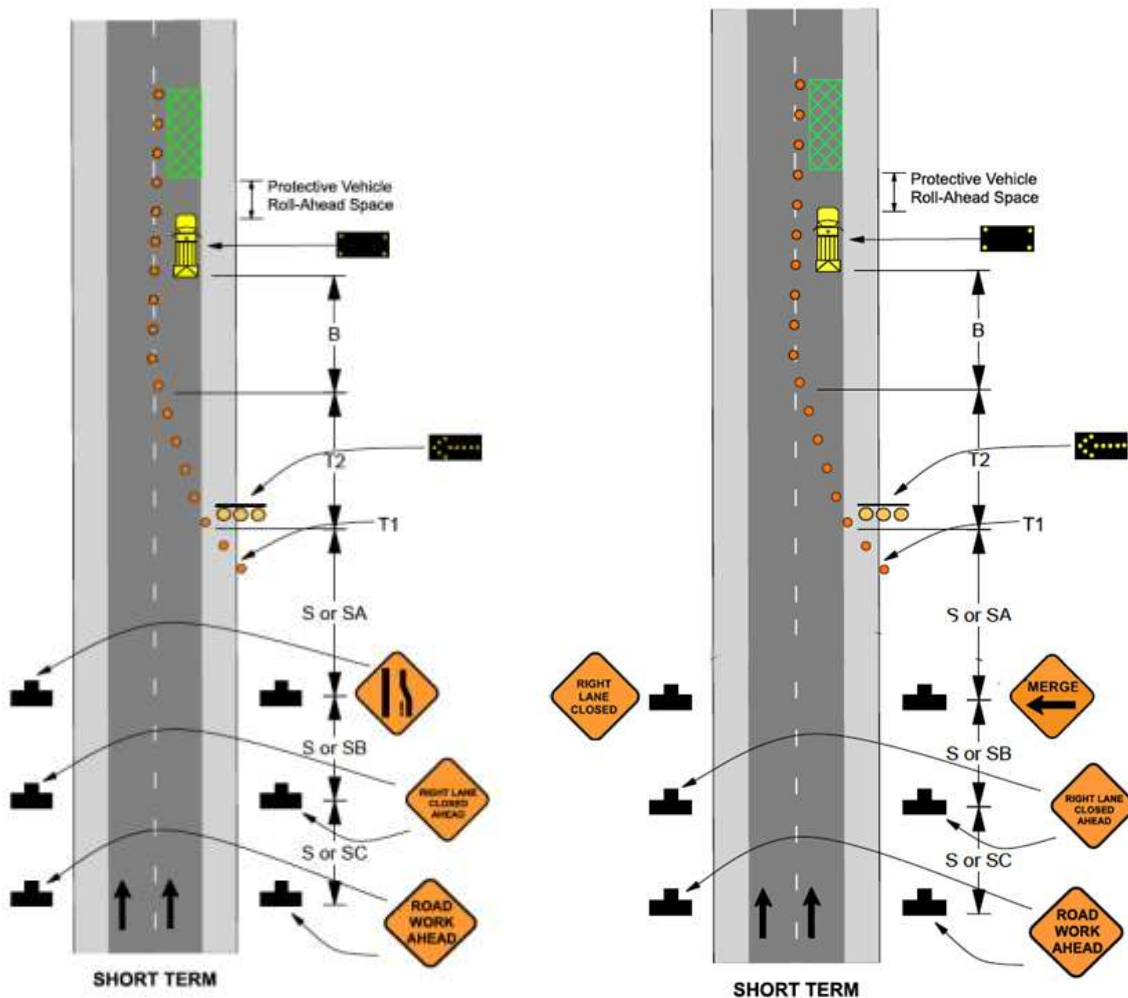
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45 Roadway construction and maintenance activities often involve lane closures that require
46 vehicles to merge from closed lanes. A temporary traffic control (TTC) plan consisting of
47 directions on the type of signage and their locations in a work zone is used to warn and guide
48 drivers through a work zone. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
49 (FHWA 2009) provides guidance on TTC plans for both short-term and long-term work zones.
50 The MUTCD TTC plan used by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) for a
51 freeway work zone is shown in Figure 1(a).

52
53 The signage used in the advance warning area of a work zone provides critical
54 information to drivers such as which lane is closed, when to merge, reduced speed limits, and
55 other information. These types of information are critical to the overall safety of the work zone.
56 One study, by Srinivasan et al. (2008) in Florida showed that approximately 34% of all work
57 zone crashes occurred in the advance warning area of a work zone. In another study, Ishak et al.
58 (2012) found that the advance warning area exhibited the highest crash rates in an entire work
59 zone. Thus, effective signage that provides appropriate guidance in the advance warning area of
60 a work zone is critical for traffic safety. A review of the existing literature did not reveal any
61 studies investigating the effectiveness of different static merge signs in work zones. Studies of
62 alternative signage for non-work zone conditions are also limited. A study conducted by
63 Feldblum (2005) for the Connecticut DOT researched a new static merge sign at lane drops
64 immediately downstream of a signalized intersection. The sign differed from the standard
65 MUTCD graphical lane drop sign (see Figure 1(a)) in that it required alternating merges from
66 both lanes. A rating system was developed based on visual inspection of the speed changes of
67 merging vehicles. A vehicle received a higher rating if it experienced a lower speed change
68 during merging. The study found that the alternating merge sign received a better overall rating
69 from survey respondents than did the MUTCD sign.

