U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Memorandum

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Subject: **GUIDANCE:** Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Design Flexibility Date: August 20, 2013

From: Gloria M. Shepherd
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In Reply Refer To:
HEPH-10

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To: Division Administrators
cc: Directors of Field Services

This memorandum expresses the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) support for taking a flexible approach to bicycle and pedestrian facility design. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) bicycle and pedestrian design guides are the primary national resources for planning, designing, and operating bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) *Designing Urban Walkable Thoroughfares* guide builds upon the flexibilities provided in the AASHTO guides, which can help communities plan and design safe and convenient facilities for pedestrian and bicyclists. FHWA supports the use of these resources to further develop nonmotorized transportation networks, particularly in urban areas.

AASHTO Guides

AASHTO publishes two guides that address pedestrian and bicycle facilities:

- *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*, July 2004, (AASHTO Pedestrian Guide) provides guidelines for the planning, design, operation, and maintenance of pedestrian facilities, including signals and signing. The guide recommends methods for accommodating pedestrians, which vary among roadway and facility types, and addresses the effects of land use planning and site design on pedestrian mobility.

- *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities 2012, Fourth Edition* (AASHTO Bike Guide) provides detailed planning and design guidelines on how to accommodate bicycle travel and operation in most riding environments. It covers the planning, design, operation,

maintenance, and safety of on-road facilities, shared use paths, and parking facilities. Flexibility is provided through ranges in design values to encourage facilities that are sensitive to local context and incorporate the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists.

NACTO Guide

NACTO first released the *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* (NACTO Guide) in 2010 to address more recently developed bicycle design treatments and techniques. It provides options that can help create "complete streets" that better accommodate bicyclists. While not directly referenced in the AASHTO Bike Guide, many of the treatments in the NACTO Guide are compatible with the AASHTO Bike Guide and demonstrate new and innovative solutions for the varied urban settings across the country.

The vast majority of treatments illustrated in the NACTO Guide are either allowed or not precluded by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). In addition, non-compliant traffic control devices may be piloted through the MUTCD experimentation process. That process is described in Section 1A.10 of the MUTCD and a table on the FHWA's bicycle and pedestrian design guidance Web page is regularly updated (FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Design Guidance), and explains what bicycle facilities, signs, and markings are allowed in accordance with the MUTCD. Other elements of the NACTO Guide's new and revised provisions will be considered in the rulemaking cycle for the next edition of the MUTCD.

ITE Guide

In 2010, FHWA supported production of the ITE Guide *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*. This guide is useful in gaining an understanding of the flexibility that is inherent in the AASHTO "Green Book," *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*. The chapters emphasize thoroughfares in "walkable communities" – compact, pedestrian-scaled villages, neighborhoods, town centers, urban centers, urban cores and other areas where walking, bicycling and transit are encouraged. It describes the relationship, compatibility and trade-offs that may be appropriate when balancing the needs of all users, adjoining land uses, environment and community interests when making decisions in the project development process.

Summary

FHWA encourages agencies to appropriately use these guides and other resources to help fulfill the aims of the *2010 US DOT Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations* – "...DOT encourages transportation agencies to go beyond the minimum requirements, and proactively provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that foster increased use by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, and utilize universal design characteristics when appropriate."

Accompanying this memo are the latest versions of the: 1) AASHTO Bike Guide, 2) NACTO Bike Guide; and 3) the ITE *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares* Guide.

The attachments provide two examples that demonstrate the use of treatments illustrated in the NACTO Guide (i.e., buffered bike lanes and green colored pavement for bicycle lanes) by State or local DOTs, and a list of FHWA staff that can help with questions about pedestrian and bicycle design issues.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Example 1 & 2

Example 1: Michigan DOT's Buffered Bike Lanes

One of the innovative bicycle facilities discussed in the NACTO *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* is buffered bike lanes. Buffered bike lanes create more space between motor vehicles and bicycles by delineating extra space between the bike lane and parked cars and/or a motor vehicle lane. Buffered bike lanes can be implemented if the pavement markings and channelizing devices are compliant with the MUTCD (see Bicycle Facilities and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices). Michigan DOT developed a video that describes their efforts to install buffered bike lanes in Oakland County (see Northwestern Highway Bicycle Lane: A Safer Place to Ride). Michigan DOT also developed a brochure that explains buffered bike lanes to the public (see What Every Michigan Driver Should Know About Bike Lanes).

