



Transportation Advisory Board Report

Date: September 15, 2009
To: Transportation Advisory Board
From: Alan Sanderson, Deputy Transportation Director
Subject: Traffic Code Changes Adding New Definitions and Exempting Service Vehicles from Prohibitions on Parking and Driving Over Sidewalks

Purpose and Recommendation

It is recommended that definitions for “City Transportation Facility,” and “Service Vehicle” as detailed in the Discussion section of this report be added to the traffic title of Mesa City code. It is also recommended that additions be made to the traffic title of Mesa City providing exemptions from parking regulations and the prohibition against driving across sidewalks for drivers of service vehicles in the performance of official duties, as detailed in the Discussion section of this report.

Background

In developing the proposed Temporary Traffic Control (TTC) program and a recommendation for an updated Traffic Barricade Manual, it was noted that some “housekeeping” type additions needed to be made to the traffic title of City code. These changes consist of adding some definitions to support some of the TTC program and the barricade manual provisions, an exemption for service vehicle drivers making them exempt from parking restrictions in certain situations, and an allowance for service vehicles to drive across sidewalks when necessary.

Discussion

Definitions

In developing the TTC program, a need for an all-inclusive term for City transportation facilities that might be affected by construction and temporary traffic control measures was identified. Therefore adding a definition for “City Transportation Facility” to the “Definitions” section of Mesa City code Title X—Traffic is recommended as follows:

CITY TRANSPORTATION FACILITY: Any street, sidewalk, bicycle lane, equestrian, bicycle, pedestrian or multi-use path, special use trail, alley, highway, transit stop or station, or similar public way owned, operated, and maintained by the City for public use.

There also is a need to define “service vehicle,” a term used in the current and proposed updated Mesa Traffic Barricade Manual. This term is also used in the City of Phoenix Traffic Barricade Manual, but is not defined by either city code or State statute. Service vehicles can range from “golf car” type vehicles to pickup trucks, aerial lift trucks, or various other truck and self-propelled equipment types. The nature of the work done with these vehicles is such that they often need to travel slowly or stop for brief periods on City streets. They are used in a variety of street and utility type work. The Traffic Barricade Manual has specific requirements for warning lights and arrow panels needed on service vehicles. Therefore adding a definition for “service vehicle” to the “Definitions” section of the traffic title of Mesa City code is recommended as follows:

SERVICE VEHICLE: A licensed vehicle used in the construction, operation or maintenance of a municipal or utility facility, or in the provision of service by a municipal or utility service provider.

Exemption to Parking Regulations for Service Vehicle

Due to the nature of some of the work for which service vehicles are used, it is sometimes necessary or desirable for them to be parked in locations where parking is normally prohibited. For example a technician servicing a traffic signal controller may have room to park his truck off of the street and behind the sidewalk in an area covered with gravel. This is desirable because the technician’s vehicle would not block vehicular or pedestrian traffic. However City code prohibits parking in such areas. To encourage drivers of service vehicles to park so they do not interfere with vehicular or pedestrian traffic when possible, and make it legal for them to do so, it is recommended that a provision be added to the “Exemptions” section of the traffic title of Mesa City code as follows:

A driver of an authorized service vehicle engaged in official duties related to the construction, operation or maintenance of a municipal or utility facility, or in the provision of service by a municipal or utility service provider, except when directed by a Police officer, may park or stand such vehicle in locations where parking or standing a vehicle would otherwise be prohibited. This exemption shall apply when such parking or standing is necessary to carry out official duties, does not endanger life or property, and temporary traffic control measures as required in Chapter 10 of Title X are in place.

Driving on Sidewalk

City code currently prohibits driving on a sidewalk “...except on a permanent or duly authorized temporary driveway.” However there are instances where a facility requiring service, maintenance or some other work is located in the sidewalk, or well behind the sidewalk. In the former instance it may be necessary to park a service vehicle on a sidewalk to perform the necessary work, or in the latter a service vehicle may need to cross the sidewalk to gain access to the facility. In some cases a worker may be able to park behind the sidewalk so the vehicle does not interfere with vehicular or pedestrian traffic. In all of these cases, it would be necessary to drive on the sidewalk. Therefore the following addition is recommended to the “Driving on Sidewalk” section of the traffic title of Mesa City code:

A person driving an authorized service vehicle engaged in official duties related to the construction, operation or maintenance of a municipal or utility facility, or in the provision of service by a municipal or utility service provider may cross a sidewalk at a location other than a driveway.

Alternatives

NOT MAKING THESE CHANGES IN CITY CODE is an alternative. This is not recommended because it would not provide definitions needed to support barricade manual and Temporary Traffic Control provisions. It also would not enable drivers of service vehicles legally to park in certain areas and drive over sidewalks so as to minimize their impact on vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact to making these changes

Concurrence

The City attorney assigned to the Transportation Department reviewed, provided input on and approved these proposed code changes.



Alan Sanderson, P.E.
Deputy Transportation Director—Traffic Engineering