70
71 Although the MUTCD TTC signage for work zones has been in use for several years, it is
72 not known if the signage recommended by the MUTCD offers the highest safety for all
73 jurisdictions. Investigating the safety performance of alternative signage in work zones and
74 comparing it with the performance of the MUTCD signage is of value to both transportation
75 agencies and drivers. In this study, one alternative merging sign configuration was investigated
76 and its performance compared with the performance of the standard MUTCD signage. Section
77 6F.24 of the MUTCD recommends using W4-2 sign before the taper to advise approaching
78 drivers of the lane reduction. In the alternative configuration, the MUTCD graphical lane closed
79 sign shown in Figure 1 (a) is replaced with a MERGE/arrow sign on the closed-lane side and a
80 RIGHT LANE CLOSED sign on the other side, as shown in Figure 1(b). In Figure 1, SA, SB,
81 SC, T1, T2, and B refer to distances between signs or taper lengths, and are computed based on
82 the road type, offset, and posted speed. In order to test the new signage in the field, a MUTCD
83 request for experimentation was submitted by MoDOT and approved by FHWA in early 2013.

84
85 To accomplish the study objective of comparing the performance of the MUTCD and the
86 test signage, field studies were conducted at a work zone site on Interstate 70 (I-70) in Missouri.
87 Video monitoring was used to observe vehicle merge locations, and radar guns were used to
88 collect vehicle speeds. The field data was analyzed, and several measures of effectiveness were

89 extracted. These measures included the distribution of traffic in the open and closed lanes at
 90 various distances from the taper; 85th percentile speeds; mean speeds; and speed variance. It is
 91 not atypical in work zone research to test new signage, and other novel traffic control concepts at
 92 a limited number of sites. For example, Beacher et al (2005) field-tested the late merge traffic
 93 control strategy at one site in Virginia, Heaslip et al (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of
 94 portable rumble strips to improve truck safety on a closed course in Kansas, and Sun et al. (2011)
 95 tested portable rumble strips at one work zone location in Missouri.
 96



97 (a) Missouri MUTCD-based

98 (b) Test merge sign

99 **FIGURE 1 Temporary traffic control plan for stationary lane closure on divided highway.**

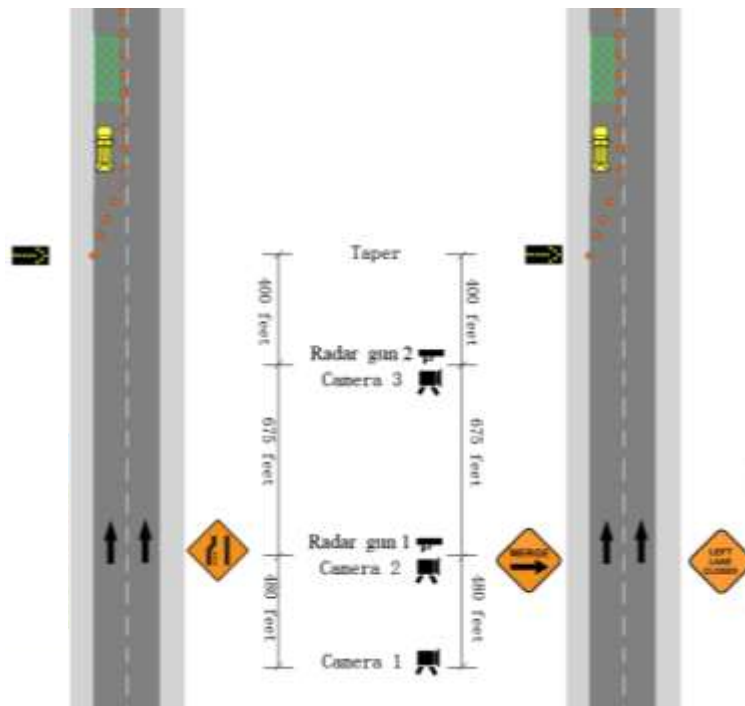
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 101 This paper first explains the field studies conducted to compare the effectiveness of the
 102 new merge sign ('test' sign) and the MUTCD sign. It then presents the methodology used to
 103 analyze the field data, followed by the results of various measures of effectiveness. Conclusions
 104 are then drawn based on the study findings.
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108 **FIELD STUDIES**

109 **Site Description**

110 A short-term work zone involving a left lane closure on a two-lane segment of westbound
111 I-70 near Boonville, MO was tested in this study. The work activity involved patching the bridge
112 deck over the Lamine River. The work zone and temporary traffic control plan was set in place at
113 9:00 am and removed at 3:00 pm. The two data collection periods occurred at the same location
114 and at approximately the same time of day on different days. Data collection occurred between
115 11:30 am and 2:00 pm. Weather conditions were sunny and clear on both days. In accordance
116 with the TTC plan, merge signs were placed 1,000 feet upstream of the taper. The new static text
117 merge sign, (hereafter referred to as the “test sign”), was tested on April 22nd, 2013, Monday; the
118 MUTCD graphical sign was tested on April 25th, 2013, Thursday.

