NOTE: This is a recommendation by NCUTCD to FHWA to add or revise the content of the MUTCD. This proposal by itself does not constitute official standards or guidance. Regardless of NCUTCD approval status, any proposed change or revision has no legal or official status until specifically approved by FHWA through either the Interim Approval process or adoption into a new edition of the MUTCD.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE: Bicycle Technical Committee

TOPIC: Contraflow Bicycle Lanes

STATUS/DATE OF ACTION:
BTC Drafts: 01/08/2013
BTC Approval: 01/09/2014
MTC Concurrence: 01/09/2014
Transmitted to Sponsors: 03/25/2014
TC Revision: 06/27/2014
Council Approval: 06/28/2014 (v1.6)

ORIGIN OF REQUEST: FHWA

AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD: Section 9C.05 - Bicycle Lane Markings

SUMMARY: Provides for bicycle lanes to facilitate travel by bicycle in the opposite direction where travel lanes carry traffic in a single direction.

DISCUSSION: Contraflow Bicycle Lanes have been provided by many communities throughout the U.S., including:

- Boulder CO
- Burlington VT
- Eugene OR
- Portland OR
- Corvallis OR
- Washington DC
- Ithaca NY
- Chicago IL
- Madison WI
- Gainesville FL
- Tucson AZ
- Atlanta GA (2014)
- Lansing MI
- Minneapolis MN
- Helena MT
- Cambridge MA
- Brookline MA
- Boise ID
- Silver Spring MD
- Newport Beach CA
- Pasadena CA
- San Francisco CA
Many of these installations have been in place for over ten years, including Eugene, Corvallis, Madison and Newport Beach. Most agencies have not reported significant issues. Examples include relatively low volume, low speed streets generally providing stop controls for side streets, as well as heavily used downtown streets providing traffic signal control at intersections.

The NCUTCD Markings Technical Committee reviewed and concurred with this proposal in January 2014.

RECOMMENDED MUTCD PROVISIONS/ REVISIONS:

Add the following text to Section 9C.04 Markings for Bicycle Lanes (following the end of all existing text):

Support:

15 A contraflow bicycle lane is an area of the roadway designated to allow for the lawful use by bicyclists to travel in the opposite direction from traffic on a roadway that allows traffic to travel in only one direction.

Guidance:

16 Where used, a contraflow bicycle lane should be marked such that bicyclists in the contraflow lane travel on their right-hand side of the road in accordance with normal rules of the road, with opposing traffic on the left.

Standard:

17 Where used, a contraflow bicycle lane shall be separated from opposite-direction travel by use of a solid double yellow center line marking, or a painted or raised median island. See Figure 9C-x1 and 9C-x2.

18 Where intersection traffic controls along the street exist, (e.g., stop signs, flashing light signals, or traffic signals), appropriate devices shall be oriented toward bicyclists in the contraflow lane.

Guidance:

19 A buffer per Section 3B.24 or an island should be used to separate the contraflow lane from adjacent travel lanes at posted speeds of 40 mph and above.

Option:

20 A bicycle lane for travel in the same direction as the general purpose lanes may be placed on the left hand side of the general purpose lanes.
Guidance:

21 Where signs are provided to regulate turns from streets or driveways that intersect with a roadway that has a contraflow bicycle lane, One Way (R6-1 or R6-2) signs should not be used. Turn Prohibition signs (R3-1 or R3-2) with supplemental R5-xxP Except Bicycles plaques should be used. If DO NOT ENTER signs (R5-1) are used, an Except Bicycle plaque should be placed under the DO NOT ENTER sign. See Figure 9C-x2. (Note: the R5-xxP Except Bicycles regulatory plaque was approved by NCUTCD in June 2010)

Support:

22 Contraflow bicycle travel can be unexpected by motorists crossing the contraflow bicycle lane when entering, exiting, or crossing the roadway. Consideration of additional signalization, signing and/or marking treatments is appropriate for intersections, alleys, grade crossings, and driveways.

Option:

23 At locations where a contraflow bicycle lane is provided across an intersection or a driveway entrance, pavement markings that inform intersection or driveway traffic of the presence of the bicycle facility and the direction of permitted bicycle traffic may be placed within the contraflow bicycle lane across the intersection or driveway opening.
Figure 9C-x1. Example of Contraflow Bicycle Lane
Figure 9C-x2. Example of Signing for Contraflow Bicycle Lanes at Intersections