



Kansas LTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Road & Bridge Agencies

Wayfinding for Bicycle Routes

By Pat Weaver

Guidance from city transportation officials on how to help guide bicyclists through your community.



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If you're looking for design standards for wayfinding for bicycle routes in your community, the *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* published by the National Association of City Transportation Officials, may be your answer. The second edition of this guide, published in 2012, created a standardized set of signing and pavement marking treatments for bicycling in U.S. cities. The Guide was developed with input from 21 cities as well as a nationwide team of experts. In each section of the publication, three levels of guidance are provided: required, recommended, and optional. This article will review these recommendations associated with bike route wayfinding and suggest where to go for additional information.

What is a bicycle wayfinding system?

The authors of the NACTO Guide define bicycle wayfinding system as “a set of comprehensive signing and/or pavement markings used to guide bicyclists to their designations along preferred routes.” The signs or markings are placed at decision points along the route and may include placement at an intersection of bikeways as well as at other locations leading to or along the route.

The signing/marketing system includes three types: confirmation to indicate to the traveling public that they are on a bicycle route; turn, when the bikeway turns from one street to another; and decision signs to mark a junction and to provide information about the route to key destinations.

Why implement a wayfinding system?

An easy-to-understand wayfinding system helps users understand the bicycle network, and may be particularly helpful to new or infrequent bicyclists. It provides information on the best routes to specific destinations and, with mileage or travel time information, may help encourage users to travel by bicycle. Clearly-identified wayfinding also gives information to motorists that they are driving on a bicycle route to encourage additional caution.

What's required? What's recommended?

First, the requirements: Standards outlined in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (in Section 9B.01—Application and Placement of Signs and Section 9B.20—Bicycle Guide Signs) are required. These standards detail mounting height and lateral placement as well as examples of signs used for confirmation, turn, and decisions.

There is no standard color for bicycle wayfinding signage, although the MUTCD establishes the general meaning for signage colors. Green is the most common color of bicycle wayfinding signage in the US.

In addition to MUTCD requirements, NACTO also provides a number of recommended features to improve



wayfinding. For example, placement of confirmation signs are recommended every two to three blocks on on-street routes and at the far side of major street intersections. If travel time is included on decision signs, it is recommended that 10 mph bicycle speed be used for calculations.

Additional considerations

A few other optional recommendations are provided in the Guide to enhance wayfinding. For example, there is a suggestion that signs be placed on “feeder” streets between the bicycle route and nearby destinations. The Guide also states that wayfinding signs “may be limited specifically to the designated bicycle network, as other streets may be difficult or dangerous for bicyclists.” Other features outlined as optional include placement of route map signs, pavement markings placed to reinforce routes and directional signage and, for extensive route networks, route number systems.

The authors of the Guide point out that Google and other online mapping programs offer bicycle route mapping that may differ from your city or county. You might want to consider these technologies and how your community is using them as you identify (or make changes to) your bicycle route system and associated wayfinding.

The NACTO Guide provides extensive resources on wayfinding and many other topics of bicycle facility design. However, as the authors of the Guide state, “. . . treatments must be tailored to the individual situation. Good engineering judgment based on deep knowledge of bicycle transportation should be a part of bikeway design. . . and decisions should be thoroughly documented.”

For more information about the *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, visit the NACTO website at <http://nacto.org>. The Guide is available for purchase at their site for \$50. ■

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Other Resources on Wayfinding

Neighborhood Wayfinding: What You Need to Know to Get Involved! August 6, 2-14. Easter Seals Project Action. <http://www.projectaction.org/News/tabid/727/token/detail/nid/142/Default.aspx>

The following two resources each address coordination of wayfinding across jurisdictions:

Cape Cod Regional Bicycle Wayfinding Design Guidelines. November 2012. http://www.capecodcommission.org/resources/transportation/FINAL_BIKE_GUIDELINES_REPORT_2012.pdf

City of Oakland Design Guidelines for Bicycle Wayfinding Signage June 2009. <http://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/City-of-Oakland-Design-Guidelines-for-Bicycle-Wayfinding-Signage.pdf>