119
120 Figure 2 shows the configuration of the data collection setup. One radar gun was placed
121 at the merge sign, and another radar gun was placed near the taper in order to capture
122 longitudinal speed changes for individual vehicles. Three cameras covered the entire study area,
123 as shown in Figure 2.



124 **FIGURE 2 Data collection setup for MUTCD (left) and Test sign.**

125
126 Camera 1 was located 480 feet upstream of the merge sign, and was raised 20 feet above
127 the ground. This camera captured merge location data to determine where vehicles merged into
128 the open lane. A radar gun and Camera 2 recording the speeds captured by the radar was placed
129 at the merge sign location. The radar gun was positioned so that it would begin recording
130 vehicles from both lanes near the merge sign. The camera coverage was also used to obtain
131 merge location data for locations up to approximately 600 feet downstream of the merge sign. A
132 radar gun capturing speeds at the beginning of the taper was deployed, along with Camera 3 to
133 record its display. This camera coverage was used to obtain merge location data 400 feet
134 upstream from the taper. All three cameras were shooting in the direction towards the taper.

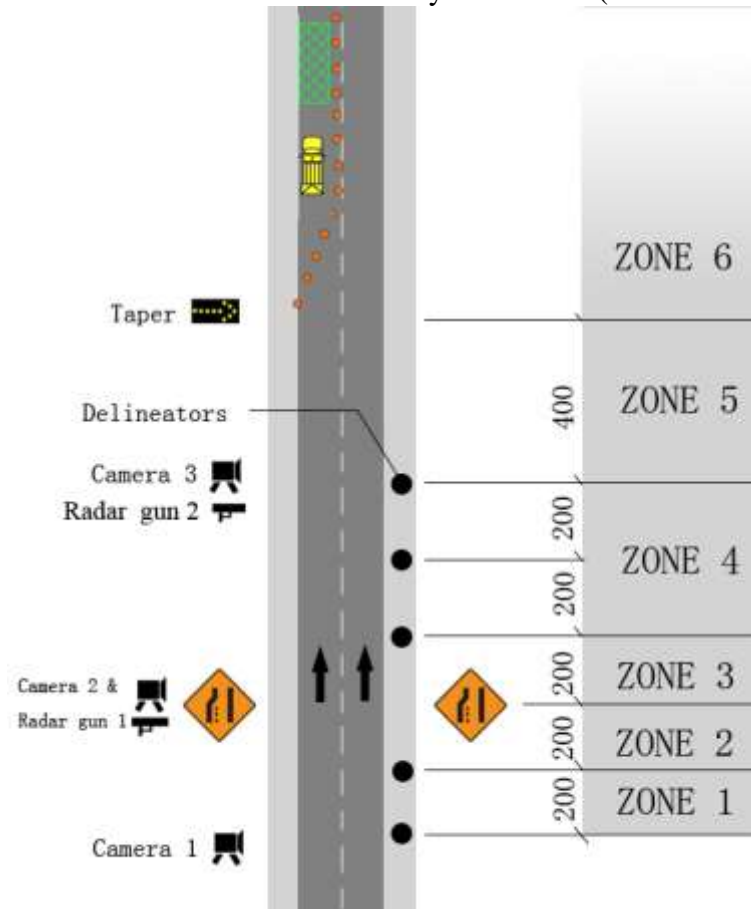
135 Camera clocks were synchronized so that individual vehicle maneuvers could be monitored
136 through the three cameras.

137
138 **METHODOLOGY**

139 **Open Lane Occupancy**

140 Open lane occupancy, defined as the proportion of total traffic in the open lane on a road
141 segment, was computed at segments upstream and downstream of the merge sign. The location
142 of a vehicle merge was recorded if it occurred within any of the three camera views described in
143 the previous section. Every vehicle was tracked individually through the area between Camera 1
144 and the end of the taper, and the area was divided into six zones or segments for analysis. Figure
145 3 shows the six zones that were created. Whenever a vehicle merged from the left lane to the
146 right lane, the zone in which the merging maneuver occurred was recorded.

147 Five delineators were used to identify the six zones in the camera coverage. Delineators
148 were placed at 200 foot intervals for a distance of 400 feet upstream and 600 feet downstream
149 from the merge sign. As shown in Figure 3, Zone 1 was between the two delineators farthest
150 from the merge sign, and Zone 2 was between the delineator just upstream and the merge sign.
151 Zone 3 was the area between the merge sign and the third delineator. Zone 4 covered the distance
152 between the third and fifth delineators, 400 feet upstream of camera 3. Zone 5 included the
153 distance between the fifth delineator and the beginning of the taper. Zone 6 covered the area
154 beyond Zone 5 to the end of the taper. Lane occupancy differences were tested statistically using
155 a standard z test because the differences were normally distributed (Milton and Arnold 2007).



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FIGURE 3 Lane occupancy analysis zones.

