

STATE LAW

CGS § 14-298 establishes the State Traffic Commission within the Department of Transportation (DOT). It consists of the commissioners of Public Safety, Transportation, and Motor Vehicles. The law requires the commission, for the purpose of standardization and uniformity, to adopt and to publish regulations establishing a uniform system of traffic control signals, devices, signs, and markings consistent with state law for use upon the public highways.

State Traffic Commission regulations on the use of STOP signs specify that they: (1) should never be used on the through road of expressways; (2) should never be erected at intersections where traffic control signals are operating; (3) should normally be erected on the minor street to stop the lesser flow of traffic where two main highways intersect, unless traffic engineering studies justify a decision to install a sign on the major street; and (4) should not be used for speed control. The regulations also state that portable or part-time STOP signs should only be used for emergency purposes (Conn. Agency Regs. § 14-298-523). These regulations essentially mirror the general guidance provided by the MUTCD.

MUTCD GUIDANCE FOR STOP SIGN INSTALLATIONS

General Guidance for STOP Signs

In terms of general guidance, the MUTCD (§ 2B.05) states that STOP signs should be used if engineering judgment indicates that one or more of the following conditions exist:

- Intersection of a less important road with a main road where application of the normal right-of-way rule would not be expected to provide reasonable compliance with the law
- Street entering a through highway or street
- Unsignalized intersection in a signalized area
- High speeds, restricted view, or crash records indicate a need for control by the STOP sign

The MUTCD also states that STOP signs should not be used for speed control. This principle appears to be based on the results of several studies that have shown that when STOP signs have been installed for the purpose of controlling the speed of vehicles rather than to reduce the likelihood of vehicle conflicts at intersecting roads, the vehicle speeds between the sign installations typically increase over what they were prior to the signs being erected.

In addition, the MUTCD states that:

- STOP signs should be installed in a manner that minimizes the numbers of vehicles having to stop. At intersections where a full stop is not necessary at all times, consideration should be given to using less restrictive measures such as YIELD signs.
- Once a decision has been made to install two-way stop control, the decision regarding the appropriate street to stop should be made based on engineering judgment. In most cases, the street carrying the lowest volume of traffic should be stopped.
- A STOP sign should not be installed on the major street unless justified by a traffic engineering study.

The MUTCD lists several considerations that might influence the decision regarding the appropriate street upon which to install a STOP sign where two streets with relatively equal traffic volumes and/or characteristics intersect. These include:

- Stopping the direction that conflicts the most with established pedestrian crossing activity or school walking routes
- Stopping the direction that has obscured vision, dips, or bumps that already require drivers to use lower operating speeds
- Stopping the direction that has the longest distance of uninterrupted flow approaching the intersection
- Stopping the direction that has the best sight distance to conflicting traffic