




U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION:** MUTCD – Interim
Approval for Optional Use of Green
Colored Pavement for Bike Lanes (IA-14)

Date: APR 15 2011

From: 
Jeffrey A. Lindley
Associate Administrator for Operations

In Reply Refer To:
HOTO-1

To: Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers
Division Administrators

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to issue an Interim Approval for the optional use of green colored pavement in marked bicycle lanes and in extensions of bicycle lanes through intersections and other traffic conflict areas. Interim Approval allows interim use, pending official rulemaking, of a new traffic control device, a revision to the application or manner of use of an existing traffic control device, or a provision not specifically described in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Background: Chapter 3G of the 2009 MUTCD contains provisions regarding the use of colored pavements. Paragraph 1 of Section 3G.01 describes colored pavement as consisting of differently colored road paving materials, such as colored asphalt or concrete, or paint or other marking materials applied to the surface of a road or island to simulate a colored pavement.

If colored pavement is used to regulate, warn, or guide traffic, the colored pavement is considered to be a traffic control device. Paragraph 3 of Section 3G.01 limits the use of colored pavement used as a traffic control device to the colors yellow and white. Paragraph 2 of Section 3G.01 discusses the use of colored pavement as a purely aesthetic treatment that is not intended to regulate, warn, or guide traffic and is therefore not considered to be a traffic control device. Part 9, Traffic Control for Bicycle Facilities, of the 2009 MUTCD does not mention colored pavement.

A number of experiments have been conducted in the United States and in other countries around the world to determine the value of designating a particular pavement color to communicate to road users that a portion of the roadway has been set aside for exclusive or preferential use by bicyclists and to enhance the conspicuity of a bicycle lane or a bicycle lane extension. Green, blue, and red are among the colors that have been tested for this purpose. Because these colored pavements are intended to regulate, warn, or guide traffic (motorists and bicyclists) and thus are serving as more than just an aesthetic treatment, they are considered to be traffic control devices.

For the past 10 years in the United States, green has been the only color that has received official FHWA approval for colored pavement experiments on bicycle facilities. Blue colored pavement cannot be designated for exclusive or preferential use in bicycle facilities because it is already the primary color of the international symbol of accessibility parking symbol (see Figure 3B-22 of the 2009 MUTCD) and it is also used for the lines that are adjacent to parking spaces that are reserved for use only by persons with disabilities. The use of red colored pavement has not been approved for any bicycle-related experiments in the United States because it is currently being tested for a different potential use.

Research on Green Colored Pavement for Bike Lanes: Agencies across the United States are showing an increased interest in using colored pavement specifically for bicycle facilities, and many of them have submitted requests to the FHWA to experiment with colored pavement. During the past 10 years, the FHWA has approved experiments with green colored pavement for a variety of State and local governmental agencies, including the following: the Vermont Agency of Transportation; the City of Chicago, IL; the City of New York, NY; the City of St. Petersburg, FL; the City of San Francisco, CA; the City of Portland, OR; the City of Columbia, MO; the City of Long Beach, CA; the City of Austin, TX; the City of Nashville, TN; the City of Missoula, MT; the City of Golden, CO; the Minnesota DOT (for Minneapolis); and the Pennsylvania DOT (for Philadelphia). In these experiments, green colored pavement is being used as a traffic control device to designate locations where bicyclists are expected to operate, and areas where bicyclists and other roadway traffic might have potentially conflicting weaving or crossing movements.

FHWA Evaluation of Results: The Office of Transportation Operations has reviewed the available data and considers the experimental green colored pavement to be satisfactorily successful for the bicycle applications that were tested. Positive operational effects have been noted in the experiments, such as bicyclists positioning themselves more accurately as they travel across intersections and through conflict areas, and no notable negative operational effects have been observed. The research has also shown that bicyclists and motorists both have a positive impression of the effect of the green colored pavement, with bicyclists saying that they feel safer when the green colored pavement is present, and motorists saying that the green colored pavement gives them an increased awareness that bicyclists might be present and where those bicyclists are likely to be positioned within the traveled way.

The design of the experimental green colored pavement is not proprietary and can be used by any jurisdiction that requests and obtains interim approval from the FHWA to use green colored pavement. The FHWA believes that the experimental green colored pavement has a low risk of safety or operational concerns.

This Interim Approval does not create a new mandate compelling the use of green colored pavement, but will allow agencies to install green colored pavement, pending official MUTCD rulemaking, to enhance the conspicuity of a bicycle lane or a bicycle lane extension.