158 **Speed-Based Measures**

159 Vehicle speeds were recorded at two locations: at the merge sign, 1,000 feet upstream
 160 from the taper, and 400 feet upstream from the taper. Speed statistics such as mean speed,
 161 standard deviation, and 85th percentile speed were compared statistically between the two
 162 different merge sign configurations. The standard t-test was used for comparing means, and the
 163 F-test was used to compare variances. The magnitude of the difference in mean speeds between
 164 the MUTCD sign and the test sign was tested using an effect size test (Coe 2002). The effect size
 165 test thus complements the t-test. The 85th percentile speed was also calculated to determine
 166 whether vehicles were compliant with speed limits. The 85th percentile speeds across different
 167 merge sign configurations were statistically compared using a percentile test described in Hou et
 168 al. (2012). Speed differential between the merge sign and the beginning of the taper were
 169 calculated for each vehicle. A standard t-test was used to test the statistical difference of the
 170 speed differentials.

171
 172 *Description of Statistical Tests*

173 The various statistical tests used in this study are briefly described below. The two
 174 sample t-test is commonly used for testing the statistical difference in the means of two data sets.
 175 Thus, the t-test can be used to identify differences in the means that are due to randomness.
 176 Assuming the two data sets are independent and are from a normal distribution, the t-test for
 177 unequal variance is presented as:

178 Degrees of freedom:
$$v = \frac{\left(\frac{s_y^2}{n_y} + \frac{s_x^2}{n_x}\right)^2}{\frac{\left(\frac{s_y^2}{n_y}\right)^2}{n_y-1} + \frac{\left(\frac{s_x^2}{n_x}\right)^2}{n_x-1}}$$

179 The test statistic is:
$$t = \frac{\bar{y} - \bar{x}}{\sqrt{\frac{s_y^2}{n_y} + \frac{s_x^2}{n_x}}}$$

180 Reject the null hypothesis if $|t| > t_{v,\alpha/2}$ or p-value $< \alpha/2$

181 where,

182 n is the sample size for the two data sets, x and y α is the user-selected significance level;

183 \bar{y} and \bar{x} are sample means $\bar{y} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_y} y_i}{n_y}$, $\bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_x} x_i}{n_x}$;

184 s_y^2 and s_x^2 are sample variances $s_y^2 = \frac{1}{n_y-1} \sum_{i=1}^{n_y} (y_i - \bar{y})^2$;

185 $t_{v,\alpha/2}$ is the upper critical point of a t distribution.

186
 187 Similar to a t-test, the F-test is used to test the statistical significance of the difference in
 188 variance between two data sets. A large deviation of F from the value of 1.0 signifies that the
 189 difference in variance is significant and not due to randomness.

190
 191 The test statistic is:
$$F = \frac{s_y^2}{s_x^2}$$

192
 193 The null hypothesis is rejected (i.e., there is a statistically significant difference in
 194 variances) if $F > f_{(n_y-1, n_x-1, \frac{\alpha}{2})}$ or $F < f_{(n_y-1, n_x-1, 1-\frac{\alpha}{2})}$ where $f_{(n_y-1, n_x-1, \frac{\alpha}{2})}$ is the upper $\alpha/2$
 195 critical point of an F-distribution with $n_y - 1$ and $n_x - 1$ degrees of freedom.

196 where, α is the user-selected significance level.

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The effect size and 85th percentile tests are not as commonly used in transportation as the t-test and F-test. Cohen's d (Cohen 1988) is a standardized difference in means, which can be used as an effect size statistic. It helps analyze the magnitude of the difference on a standardized scale.

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$$effect\ size = \frac{\bar{x} - \bar{y}}{s}$$

where,

$$\bar{y}\ and\ \bar{x}\ are\ sample\ means\ \bar{y} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_y} y_i}{n_y},\ \bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_x} x_i}{n_x}$$

206

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{(n_y-1)s_y^2 + (n_x-1)s_x^2}{(n_y-1) + (n_x-1)}}\ is\ pooled\ sample\ standard\ deviation$$

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The 85th percentile test was presented in Hou et al. (10) to test the statistical significance of 85th percentiles between two datasets. The 85th percentile test is analogous to the t-test for means.

211
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The test statistic is:

213

$$\frac{X_{([n_{0.85}] + 1)} - Y_{([n_{0.85}] + 1)}}{1.530 \sqrt{\frac{s_y^2}{n_y} + \frac{s_x^2}{n_x}}}$$

214
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where,

$X_{([n_{0.85}] + 1)}$ and $Y_{([n_{0.85}] + 1)}$ are the 85th sample percentiles of two independent random samples;

217

$$s_y^2\ and\ s_x^2\ are\ sample\ variances\ s_y^2 = \frac{1}{n_y - 1} \sum_{i=1}^{n_y} (y_i - \bar{y})^2;$$

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n_y and n_x are sample sizes.

