

CHAPTER 5: BICYCLE GUIDANCE SIGNING

5.1 Purpose

Bicycle guide signs are helpful to direct bicyclists along urban and suburban streets, and highways in rural areas. Guide signs provide bicyclists the following advantages:

- Information about intersecting bicycle routes and shared use paths;
- Distances and directions to cities, towns, villages and neighborhoods; and
- Specific guidance to desirable destinations such as parks and recreation areas, trails, transit stations, schools and universities, libraries and post offices, historic and cultural sites, commercial centers and business districts, residential neighborhoods and other important places.

While conventional guide signs commonly provided to help motorists find their way are useful for bicyclists, they often do not meet bicyclists' needs. Guide signs specifically designed to address the bicyclist's travel needs can be used to augment conventional roadway guide signs.

Bicycle guide signs are typically used to mark one or more bicycle routes; ideally a system of routes planned for a state, sub-state region, local jurisdiction such as city or county, or in a metropolitan community composed of multiple local jurisdictions.

Designated bicycle routes are often developed to serve one or more of various bicycle trip types—such as recreational, commuting or utilitarian trips. The overarching purpose for providing guide signing along a bicycle route should include one or more of the following:

- To provide wayfinding guidance that is necessary to ensure efficient and successful bicycle navigation of a route;
- To provide travel guidance to a specific place or series of places that are frequented by bicyclists or to which bicyclists are likely to desire access;
- To provide an element of permanent and highly visible bicycle transportation marketing in the public realm, as an encouragement to increased use of the bicycle to meet transportation needs, or to support bicycle touring as an economic development activity; or
- To compliment published maps and/or brochures providing bicycle route and travel information related to a specific community, or place within a community.

5.2 Planning Signed Bicycle Routes—Scale and Context

As noted above, signed bicycle routes may be useful at a variety of scales and within various contexts throughout Maryland, such as:

- **State bicycle routes**, frequently on state highways, primarily providing guidance for long distance bicycle travel. Such routes may overlap with or relate to larger regional and national routes that traverse the state of Maryland, such as the East Coast Greenway, American Discovery Trail, or the Bike Centennial Bicycle Route 1 along the Eastern Seaboard.
- **Metropolitan Area bicycle routes and systems**, within large multi-jurisdictional urban areas, such as the Washington, DC area or Greater Baltimore. These routes will typically use a combination of state, county and municipal roadways, and trails.
- **Regional bicycle routes and systems** within multi-jurisdictional areas that are defined by geographic or cultural characteristics, such as the Eastern Shore or Southern Maryland. These routes are likely to use a combination of state, and

county roadways and trails, and some municipal streets. These routes and systems are typically accompanied by promotional maps and/or brochures.

- **Countywide bicycle routes and systems** in urban, suburban or rural counties. The routes area likely to use a combination of state, county and municipal roadways and trails.
- **City or Municipal bicycle routes** using city streets and possibly state roadways. These routes will be wholly within municipal boundaries and may be developed by jurisdictions such as Baltimore City, Rockville, Columbia, Annapolis or Frederick.

5.3 Planning Signed Bicycle Routes—Addressing Specific Wayfinding Needs

In addition to providing general wayfinding guidance, the signing of a specific bicycle route often indicates to cyclists that there are particular advantages to using the route, as compared to an alternate route that may connect the same origin and destination. The following situations are valid warrants for marking a route with guide signs:

- a. The route provides connectivity to/from other bicycle facilities such as bicycle lanes and shared use paths.
- b. The route extends along a series of minor streets that:
 - would be difficult to follow without signs,
 - provides a somewhat less direct route between major destinations, but one with more favorable conditions for bicycling,
 - provides a short cut route between destinations, without requiring use of streets with unfavorable bicycling conditions,
 - leads to an internal neighborhood destination such as a park, school, trail access point or commercial district, that would be hard to find otherwise.
- c. The route provides a low-traffic and/or low speed parallel route to a major arterial roadway or limited access freeway.
- d. The route includes specific improvements made to enhance bicycle safety and convenience.
- e. The route avoids streets with conditions that are difficult for bicyclists such as steep hills, complex intersections, or other physical conditions unfavorable to bicycling.
- f. The route leads to a key bicycle accessible bridge or tunnel, or follows along a roadway that provides the only through access over, under or around an impediment such as a large body of water, a ravine, a railroad yard, an interstate highway, a large residential pod with no outlet, a river, a mountain, etc.
- g. In rural areas, the route is highly popular and generally preferred for bicycling due to low motor vehicle traffic volumes, high scenic and destination values and/or the presence of a paved shoulder.

