



City of Concord, New Hampshire

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
CITY HALL • 41 GREEN STREET • 03301

RICHARD K. PERKINS, P.E.
CITY ENGINEER
603-225-8520

December 26, 1997

ACCEPTED

City Council
City of Concord
New Hampshire

Re: "Caution Children Warning Signs"

To the Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

At the November 1997 Council meeting it was requested that we schedule a review of the policy or guidelines that the City follows regarding the installation of the subject signage.

In the way of background information, I would note that to the best of my knowledge the City has never had a policy of installing these signs. While I do not recall the specific year that the attached guidelines were formulated, I do know that it is essentially the same position that the City has always followed. I do however recall that when first presented to the City Council it was titled "Policy Statement". During some discussion, it was pointed out that only the City Council (i.e., not administration) sets policy. I do not recall what official action the Council took on this matter. However, we did retitle the report to reflect they consisted of "Guidelines".

Whether referred to as policy or guidelines, we have taken the position that Council has continued to accept the administration's recommendation for not installing this signage.

In recent years, Concord, as well as other communities across the country, has become increasingly more concerned with traffic issues on our neighborhood streets. This has led to the creation of measures commonly referred to as traffic calming devices. They can consist of significant changes such as roundabouts to the simpler action of installing four way stop signs. However, none of the material or reports we have read in regard to traffic calming measures support the need to reconsider this usage of caution children signs.

We should also discuss the cost implications involved if the Council decided it wanted to adopt the policy of installing these signs. The General Services Department estimates the cost to purchase and install one sign and post is just under sixty dollars (\$60.00). While this may seem minimal, we must understand the magnitude of the precedent set with this

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policy change. I can not actually think of any circumstances where a request to install such signage could be legitimately denied.

Over the years, I have personally handled hundreds of requests for such signing. These requests vary from residents who are concerned that there are a large number of children on a particular street, to a parent who lives in a rural area and is concerned that their child is the only one on the street. I contend that both situations and all similar requests would warrant the signage if it was the City's policy to install same.

Therefore, if we accept the premise that it would be difficult to deny a request for such signage, we would have significant costs (including yet not limited to purchase, installation, operation and maintenance and staff time involved to field review physical sign location) associated with this policy change. This is in addition to the other factors such as complacency outlined in the guidelines.

I would also stress that the City does not ignore the issue when requests are made. There are other traffic control and safety options that are reviewed and in many cases implemented. These include installation of other related pedestrian warning signs for playgrounds, schools, pedestrian crossings as well as persons with disabilities.

In summation, it is the City staffs' position and that of the Traffic Operations Committee that the present policy and guidelines be continued.

Sincerely,



Richard K. Perkins, PE
City Engineer

RKP/b
Attachment



City of Concord, New Hampshire

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GUIDELINES

Regarding The Installation of "Caution Children" Signing

As a result of frequent inquiries, we have prepared this guideline statement regarding the city's position on the installation of the Slow Children type of warning sign.

Generally speaking, warning signs are used when it is deemed necessary to warn traffic of existing or potentially hazardous conditions on or adjacent to a highway or street. The City of Concord, like most other municipalities, has tried to bring all our traffic signing into conformance with the "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" (MUTCD) prepared for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Although not specifically prohibited, the MUTCD Manual does not recommend the "Caution Children" sign for standard use. In particular, the manual states that "The use of warning signs should be kept to a minimum, because the unnecessary use of them to warn of conditions which are apparent tends to breed disrespect for all signs". In respect to warning of children it can be argued that motorists should always be on the lookout for children, regardless of other conditions. Therefore, to sign for children would tend to establish a precedent whereby most all requests for this type of signing would be valid. Once this had occurred, the city would have an abundance of these signs and the motorists would become complacent to their existence. This would also raise the questions, if there is not signing does a motorist feel they should not be concerned with looking out for children. Obviously, this is not the case on any of our streets.

