# **Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices – Temporary Traffic Control Zones**

Many cities and counties are under the impression that they do not have to set up temporary traffic control measures when operating in a low traffic volume environment. Part 5 of the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (TMUTCD) has provisions that should be followed, *even on low-traffic volume roads with less than 400 AADT.* Let’s look at some of those provisions and regulations you should follow.

## **CHAPTER 5G. TEMPORARY TRAFFIC CONTROL ZONES (Low Volume Roads)**

## ***Section 5G.01 Introduction***

The safety of road users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as personnel in work zones, should be an integral and high priority element of every project in the planning, design, maintenance, and construction phases. Part 6 should be reviewed for additional criteria, specific details, and more complex temporary traffic control zone requirements. The following principles should be applied to temporary traffic control zones:

A. Traffic movement should be disrupted as little as possible.

B. Road users should be guided in a clear and positive manner while approaching and within construction, maintenance, and utility work areas.

C. Routine inspection and maintenance of traffic control elements should be performed both day and night.

D. Both the contracting agency and the contractor should assign at least one person on each project to have day-to-day responsibility for assuring that the traffic control elements are operating effectively, and any needed operational changes are brought to the attention of their supervisors.

Traffic control in temporary traffic control zones should be designed on the assumption that road users will only reduce their speeds if they clearly perceive a need to do so, and then only in small increments of speed.

Temporary traffic control zones should not present a surprise to the road user. Frequent and/or abrupt changes in geometrics and other features should be avoided. Transitions should be well delineated and long enough to accommodate driving conditions at the speed’s vehicles are realistically expected to travel.

In the picture above, would you eliminate traffic control? If you do, you place motorists striking a heavy piece of equipment and putting workers at risk of injury. *Don’t take the risk!*

A temporary traffic control plan (see Section 6C.01) should be used for a temporary traffic control zone on a low-volume road to specific particular traffic control devices and features, or to reference typical drawings such as those contained in Part 6.

Note in the section highlighted above the words “should be used for a temporary traffic control zone on a low-volume road”. An option *to not have* any traffic control in place ***is not*** given. Many cities and counties will only place a sign such as “Work Ahead” and hope that motorists will reduce their speed and take the risk a worker will not be struck by a vehicle.

## ***Section 5G.02 Applications***

Guidance:

01 Planned work phasing and sequencing should be the basis for the use of traffic control devices for temporary traffic control zones. Part 6 should be consulted for specific traffic control requirements and examples where construction or maintenance work is planned.

02 Maintenance activities might not require extensive temporary traffic control if the traffic volumes and speeds are low. **Notice that the words “extensive” is not needed for low volume roads, it does not eliminate traffic control completely.**

03 The traffic applications shown in Figures 6H-1, 6H-10, 6H-11, 6H-13, 6H-15, 6H-16, and 6H-18 of Part 6 are among those that may be used on low-volume roads.

04 Table 6H-3 provides distances for the advance placement of the traffic control devices shown in the typical applications.

05 For low-volume roadways with speeds of 30 miles per hour or less, a minimum distance of 100 feet may be used for the advance placement distance and the distance between signs shown in the typical applications.

06 For temporary traffic control zones on low-volume roads that require flaggers, a single flagger may be adequate if the flagger is visible to approaching traffic from all appropriate directions.

Options 05 and 06 address special conditions for your traffic control that still provides a safe environment for your motorists and workers, and at the same time meets the TMUTCD requirements.

Section 5G.02 part 03 lists several TC setups that are found in Part 6 of the TMUTCD. The information from Figure 6H-16 for work in the center of a road with low traffic is shown as an example

that meets the requirements of the TMUTCD and does not drain your personnel resources to man and flag the setup.

Graphical user interface, application, Word

Description automatically generated

## ***Notes for Figure 6H-15—Typical Application 15***

### ***Work in the Center of a Road with Low Traffic Volumes***

Guidance:

1. The lanes on either side of the center work space should have a minimum width of 10 feet as measured from the near edge of the channelizing devices to the edge of the pavement or the outside edge of the paved shoulder.

2. Flashing warning lights and/or flags may be used to call attention to the advance warning signs.

3. If the closure continues overnight, warning lights may be used on the channelizing devices.

4. A lane width of 9 feet may be used for short-term stationary work on low-volume, low-speed roadways when motor vehicle traffic does not include longer and wider heavy commercial vehicles.

5. A work vehicle displaying high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights may be used instead of the channelizing devices forming the tapers or the high-level warning devices.

6. Vehicle hazard warning signals may be used to supplement high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights.

7. Vehicle hazard warning signals shall not be used instead of the vehicle’s high intensity rotating,

flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights.

Remember, contact the TxLTAP Center for training classes on the TMUTCD!