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A proportion is a count of a certain category divided by the entire sample size, such as truck percentages, lane occupancies, etc. When the sample size is large, the test statistic is distributed close to the standard normal distribution:

224

$$Pooled\ proportion\ of\ two\ samples: \hat{p} = \frac{n_1 \hat{p}_1 + n_2 \hat{p}_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$

225

$$Reject\ null\ hypothesis\ p_1 = p_2\ if\ \left| \frac{\hat{p}_1 - \hat{p}_2 - 0}{\sqrt{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}} \right| > Z_{\alpha/2}$$

226

where,

227

$$\hat{p}_1\ and\ \hat{p}_2\ are\ the\ sample\ proportions.\ e.g.\ Truck\% = \frac{truck\ counts}{Total\ vehicle\ counts};$$

228

n_1 and n_2 are sample sizes;

229

$z_{\alpha/2}$ is the upper critical point of a standard normal distribution;

230

α is the user-selected significance level.

231 **RESULTS**

232

233 **Merge Location Analysis**

234 Over 2000 vehicles were individually tracked for the two configurations, and their traffic
 235 characteristics are shown in Table 1. The traffic flow conditions on both data collection days
 236 were similar, at 652 vph and 694 vph. The relatively low flows imply that the performance
 237 measures were not dominated by traffic interactions and reflect driver reactions to the merge
 238 signage. Both the total number of vehicles and the percentage of trucks were slightly higher on
 239 the second day with the MUTCD configuration than on the first day with the test sign
 240 configuration. In order to assess the effect of different truck percentages, passenger vehicles and
 241 trucks were also analyzed separately. In this study, trucks were defined as all vehicles other than
 242 motorcycles, buses, and passenger cars with one- or two-axle trailers, including light pickups and
 243 minivans. Thus, trucks included single unit trucks and semi- and full tractor-trailers as classified
 244 by FHWA (TXDOT 2001).

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TABLE 1 Traffic Volume and Composition for Sign Setups

	Test Sign	MUTCD Sign
Total Number of Vehicles	978	1041
Flow (vph)	652	694
Number of Passenger Cars	707	666
Number of Trucks	271	375
Truck percentage	27.7%	36.0%

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248 The low traffic volumes at the work zone site did not pose any operational issues in terms
 249 of delays or queuing. Thus, the merging locations of vehicles did not have any significant effect
 250 on operational performance. In terms of safety during uncongested flow, it is desirable to have
 251 vehicles occupy the open lane as far upstream of the taper as possible to avoid merging conflicts
 252 near the taper. The cumulative open lane occupancies of seven different zones are shown in
 253 Table 2. At the start of Zone 1, the test sign saw 81% occupancy in the open lane, compared to
 254 75% occupancy for the MUTCD sign. This 6% increase in open lane occupancy is desirable in
 255 terms of safety, because it means fewer vehicles will have to merge from the closed lane. The
 256 open lane occupancy for the test sign continued to be higher than that of the MUTCD sign until
 257 the merge sign location. Past the merge sign, however, the cumulative open lane occupancies for
 258 both sign configurations were equal.

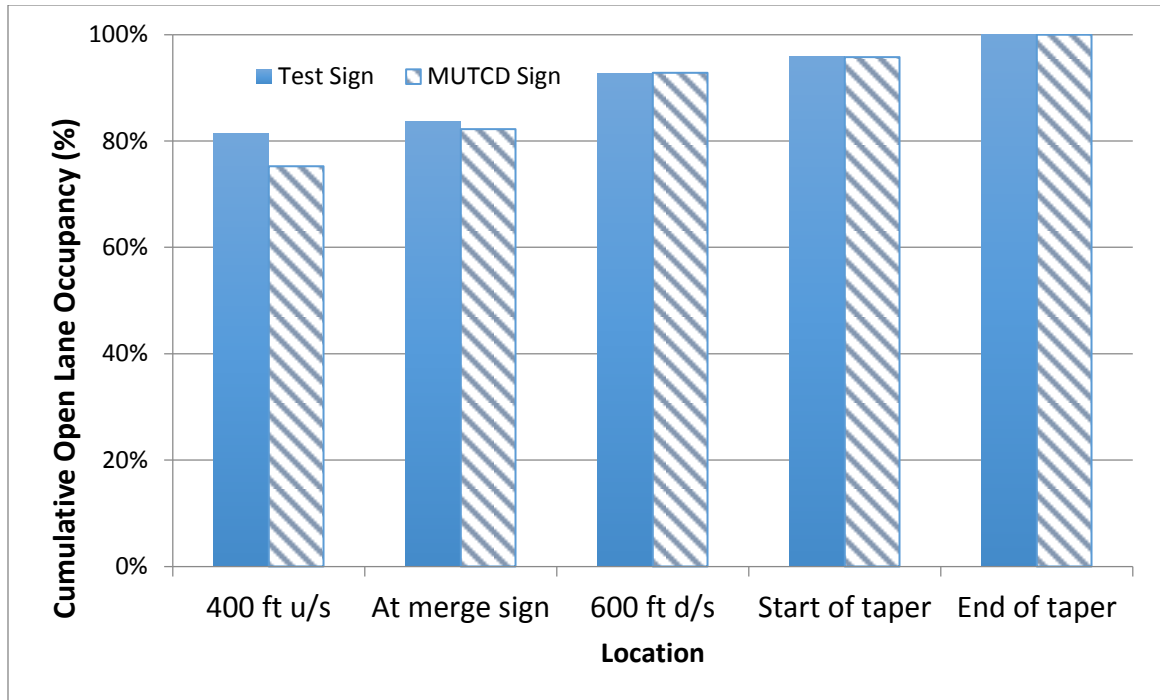
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TABLE 2 Cumulative Open Lane Occupancy at Different Locations (All Vehicles)

