

CHAPTER 4I. TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS FOR FREEWAY ENTRANCE RAMPS

Section 4I.01 Application of Freeway Entrance Ramp Control Signals

Support:

01 Ramp control signals are traffic control signals that control the flow of traffic entering the freeway facility. This is often referred to as “ramp metering.”

02 Freeway entrance ramp control signals are sometimes used if controlling traffic entering the freeway could reduce the total expected delay to traffic in the freeway corridor, including freeway ramps and local streets.

Guidance:

03 *The installation of ramp control signals should be preceded by an engineering study of the physical and traffic conditions on the highway facilities likely to be affected. The study should include the ramps and ramp connections and the surface streets that would be affected by the ramp control, as well as the freeway section concerned.*

Support:

04 Information on conditions that might justify freeway entrance ramp control signals, factors to be evaluated in traffic engineering studies for ramp control signals, design of ramp control signals, and operation of ramp control signals can be found in the FHWA’s “Ramp Management and Control Handbook” (see Section 1A.11).

Section 4I.02 Design of Freeway Entrance Ramp Control Signals

Standard:

01 **Ramp control signals shall meet all of the standard design specifications for traffic control signals, except as otherwise provided in this Section.**

02 **The signal face for freeway entrance ramp control signals shall be either a two-section signal face containing red and green signal indications or a three-section signal face containing red, yellow, and green signal indications.**

03 **If only one lane is present on an entrance ramp or if more than one lane is present on an entrance ramp and the ramp control signals are operated such that green signal indications are always displayed simultaneously to all of the lanes on the ramp, then a minimum of two signal faces per ramp shall face entering traffic.**

04 **If more than one lane is present on an entrance ramp and the ramp control signals are operated such that green signal indications are not always displayed simultaneously to all of the lanes on the ramp, then one signal face shall be provided over the approximate center of each separately-controlled lane.**

Guidance:

05 *Additional side-mounted signal faces should be considered for ramps with two or more separately-controlled lanes.*

Standard:

06 **Ramp control signals shall be located and designed to minimize their viewing by mainline freeway traffic.**

Option:

07 Ramp control signals may be placed in the dark mode (no indications displayed) when not in use.

08 Ramp control signals may be used to control some, but not all, lanes on a ramp, such as when non-metered HOV bypass lanes are provided on a ramp.

09 The required signal faces, if located at the side of the ramp roadway, may be mounted such that the height above the pavement grade at the center of the ramp roadway to the bottom of the signal housing of the lowest signal face is between 4.5 and 6 feet.

10 For entrance ramps with only one controlled lane, the two required signal faces may both be mounted at the side of the roadway on a single pole, with one face at the normal mounting height and one face mounted lower as provided in Paragraph 9, as a specific exception to the normal 8-foot minimum lateral separation of signal faces required by Section 4D.13.

Guidance:

11 *Regulatory signs with legends appropriate to the control, such as XX VEHICLE(S) PER GREEN or XX VEHICLE(S) PER GREEN EACH LANE (see Section 2B.56), should be installed adjacent to the ramp control signal faces. When ramp control signals are installed on a freeway-to-freeway ramp, special consideration should be given to assuring adequate visibility of the ramp control signals, and multiple advance warning signs with flashing warning beacons should be installed to warn road users of the metered operation.*

Section 4I.03 Operation of Freeway Entrance Ramp Control Signals*Guidance:*

- 01 *Operational strategies for ramp control signals, such as periods of operation, metering rates and algorithms, and queue management, should be determined by the operating agency prior to the installation of the ramp control signals and should be closely monitored and adjusted as needed thereafter.*
- 02 *When the ramp control signals are operated only during certain periods of the day, a RAMP METERED WHEN FLASHING (W3-8) sign (see Section 2C.37) should be installed in advance of the ramp control signal near the entrance to the ramp, or on the arterial on the approach to the ramp, to alert road users to the presence and operation of ramp meters.*

Standard:

- 03 **The RAMP METERED WHEN FLASHING sign shall be supplemented with a warning beacon (see Section 4L.03) that flashes when the ramp control signal is in operation.**