

PEANUT BELT RPO TRAFFIC COUNTER USE POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

The Peanut Belt Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) approved purchase of four Nu-Metrics Hi-Star NC-97 traffic counters on April 20, 2004. The traffic counters will be used by Peanut Belt RPO to obtain traffic counts on highways, secondary roads, and municipal streets within the Peanut Belt RPO planning area. The traffic counters are intended to supplement existing, ongoing traffic data collection conducted by NCDOT. The traffic counts will be obtained for use by the Peanut Belt RPO in conducting project prioritization, long-range planning, and site-specific facility planning.

Additionally, the RPO staff may obtain traffic counts for Peanut Belt RPO area local governments on municipal streets, parking lots, or private roads under certain conditions specified in this document. All requests for these traffic counts shall be made by a member of the local government's staff.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Peanut Belt RPO Traffic Counter Use Policy is to outline the proper use of the counters, and establish a procedure for scheduling the use of the counters.

III. EQUIPMENT DESCRIPTION

The Peanut Belt RPO purchased the following traffic counter equipment:

- two Nu-Metrics Hi-Star NC-97 traffic counters, identified by serial numbers:
 1. S/N 2094134-418
 2. S/N 2043638-418
- two protective covers

The NC-97 counters have magnetic chip sensors that detect magnetic field interruption from passing vehicles. They operate on 3.6-volt nickel metal hydride batteries, rechargeable with 115vac transformers (batteries are internal, transformers included with counters). The counters are approximately 6" square; the covers are approximately 16" square.

Special software is used to program the counters and retrieve the data recorded by the counters.

IV. USE OF EQUIPMENT

This is a general overview of use of the NC-97 traffic counters. Additional information can be found in the Hi-Star Operations Manual.

A. Programming

The traffic counters should be charged for 12 hours prior to use.

The counters are programmed prior to use through connection to a computer containing the HDM software. Programming includes selection of the following variables:

- location of counters, including traffic lane
- beginning date and time of counter use
- ending date and time of counter use
- Period for recording counts (i.e., 15 minutes, 30 minutes, one hour, two hours, etc.)

Beginning time needs to be set for at least 30 minutes later than time of installation. It takes the counters 30 minutes to realign the magnetic sensors.

B. Installation

The traffic counters should be placed in the center of the traffic lane to be counted, with the arrow on the counter pointing in the direction of traffic movement. A protective cover should be used for every installation. The cover should be mounted using nails or screws in all the pre-drilled holes.

The traffic counters should be installed only on asphalt surfaces.

The traffic counters should be identified by location and lane, using the units' serial number, to avoid confusion after removal.

Local governments having jurisdiction in the location where the traffic counters will be used may be asked for assistance in installation of the traffic counters.

C. Data Retrieval

Data is retrieved from the counters through connection to a computer containing the HDM software. Once the data is downloaded, it can be transferred into various report or graph formats.

Traffic counts obtained by the use of the Peanut Belt RPO's traffic counters will produce raw data only. The raw counts will not be seasonally factored through the formulas used by NCDOT for their counts, and may not be used to challenge DOT's counts.

V. SAFETY

Installation of the traffic counters will require the following safety measures:

- At least two people shall be present during installation of traffic counters.
- At least one of the people present during installation shall have been certified as a HILTI qualified operator.
- In high traffic areas, local law enforcement or public works staff may be requested to assist in traffic control while counters are being installed and removed.
- Individuals installing the traffic counters shall wear safety vests, gloves, and safety glasses
- If installation is being conducted with nail gun, proper ear protection shall be used.
- During installation of traffic counters, signage shall be erected to warn motorists in accordance with Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

VI. COORDINATION WITH NCDOT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Prior to installation of traffic counters, the following individuals shall be notified of the location and duration of counter use:

- NCDOT District Engineer covering the area where traffic counter is used
- NCDOT County Maintenance Engineer covering the area where traffic counter is used
- Local government manager or clerk, local public works director, and local law enforcement in the jurisdiction where traffic counter is used

If traffic counts are desired on private roads or parking lots, a form must be obtained from the RPO staff, signed by the property owner giving permission to install the counters, and submitted to the RPO staff prior to installation.

VII. REQUESTS FOR TRAFFIC COUNTS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Peanut Belt RPO staff will obtain traffic counts upon request by local governments under the following conditions:

- NCDOT has not collected traffic counts at the location within the past two years, unless there are extenuating circumstances for doing new counts such as the opening of new large industrial or commercial development in the immediate area.
- NCDOT is unable to schedule the counts for at least six months.
- The RPO has not scheduled the traffic counters for use during the requested time.

- RPO has available resources for programming and installing the counters, for retrieving the counters, and for downloading and analyzing the data.
- Counts obtained with the RPO's traffic counters will not be used in any dispute with DOT.

VIII. COSTS

Costs associated with obtaining and interpreting traffic count data for use by the RPO and/or its staff shall be budgeted through the RPO funds. Costs for counts requested by a Peanut Belt area local government shall be assumed by the Peanut Belt RPO, providing the conditions listed in this document are met.

When the Peanut Belt RPO traffic counters are being used for individual local government purpose (i.e., not scheduled by Peanut Belt RPO), the local government that requested the counts shall be responsible for replacing any damaged, lost, or stolen counters.

VIII. SCHEDULING USE

Scheduling of use of the traffic counters will be conducted by the Peanut Belt RPO Transportation Planner/RPO Coordinator.