Example 2: Missoula's Colored Bike Lanes

MUTCD experimentation is a methodology that analyzes innovative traffic control devices through field deployment for the purpose of testing or evaluating its application or manner of use. An approved request to experiment numbered and titled as Official Ruling "3(09)-3(E) – Colored Bike Lanes – Missoula, MT" illustrates a successful experiment. The City of Missoula submitted a request to experiment in January 2010 in accordance with all Items in Paragraph 11 of Section 1A.10 in the 2009 MUTCD.

The experiment was conducted for one year and revealed that approximately 70 percent of motorists noticed the color conspicuity enhancement to the bike lane. This was interpreted as an increased awareness by motorists of the potential presence of bicyclists at intersections where those motorists would be making a right turn.

The City also reported ancillary findings that were not anticipated in the original Evaluation Plan of the request to experiment. This included psychological discomfort of the cyclist with the lateral locations of the colored bicycle lane with respect to door zones in parallel parking corridors. In addition, the experiment revealed an unintended design weakness where colored bike lanes that achieve high compliance of little or no occupation of motorized vehicles can also be attractive to pedestrians who wish to use them to facilitate their travel in lieu of crowded sidewalks or to patronize parking meters. For these reasons, a successful experiment can reveal unanticipated findings, further demonstrating the value of official experimentation.

This particular experiment provided two conclusions that supported FHWA's decision to issue Interim Approval for green colored pavement for bicycle lanes in April 2011.

For more information see http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/reqdetails.asp?id=1135.

Attachment 2

FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Staff Resources

Human Environment —Livability and Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs

- Shana Baker, Livability Team Leader, 202-366-4649, shana.baker@dot.gov: Livability, Context Sensitive Solutions
- Christopher Douwes, Trails and Enhancements Program Manager 202-366-5013, christopher.douwes@dot.gov: Transportation Alternatives Program/Enhancement Activities; Recreational Trails Program related activities; Bicycle and pedestrian policy and guidance
- Daniel Goodman, Transportation Specialist, 202-366-9064, daniel.goodman@dot.gov: Bicycle and pedestrian activities; Livability
- Wesley Blount, Program Manager, 202-366-0799, wesley.blount@dot.gov: Safe Routes to School, Discretionary programs

Planning

- Brian Gardner, 202-366-4061, brian.gardner@dot.gov: Modeling
- Jeremy Raw, 202-366-0986, jeremy.raw@dot.gov: Modeling
- Harlan Miller, 202-366-0847, harlan.miller@dot.gov: Planning Oversight
- Kenneth Petty, 202-366-6654 kenneth.petty@dot.gov: Planning Capacity Building

Policy

- Steven Jessberger, 202-366-5052, steven.jessberger@dot.gov, Traffic Monitoring Guide

Infrastructure — Design (including accessible design)

- Michael Matzke, 202-366-4658, michael.matzke@dot.gov

Resource Center— Design (including accessible design)

- Brooke Struve, Safety and Design Team, 720-963-3270, brooke.struve@dot.gov
- Peter Eun, Safety and Design Team, 360-753-9551, peter.eun@dot.gov

Operations — Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

- Kevin Dunn, Transportation Specialist, 202-366-6054, kevin.dunn@dot.gov: MUTCD Team

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Gabe Rousseau, Safety Operations Team Leader, 202-366-8044, gabe.rousseau@dot.gov: Bicycle and pedestrian safety programs
- Tamara Redmon, Pedestrian Safety Program Manager, 202-366-4077, tamara.redmon@dot.gov: Pedestrian safety

Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety Research

- Ann Do, 202-493-3319, ann.do@dot.gov
- Jim Shurbutt, 202-493-3420, jimmy.shurbutt@dot.gov

Civil Rights — Accessibility Policy and Compliance

- Patrick Gomez, Resource Center Civil Rights Team, 720-963-3269, patrick.gomez@dot.gov
- Candace Groudine, Director of External Civil Rights Programs, 202-366-4634, candace.groudine@dot.gov