



## Traffic Guidelines Manual

ORIGINATOR Director, Bureau of Highway Operations	2-2-19.1
CHAPTER 2	Signing
SECTION 2	Regulatory
SUBJECT 19.1	No U Turn Signs (Controlled Intersection Placement)

### Background

Historically, Wisconsin State Law has not allowed U Turns at intersections controlled by traffic control signals or intersections controlled by an officer. Effective January 1, 2010, the State Law was changed to make U Turns legal at intersections that do not have signs prohibiting the maneuver. Traffic engineering experience has shown that the permitting of U Turns at controlled intersections can be a safe and beneficial traffic maneuver. From an economical standpoint, the permitting of U Turns can reduce costs and issues connected with access control where highway projects result in median closings because reasonable access to the businesses can be possible via U Turns. It is noteworthy to point out that all other states allow U Turns at intersections to one degree or another.

For dual left turn applications, Wisconsin State Statute 346 states that U-Turns would be made from the innermost left turn lane in the same fashion as a left turn. Vehicles on the intersecting streets turning right on red will need to yield to the U Turning vehicle. Statute 346 also states that backing is not permitted as part of a U Turn maneuver, therefore a motorist will need to have knowledge of the turning radius of their vehicle. A U Turn is also prohibited on undivided highways for crest and vertical curve locations where the sight distance is less than 500 feet.

Usage of Turn Prohibition Signs, specifically No U Turn Signs, is covered in Section 2B.19 of the 2003 MUTCD. However, the MUTCD does not get into specific Engineering Criteria as to when signs *should* be used. Motorists are not necessarily familiar with State Statute language and signing *may* be appropriate at certain intersections to prohibit U Turns, due to motorist safety issues or to help enforce the State Statute. Wisconsin State Statute 346 gives maintaining governments the authority to prohibit U Turns at specific intersections. Intersections where U Turns are prohibited **shall** be signed.

### Definitions

Freeways are defined as divided highways with fully controlled access at interchanges only. Interstate Highways are freeways with the interstate route designation.

Expressways are defined as divided highways with partially controlled access by a combination of interchanges, at-grade intersections and driveways.

Conventional Highways are defined as streets or roads other than freeways or expressways. They *may* be divided or undivided, two-lane or multi-lane, and access is available at intersections and driveways.

### Qualifying Criteria for Signing

1. No U Turn (R3-4 signs) **shall** be installed at the following signal and stop controlled intersections where U Turns are prohibited:
  - A. Intersections where there are existing No Left Turn Signs. The No U Turn (R3-4 sign) **shall** be installed at these locations in conjunction with the No Left Turn (R3-2 sign). The combination No Left Turn / No U Turn (R3-18 sign) *may* be utilized for these locations instead.
  - B. Intersections where there are signalized right turns that operate simultaneously with protected left turn movements. The No U Turn (R3-4 sign) **shall** be installed at these locations.
  - C. Signalized intersections that are interconnected to a railroad crossing and operate with advance (not simultaneous) pre-emption. The No U Turn (R3-4 sign) **shall** be installed on any divided highway approach that crosses the railroad tracks.
2. No U Turn (R3-4 signs) *may* be installed at other signal and stop controlled intersections that have demonstrated the following operational issues:
  - A. Intersections with less than 500 feet of sight distance and there are demonstrated crashes attributed to U Turns that are above the statewide average for that type of intersection.
  - B. Intersections with dual left turn lanes and there are demonstrated problems with motorists making U Turns from the outside left turn lane. For this issue, the lane control sign (R3-8 UU sign) *should* be used to emphasize that U turns *may* only be made from the inside left lane. For overhead signing applications, the R3-5U (with 6" black border) or R3-50U (without 6" black border) *may* be installed in place of the R3-5L or R3-50L.
  - C. Intersections with a deficient truck turning radius that present repeated problems with trucks backing up to complete a U Turn, signs and/or signals being damaged or other safety or operational issues caused by the deficient truck turning radii. Intersections *may* have signing to just restrict trucks in making U Turns. For these applications, the standard No U Turn (R3-4 Sign) with Supplemental Truck Plaque (M4-4 sign) would be used.

- D. Temporary signalized intersections during improvement projects where left turns *may* be restricted or eliminated.
  - E. Intersections that have poor geometrics and there are demonstrated crashes attributed to U Turns that are above the statewide average for that type of intersection. Examples would be skewed intersections or nearby railroad crossings.
3. Elimination of Signs. In the past, many signalized intersections were signed mainly from requests by Law Enforcement due to repeated problems with illegal U Turns at intersections and the signs aided in enforcement of the law. The Region *should* make efforts to review these intersections, based on the criteria outlined in items 1 and 2 above, and adjust or remove signs as necessary.

### Guidance for Field Placement of Signs

1. Installation of No U Turn signs at controlled intersections can be challenging due to lack of space to install signs and the presence of many other signs. A minimum of one No U Turn sign **shall** be installed at each intersection approach where the U Turn move is prohibited. Below is a hierarchy of where the sign *should* be installed:
  - A. Primary choice is mounting of the No U Turn (R3-4 sign) on the far side median signal pole if it does not conflict with any other signs (Keep Right, etc).
  - B. Secondary choice is to install the No U Turn (R3-4 sign) side by side with the Keep Right sign on the far side median signal pole. This *may* be accomplished by a separate post or bracket system. If a bracket system is used, the No U Turn sign *should* be mounted to the left of the Keep Right sign.
  - C. Third choice is to install the No U Turn (R3-4 sign) on a nearside median signal pole.
  - D. Fourth choice is to install the No U Turn (R3-4 sign) underneath the Keep Right on the far side median signal pole. This option is the least desirable because the No U Turn sign will be lower than the minimum 5 foot mounting height as specified by the MUTCD.
2. A second No U Turn (R3-4 sign) *may* be installed in advance of the intersection approach for areas where compliance is still a problem that is resulting in safety issues or if visibility of the mandatory No U Turn sign is compromised due to intersection geometrics or the presence of other signs.
3. Placement of the ground mounted R3-8UU sign mentioned in 2B above, *should* be in advance of the near median signal head in the median at a minimum distance of 150 feet back from the signal.