Location	Distance from Merge Sign	Test Sign	MUTCD Sign	Difference	p-value
Start of Zone 1	400 ft upstream	81%	75%	6%	0.0004
End of Zone 1	200 ft upstream	82%	77%	5%	0.0022
End of Zone 2	At the merge sign	84%	82%	1%	0.1999
End of Zone 3	200 ft downstream	87%	87%	0%	0.4739
End of Zone 4	600 ft downstream	93%	93%	0%	0.4809
End of Zone 5	1000 ft downstream (Start of taper)	96%	96%	0%	0.4389
End of Zone 6	End of taper	100%	100%		

261 This trend is also evident in Figure 4, which shows the open lane occupancies at five
 262 locations. The five locations included: 1) 400 feet upstream of the merge sign, 2) at the merge
 263 sign, 3) 600 feet downstream of the merge sign, 4) at the start of the work zone taper, and 5) at
 264 the end of the work zone taper.
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266 **FIGURE 4 Open lane occupancies (all vehicles).**

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 269 The results displayed in Figure 4 and Table 2 represent all vehicles observed during the
 270 data collection period. The vehicle population was separated into passenger cars and trucks to
 271 investigate any differences in merging behavior across the two vehicle types. The effects of each
 272 sign setup on passenger cars are shown in Table 3 and Figure 5. The open lane occupancies at all
 273 locations until the beginning of the taper were higher for the test sign than for the MUTCD sign.
 274 The highest occupancy differences, of 11% and 10%, were observed at the two upstream
 275 locations.
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TABLE 3 Cumulative Open Lane Occupancy at Different Locations (Passenger Cars)

Location	Distance from Merge Sign	Test Sign	MUTCD Sign	Difference	p-value
Start of Zone 1	400 ft upstream	77%	66%	11%*	0.0000
End of Zone 1	200 ft upstream	78%	68%	10%*	0.0000
End of Zone 2	At the merge sign	80%	76%	4%*	0.0391
End of Zone 3	200 ft downstream	84%	82%	2%	0.1257
End of Zone 4	600 ft downstream	92%	90%	2%	0.1172
End of Zone 5	1000 ft downstream (Start of taper)	95%	94%	1%	0.1347
End of Zone 6	End of taper	100%	100%		

278 * statistically significant at 95% confidence level

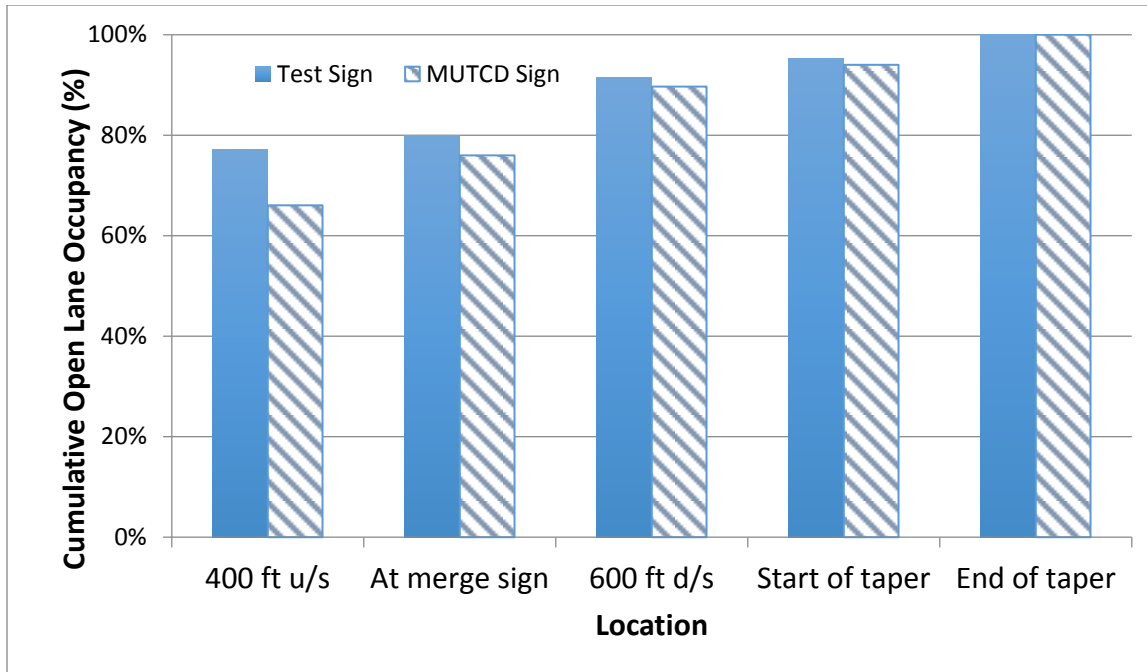


FIGURE 5 Open lane occupancies (passenger cars).

