NCUTCD Proposal for Changes to the
Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE: Bicycle Technical Committee
ITEM NUMBER: 18B-BIK-02
TOPIC: Bicycle Passing Clearance Sign
ORIGIN OF REQUEST: NCUTCD Bicycle Technical Committee
Mike Cynecki (BTC TF Chair)
R/W TF Members - Tim Haagsma, Robert Seyfried, Charles Meyer

AFFECTED SECTIONS OF MUTCD:
Sections 9B.06a

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY:
• Concurrence by Regulatory Warning Sign Technical Committee: 06/20/2018
• Approved by Bicycle Technical Committee: 06/20/2018
• Approved by NCUTCD Council: 01/11/2019

This is a proposal for recommended changes to the MUTCD that has been approved by the NCUTCD Council. This proposal does not represent a revision of the MUTCD and does not constitute official MUTCD standards, guidance, or options. It will be submitted to FHWA for consideration for inclusion in a future MUTCD revision. The MUTCD can be revised only through the federal rulemaking process.

SUMMARY:
This proposal adds a new Section 9B.06a Bicycle Passing Clearance Sign, and a new sign to Figure 9B-2, which was tested in the 2017 Traffic Control Devices Pooled Fund Study (TCD PFS), with further testing by Dr. Ron Van Houten (member of the Bicycle Technical Committee) during Spring 2018. The sign would be used on roadways where bicycles are allowed to operate, with the exact wording matching the state passing law.

DISCUSSION
The Bicycle Passing Clearance sign is intended to remind motorists of the minimum clearance that a motorist must provide when passing a bicycle according to state law. Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have passed laws requiring some specified minimum clearance to pass a bicycle. The sign may be installed along roadways where bicyclists are legally allowed to operate, and where motorists may be passing cyclists too closely, based on engineering judgement.
The 2017 TCD PFS studied various alternatives for the Bicycle Passing Clearance sign. Alternative 3 showing a bicycle symbol at the top of the sign with “MOTORISTS SHALL GIVE 3 FT CLEARANCE” scored highest for comprehension, legibility, and ranking. In the Spring of 2018, Dr. Ron Van Houten tested a variation of Alternative 3 which placed the bicycle symbol within the text and approximately in the center of the sign. The test was conducted using the same protocols and context as the PFS and found there was no decrease in comprehension and legibility. This variation of Alternate 3 tested better than the version in the FHWA PFS TCD.

The sign included in this proposal is for that variation of the PFS Alternative 3 to place the bicycle symbol within the text of the word message, such that the sign reads as a complete sentence – “MOTORISTS SHALL GIVE BICYCLES (symbol) 3 FT CLEARANCE”. This is consistent with similar signs in the MUTCD such as the R1-6 series.

RECOMMENDED MUTCD CHANGES

The following present the proposed changes to the current MUTCD within the context of the current MUTCD language. Proposed additions to the MUTCD are shown in blue underline and proposed deletions from the MUTCD are shown in red strikethrough. Changes previously approved by NCUTCD Council (but not yet adopted by FHWA) are shown in green double underline for additions and green double strikethrough for deletions. In some cases, background comments may be provided with the MUTCD text. These comments are indicated by [highlighted light blue in brackets].

CHAPTER 9B SIGNS

Section 9C.06a Bicycle Passing Clearance Sign (R4-xx)

Option:
01 Where the law requires a motorist overtaking a bicycle to pass with some specified clearance, the Bicycle Passing Clearance (R4-xx) sign may be used along roadways where bicyclists operate to remind motorists of the required (minimum) passing clearance.
02 The legend STATE LAW may be added within a header panel above the Bicycle Passing Clearance (R4-xx) sign in accordance with Section 2A.15 based on engineering judgment.

Standard:
03 The Bicycle Passing Clearance (R4-xx) sign shall indicate the passing clearance distance required by law.

Guidance:
04 The Bicycle Passing Clearance (R4-xx) sign should not be used on roadways with separated bicycle lanes.
The following new sign is added to Figure 9B-2:

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R4-xx*
24” x 36”

* Clearance distance varies as per applicable state law.

** Header panel is optional.