Conditions of Interim Approval: The FHWA will grant Interim Approval for the optional use of green colored pavement in marked bicycle lanes and in extensions of bicycle lanes through intersections and traffic conflict areas to any jurisdiction that submits a written request to the Office of Transportation Operations. A State may request Interim

Approval for all jurisdictions in that State. Jurisdictions using green colored pavement under this Interim Approval must agree to comply with the technical conditions detailed below, to maintain an inventory list of all locations where green colored pavement is installed, and to comply with Item D in Paragraph 18 of Section 1A.10 of the 2009 MUTCD, which requires:

“An agreement to restore the site(s) of the Interim Approval to a condition that complies with the provisions in this Manual within 3 months following the issuance of a Final Rule on this traffic control device; and terminate use of the device or application installed under the interim approval at any time that it determines significant safety concerns are directly or indirectly attributable to the device or application. The FHWA’s Office of Transportation Operations has the right to terminate the interim approval at any time if there is an indication of safety concerns.”

1. General Conditions:

The use of green colored pavement is optional. However, if an agency opts to use green colored pavement under this Interim Approval, the following design and installation requirements shall apply, and shall take precedence over any conflicting provisions of the MUTCD.

2. Allowable Uses:

Green colored pavement may be used within a bicycle lane or within an extension of a bicycle lane to enhance the conspicuity of the bicycle lane or extension.

The use of green colored pavement under this Interim Approval is limited to the following applications:

- a. Green colored pavement may be installed within bicycle lanes as a supplement to the other pavement markings that are required for the designation of a bicycle lane. Green colored pavement shall not be used instead of the longitudinal line required by Paragraph 2 of Section 9C.04 of the 2009 MUTCD or instead of the word, symbol, and arrow pavement markings illustrated in Figure 9C-3 of the 2009 MUTCD and required by Item C in Paragraph 6 of Section 3D.01 of the 2009 MUTCD. The green colored pavement may be installed for the entire length of the bicycle lane or for only a portion (or portions) of the bicycle lane. Green colored pavement may be installed as a rectangular background behind the word, symbol, and arrow pavement markings in a bicycle lane as a means of enhancing the conspicuity of these word, symbol, and arrow pavement markings.
- b. If a pair of dotted lines is used to extend a bicycle lane across an intersection or driveway (see Section 3B.08 of the 2009 MUTCD) or a ramp, green colored pavement may be installed between these lines as a supplement to the lines. Green colored pavement shall not be used instead of these dotted lines to extend a bicycle lane across an intersection, driveway, or ramp. The green colored pavement may be installed for the entire length of the bicycle lane extension or for only a portion (or portions) of the bicycle lane extension. The pattern of the green colored pavement may be dotted in a manner that matches the pattern of the

dotted lines, thus filling in only the areas that are directly between a pair of dotted line segments that are on opposite sides of the bicycle lane extension.

- c. If a pair of dotted lines is used to extend a bicycle lane across the beginning of a turn bay where drivers who desire to turn must cross the bicycle lane when moving out of the through lane in order to turn (see Figures 9C-1, 9C-4, and 9C-5 of the 2009 MUTCD), green colored pavement may be installed between these lines as a supplement to the lines. Green colored pavement shall not be used instead of these dotted lines to extend a bicycle lane across the beginning of a turn bay. The green colored pavement may be installed for the entire length of the bicycle lane extension or for only a portion (or portions) of the bicycle lane extension. The pattern of the green colored pavement may be dotted in a manner that matches the pattern of the dotted lines, thus filling in only the areas that are directly between a pair of dotted line segments that are on opposite sides of the bicycle lane extension.

3. Design of Green Colored Pavement:

- a. The daytime chromaticity coordinates for the color used for green colored pavement shall be as follows:

1		2		3		4	
x	y	x	y	x	y	x	y
0.230	0.754	0.266	0.500	0.367	0.500	0.444	0.555

The daytime luminance factor (Y) shall be at least 7, but no more than 35.

- b. The nighttime chromaticity coordinates for the color used for green colored pavement shall be as follows:

1		2		3		4	
x	y	x	y	x	y	x	y
0.230	0.754	0.336	0.540	0.450	0.500	0.479	0.520

- c. Green colored pavement may be retroreflective, but there is no requirement or recommendation that it be retroreflective.
- d. If green paint or other marking materials applied to the roadway surface are used to simulate a green colored pavement, consideration should be given to selecting pavement marking materials that will minimize loss of traction for bicyclists (see Paragraph 4 of Section 3A.04 of the 2009 MUTCD).

4. Other:

Except as otherwise provided above, all other provisions of the MUTCD that are applicable to colored pavements shall apply to green colored pavement.

Any questions concerning this Interim Approval should be directed to Mr. Bruce Friedman at bruce.friedman@dot.gov.

cc:

Associate Administrators

Chief Counsel

Chief Financial Officer

Directors of Field Services

Director of Technical Services