Another point is that a primary use of warning signs is for the protection of the driver who is unacquainted with the road and its potential hazards such as sharp curves, intersections, signals, one-lane traffic, etc. In this respect, a simple warning to look out for children in general would not be consistent. Some studies have also indicated that this signing tends to develop a false sense of security on the part of both the child and the parent.

Of course we do place warning signs where there are large concentration of children or general pedestrian traffic that should be brought to the motorists attention. This includes areas around schools and playgrounds as well as school crossings. The use of painted crosswalks and yield to pedestrian signs is another standard approach to making the motorist aware of heavy pedestrian use in the highway. The downtown area is a prime example of a "Pedestrian Preference Zone.

When a request is made for a "Caution Children" type of warning sign, we do review if the problem or cause of concern can be addressed with alternate signing or other action in lieu of the requested sign. This would include the signing mentioned above or other signs such as regulatory speed or stop signs, or some of the standard (sharp curve, no outlet, etc.) warning signs that may be applicable in the area in question.

Unfortunately, in many cases there is no specific need for any signing and we are unable to offer any positive action for the request. These inquiries are, of course, followed up with the Police Department to insure that they are aware of the residents concerns. In many cases, they are able to assist through enforcement of existing traffic regulations.

Although we share the concerns of the many parents and other citizens who inquire about the "Caution Children" signing, we hope that the data presented herein emphasizes that a proliferation of this signing will not solve the problem of motorists who drive irresponsible with respect to childrens' safety.

Richard K. Perkins, PE
City Engineer

RKP/bm



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POLICY STATEMENT

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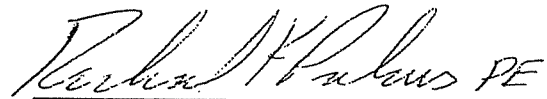
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Of course we do place warning signs where there are large concentration of children or general pedestrian traffic that should be brought to the motorists attention. This includes areas around schools and playgrounds as well as school crossings. The use of painted crosswalks and yield to pedestrian signs is another standard approach to making the motorist aware of heavy pedestrian use in the highway. The downtown area is a prime example of a "Pedestrian Preference Zone."

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Richard K. Perkins, PE
City Engineer

RKP/bm



City of Concord, New Hampshire

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT ENGINEERING DIVISION

CITY HALL • 41 GREEN STREET • 03301

RONALD H. FORD
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
603-224-1955

POLICY STATEMENT

Re: The Installation of
"Caution: Children" Signing

As a result of frequent inquiries, we have prepared this policy statement regarding the city's position on the installation of the Slow Children type of warning sign.

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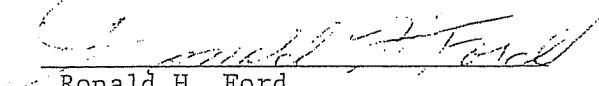
Policy Statement

"Caution: Children" Signing

When a request is made to either this Department or the Police Department for a "Caution Children" type of warning sign, we do review if the problem or cause of concern can be addressed with alternate signing or other action in lieu of the requested sign. This would include the signing mentioned above or other signs such as regulatory speed or stop signs, "no outlet" (dead end) signs or some of the standard (sharp curve, converging traffic, etc.) warning signs that may be applicable in the area in question.

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Although we share the concerns of the many parents and other concerned citizens who inquire about the "Caution Children" signing, we hope that the data presented herein shows that "all the signs in the world" cannot, and will not, stop or eliminate the driver who is irresponsible in his actions.


Ronald H. Ford
Director of Public Works

RKP/w



CITY OF CONCORD

INTER-OFFICE MEMO

Date May 10, 1978

TO John E. Henchey - City Manager
FROM Ronald H. Ford - Director of Public Works
SUBJECT Policy for the Installation of
"Caution: Children" Signing

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RKP/b

R K Rubens
Ra Ronald H. Ford

cc: Chief David G. Walchak, Police Department
Bruce A. Russell, Director of Patrol
Richard K. Perkins, Deputy Director of Public Works
John L. Forrestall, Highway Superintendent