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The open lane occupancies for trucks are shown in Table 4 and Figure 6. The occupancies at all locations were higher than those observed for passenger cars for both sign setups. A few likely reasons are offered for the observed safer merging behavior of trucks as compared to passenger cars. Typically, most commercial trucks trips are work-related, and drivers are thus more likely to adopt safer driving practices, such as compliance with the speed limit and early merging. Although sight distance was not a problem at the study site, the higher line of sight for truck drivers in comparison to passenger car drivers helps truck drivers to detect signage sooner, thus encouraging earlier merges. Trucks also tend to remain in the right lane except when passing. Due to the work-related nature of truck trips, drivers also receive traveler information through additional means such as radio communications and third-party navigation sources that may lead to early merging. The differences in occupancies across the two signs were not as discernable for trucks as they were for passenger cars. Upstream of the merge sign, the performance of the test sign was slightly better than or the same as the MUTCD sign. This trend reversed downstream of the merge sign, where the performance of the MUTCD sign was slightly better than or the same as that of the test sign.

TABLE 4 Cumulative Open Lane Occupancy at Different Locations (Trucks)

Location	Distance from Merge Sign	Test Sign	MUTCD Sign	Difference	p-value
Start of Zone 1	400 ft upstream	92%	91%	1%	0.3600
End of Zone 1	200 ft upstream	92%	92%	0%	0.4535
End of Zone 2	At the merge sign	93%	93%	0%	0.4951
End of Zone 3	200 ft downstream	95%	96%	-1%	0.1888
End of Zone 4	600 ft downstream	96%	98%	-2%*	0.0270
End of Zone 5	1000 ft downstream (Start of taper)	97%	99%	-2%	0.0708
End of Zone 6	End of taper	100%	100%		

299 *- statistically significant at 95% confidence level

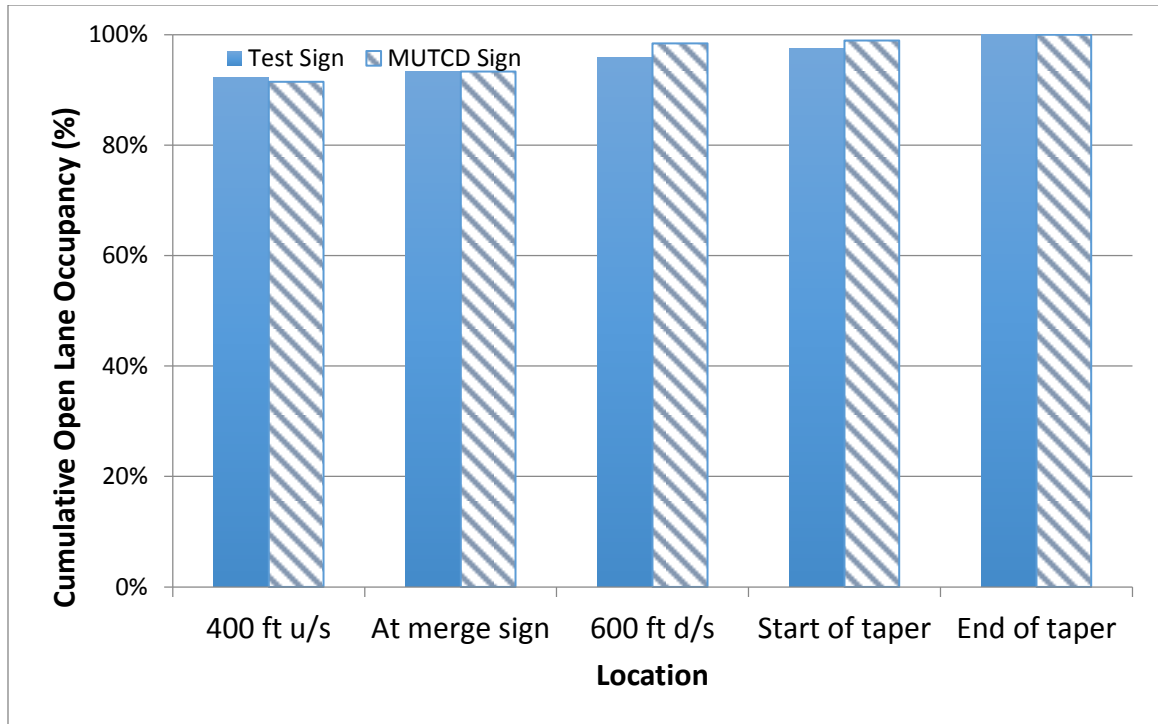


FIGURE 6 Open lane occupancies (trucks).