Typically, a bicycle route should be a minimum of 1 mile in length. Shorter routes to provide connectivity are acceptable.

Routes that are determined to meet any of these navigational needs should be further evaluated to determine if the conditions along the route are generally suitable for bicycling.

5.4 Bicycle Guide Signs—Sign Options

Based on newly approved MUTCD guidance, route planners and designers may choose from the following plaque (plaque-assembly) styles (See Figure 5.1):

1. **D11-1 & D1-1a Assembly:** Standard panel with bicycle symbol and optional legend *BIKE ROUTE*, over a narrow subplate with customized destination, arrow, and

optional distance information (see the Maryland MUTCD for guidance on subplates).

2. **D1-1c:** Standard stand-alone panel with bicycle symbol and customized destination.
3. **D11-1c:** Narrow stand-alone panel with bicycle symbol, customized destination legend, arrow, and optional distance information.

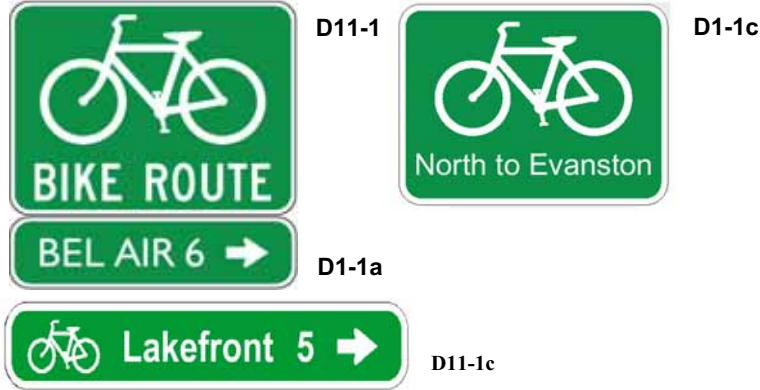


Figure 5.1 - Bicycle Guide Signs

In choosing which guide sign style to use, designers should consider what information they want the signs to communicate. The D11-1c and D1-1c styles may be used in locations where there are concerns about sign clutter. D11-1 or D11-1c should be used when there is a desire to communicate distance information. The sign option selected for a route or route system should be used consistently throughout the route or route system. Signs are typically used at locations where the route turns and as a confirmation provided after turns and periodically on straight stretches of the route. Signs should also be used on route approaches and at intersections with other routes.

For bicycle guide signs to be effective, they must regularly and clearly indicate which direction to go to remain on the route. Signs should be installed at each turn along the route and periodic signs should be placed along long sections of the route using the same road (by name or number), to provide a sense of comfort to cyclists that they have not strayed from the designated route. It is highly recommended that bicyclist-oriented destination and distance information be included, if not already present.



Figure 5.2 - Baltimore City Trail Sign for the Jones Falls Trail



Figure 5.3 - Destination and distance information provide on the Gwynns Falls Trail in Baltimore City.

5.5 Other Signs and Interstate Routes

Shared Use Path Signage: Use of bicycle route guide signs along shared use paths managed by local governments is optional. Park agencies within Maryland utilize a variety of sign types to blaze shared use paths and provide destination and distance information (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Use of the MUTCD bicycle route guide signs to provide supplemental wayfinding information should be undertaken based on need and other considerations such as aesthetic preferences and cost.

Interstate Routes & Trails: A variety of interstate bicycle and trail routes pass through Maryland, including Bicycle Route 1, the East Coast Greenway, and the American Discovery Trail.

- Interstate on-road routes, such as BR 1 should be signed with the M1-9 from the MUTCD.
- The American Discovery Trail has its own sign. Additional information about it can be obtained from the trail sponsor, the American Discovery Trail Society, located in Washington, DC. www.discoverytrail.org.
- The East Coast Greenway (ECG) also has its own sign design (see Figure 5.4) as well as a sign and logo usage protocol. The goal of the ECG is to create an off-road

shared use path between Maine and Florida, however in the interim the route follows a combination of roads and trails. The East Coast Greenway Alliance developed a signage system for use by local trail managers on designated segments of the East Coast Greenway. As trail projects on the designated ECG alignment in Maryland are developed, this sign should be used in conjunction with the standard SHA signs described above. Two sizes of signs are available, one is metal and one is plastic. Arrows are included to indicate turns in the route. Signs with the text “Maine to Florida” are provided for the southbound direction, “Florida to Maine” for the northbound direction. Detailed sign drawings, mounting instructions and guidance for ordering signs in quantity are available from the East Coast Greenway Alliance www.greenway.org.



Figure 5.4 - East Coast Greenway Sign