STOP SIGNS

Stop signs are used to control right-of-way conflicts. Driver compliance is critical to ensure a safe and efficient intersection operation is maintained. Therefore, it is important that stop signs are not used indiscriminately. The following information explains some of the considerations for determining the appropriate use of stop signs.

Installation Guidelines

The "Uniform Traffic Control Devices Manual" for Canada dictates the size, shape and color of all traffic signs. This manual has guidelines for installing signs and thus creates uniformity from province to province. The City considers these guidelines for the installation of stop signs and traffic signals. These guidelines identify specific traffic conditions which must be present at the intersection before these traffic control devices may be considered for installation.

Two Way Stop Signs

Stop signs are installed at an intersection only after a careful engineering evaluation of the existing conditions indicates that their installation is appropriate. These conditions include:

- a minor street entering a through street
- a street carrying the lesser volume of traffic, where streets have similar functions
- at intersections where application of the normal right hand rule would be unduly hazardous.

Multi-Way Stop Signs

Each year, the City receives many inquiries about installing multi-way stop signs or traffic signals as a way to reduce speeding. However, research shows that other measures are often more effective than adding more stop signs or traffic signals. The purpose of stop signs and traffic signals is to assign right-of-way at an intersection, not to control speeding. Enforcement is the most appropriate measure to control speeding.

Our experience has shown that simply improving the intersection visibility by prohibiting parking or removing vegetation near the intersection is often more effective in improving traffic safety. This often reduces the need to install more restrictive intersection controls. Overuse of stop signs reduces their overall effectiveness and if installed where not justified, are largely ignored by drivers.

Conditions considered in the evaluation for multi-way stop signs are:

- high traffic volumes are equal for both intersecting roadways
- where there is excessive delays to the minor street traffic
- where there is a high accident rate, correctable by multi-way stop signs.

Traffic Signals

The function of a traffic control signal is to assign the right-of-way between conflicting streams of traffic with maximum efficiency. Maximum efficiency implies the minimum delay and minimum hazard reasonably obtainable. Installation of a traffic control signal, which as the name implies, is primarily a control device rather than a safety device, normally cannot be justified as a safety measure alone as its installation does not necessarily guarantee a reduction in accident experience.

Before installing a traffic signal at an intersection, a review is conducted which includes an examination of:

- the amount of vehicular and

pedestrian traffic

- the need to provide interruption to the major flow for side street vehicles and pedestrians
- special conditions such as hills and curves (road geometry)
- the accident history of the intersection
- the proximity of adjacent traffic signals.

The City utilizes traffic actuated signals. Traffic actuated signals detect vehicles and adjust the timing to optimize traffic flow at the intersection.

Due to the high cost of installing a traffic signal (over $100,000), the city must ensure that the limited available funds are used to install the highest priority locations first.

Other Traffic Information Brochures Available:

- School Zone Signage
- Pedestrian Indicators
- Marked Crosswalks

If you have questions, requests or suggestions concerning traffic, please call the Engineering Department at 250-755-4409.

Publication October 2003

STOP SIGNS AND TRAFFIC SIGNALS

CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

ENGINEERING AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
www.nanaimo.ca