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Speed Analysis

Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics pertaining to speeds for all vehicles and by vehicle type for passenger cars and trucks. The statistics include mean speed, standard deviation of speeds, and 85th percentile speeds at the merge sign and at the taper. Statistical significance, as indicated by p-values, is reported following the comparison of means using the t-test, and variances using the F-test. The speed differential between the two locations was also computed for each vehicle (i.e., the increase or decrease in speeds from merge sign to taper). The speed differentials for all vehicles were averaged and reported in the last column of Table 5. The positive sign of the mean speed differential indicated a decrease in speeds from the merge sign to the taper. The magnitude of the differences in mean speeds between the two sign setups was quantified using the Cohen’s effect size measure (Cohen 1988). Effect size is a measure of the practical effect of the magnitude in the differences, and Cohen’s measure is equivalent to the ratio of the difference over the standard deviation.

The speeds at the merge sign and at the taper were slightly lower for the MUTCD sign than for the test sign. The differences of 1.3 mph in mean speed and 1 mph in 85th percentile speed were statistically significant, but the difference of 0.01 in speed standard deviation and 0.23 mph in speed differential were not. The small values of the effect size measure (i.e., 0.238 and 0.324), as reported in Table 5, indicate that the differences in mean speeds between the MUTCD sign and the test sign was practically insignificant despite being statistically significant. Thus, the speed analysis did not demonstrate any substantial differences between the test sign and the MUTCD sign. In summary, the test sign could be considered a good alternative to the MUTCD sign given similar results from traffic speed measures.

TABLE 5 Descriptive Statistics of Speeds

	Location						
All vehicles	At merge sign			At taper			Mean Speed Differential (mph)
	Speed statistics (mph)			Speed statistics (mph)			
Sign Type	Mean	Standard deviation	85 th percentile	Mean	Standard deviation	85 th percentile	
Test sign	66.6	5.5	72.0	65.1	5.7	72.0	2.5
MUTCD sign	65.3	5.5	71.0	63.1	6.0	70.0	2.8
p-value	<0.001	0.465	0.004	0.00	0.069	<0.001	0.078
Cohen's	0.238	-	-	0.324	-	-	-
Passenger Vehicles							
Test sign	68.1	5.3	73.0	66.2	5.8	73.0	2.8
MUTCD sign	66.8	5.6	73.0	64.4	6.4	71.0	3.2
p-value	<0.001	0.047	0.456	<0.001	0.001	<0.001	0.045
Cohen's	0.233	-	-	0.316	-	-	-
Trucks							
Test sign	62.7	3.7	67.0	61.7	4.2	66.0	1.7
MUTCD sign	62.6	4.0	67.0	60.9	4.4	65.0	2.0
p-value	0.345	0.183	0.5	0.009	0.236	0.027	0.100
Cohen's	0.030	-	-	0.190	-	-	-

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CONCLUSIONS

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This study investigated the effect of a new merge sign configuration for freeway work zones. One main difference between this new configuration and the MUTCD is the replacement of the graphical-only lane closed sign. This is one of the first studies evaluating an alternative static merging sign for work zones. The study measured driver behavior characteristics including speeds and open lane occupancies. Measurements were taken from the same work zone on different days using two configurations: one with the new test configuration and the other with the standard MUTCD configuration. Statistical tests were conducted to ensure that the comparisons between the experimental sign and the MUTCD sign were statistically valid. Based on an analysis of the measurements, the following conclusions were drawn:

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1) Open lane occupancy was higher for the test sign in comparison to the MUTCD sign upstream of the merge sign. The occupancy values at different distances between the merge sign and the taper were similar for both the test and MUTCD signs, but the test sign encouraged up to 11% more cars to be in the open lane immediately upstream of the merge sign. In terms of safety, it is desirable for vehicles to occupy the open lane as far upstream of the taper as possible to avoid merging conflicts near the taper. Thus, the test sign proved to be a good alternative to the MUTCD sign.

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2) Traffic monitoring results showed that passenger cars stayed in the closed lane longer, or closer to the taper, than did trucks. This was not unexpected given that commercial trucks typically operate in the right lane unless for passing, truck drivers have better sight distances to

350 spot signage earlier, and since commercial trips are work-related, drivers are more likely to adopt
351 safer driving practices.

352 3) The merging behavior of truck drivers did not vary significantly with the type of
353 merge sign deployed in the work zone. This is partly because more than 90% of truck traffic
354 were already in the open lane upstream of the merge sign, both for the test sign and the MUTCD
355 sign.

356 4) The analysis of speed characteristics did not reveal substantial differences between the
357 two sign configurations. The mean speeds with the MUTCD configuration were 1.3 mph and 2
358 mph lower than the test configuration at the merge sign and taper locations, respectively.
359 However, the effect size of 0.238 and 0.324 were very small, thus the speed results are not very
360 useful despite being statistically significant.

361 There are several directions for future research. One is to survey motorists to obtain their
362 perceptions towards the test sign configuration. Another is to evaluate the test sign configuration
363 at additional work zone sites or using driving simulator experiments to further validate its
364 performance. A third is to study the effect of sign performance as a function of the position of
365 closed lane (right versus left lane). A fourth direction is to evaluate the test sign in a long-term
366 construction work zone and to compare the performance with the short-term work zone
367 evaluated in the current study. Due to habituation, driver reaction to signs and other temporary
368 traffic control in long-term work zones could be different from that of short-term work zones.
369 Finally, the performance of the test sign in nighttime work zones can be investigated.

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