

Kalamazoo Region Bike Route Committee (KRBRC)

April 23, 2024 Meeting Notes

Participants: Valerian Kwigizile,
Jun Oh, Dick Skalski and Paul Selden (Chair)

These are abbreviated meeting notes, which should suffice until sufficient progress has been made so that updating the previously agreed-upon recommendations in our complete Implementation Plan is justified. In the meantime, the wayfinding principles and their local implications that are emerging from our quarterly meetings may prove helpful (see related section, below).

Goal/Agenda

The primary goal of the meeting was to continue previous discussion and brainstorming about destination place-names on the "D1-series" destination/direction/distance wayfinding signs* on the Southwest Michigan Bikeway. The agenda focused on signage to/from Western Michigan University's (WMU's) Main and Parkview campuses, together with their connections to other destinations.

It is worth noting that WMU's Parkview campus now encompasses more area than its Business Technology Research Park. Large Parkview Campus "gateway" signs are now found both on Drake Road and Parkview Avenue, well before the intersection of Drake Road and Parkview Avenue.

*An example of the D1-series Destination-Direction-Distance guide sign (in Portage at the SE corner of Oakland Dr. at the intersection of Kilgore Rd) is below:



Next KRBRC Meeting

Next quarterly KRBRC Mtgs:

July 16; 11am-noon; location TBD - most likely we will again turn our attention to Portage

October 22; 11am-noon; location TBD – most likely rotating back to Oshtemo or Kalamazoo

Background

KATS staff recommended including WMU and KVCC campuses for inclusion in its to/from bike route mapping, almost from the beginning of a community-wide bike route planning efforts that began in 2012. At that time, KATS staff only wished to include transportation-oriented routes to enduring destinations, and to exclude routes that were primarily recreation-, shopping- and fitness-oriented that were being developed concurrently by additional mapping teams. The transportation-oriented routes were explicitly designed to connect the list of named municipalities and institutions of higher learning* found in Appendix F in the 2045 KATS MTP (see p. 190). These bike route planning efforts to/from named destinations lead to adoption of the routes illustrated in the KATS 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (illustrated in Map 7) and to adoption of the regional-oriented routes illustrated in Maps 13, 13a, 17 and 17a in the

KATS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Following their adoption in the 2045 KATS MTP, the routes in Map 7 were collaboratively named Southwest Michigan Bikeway. KATS refers to these routes as “Regional Routes” in its 2050 MTP. *Destinations are sometimes referred to as “trip generators” in the literature.

Today’s Meeting

This was the second KRBRC meeting to more closely examine aspects of routing and signage raised by the WMU Main and Parkview campuses since adoption of the 2050 KATS MTP. WMU poses one of the more complex destinations in the regional Southwest Michigan Bikeway, in large part due to the number of WMU’s to/from connections.

Factors discussed and considered included:

- WMU's Main campus is immediately adjacent to downtown Kalamazoo
- WMU's Main campus has multiple "gateways"
- the Oakland Drive Campus is Western Michigan University's most recent acquisition
- WMU’s Parkview campus is now considered to include the grounds of its Business Technology and Research Park, Asylum Lake and now includes property being developed off Drake Road that is reached by Robert Jones Way
- signs directing traffic to and within WMU’s campuses may take the place of D1-series signs installed underneath the primary SWMB signs, on a case by case basis depending on the location
- the current Southwest Michigan Bikeway node to/from the Parkview Campus is at the main entrance to the CEAS building on Campus Drive, almost ½ mile from the “new” center of the Parkview campus; it is no longer considered to be the “center” of the Parkview campus
- a multi-use path is now adjacent to Drake Rd between Stadium Dr and Parkview Av
- to/from destinations to WMU campuses include Portage, Kalamazoo, Oshtemo Twp, Climax (village), Alamo Twp, Schoolcraft (village), Texas Corners as well as between the Main and Parkview campuses.

Questions Raised / Answered / Tabled

At this meeting participants reviewed and discussed a number of questions. Some were clearly answered. Others will be addressed at later meetings. What follows are the questions as they were raised, together with their disposition.

Question 1

Should we recommend additional corridor-connecting SWMB routes connecting WMU’s Parkview Campus (e.g., connecting Parkview Av to/from Stadium Dr/9th St and/or using Drake Road’s non-motorized path)?

Disposition

The group confirmed their earlier recommendations:

- 1a. Extending SWMB routing from the intersection of Drake Road and Parkview Avenue to the intersection of West Michigan Avenue and 9th Street. Doing so would be consistent with Oshtemo Township’s plans for this area and in effect also would create a more direct east-west Southwest Michigan Bikeway corridor across the central portion of the KATS MPO.

- 1b. Tabling further discussion of an additional route between WMU's Main and Parkview Campuses, pending a review of a potential bike route that could make use of the multi-use path along Drake Rd. and routing along Stadium Dr.

Question 2a

Should we recommend using the intersection of Drake Rd and Parkview Av as the to/from node to the Parkview campus for purposes of D1-series distance legends, instead of the node at the College Circle/Campus Dr. intersection (more or less in front of Elson S. Floyd Hall)?

Disposition

The group confirmed their previous "Yes" answer. Doing so would be more consistent with WMU's plans for its Parkview Campus. Large gateway signs both on Parkview Av. and on Drake Rd now welcome visitors to the Parkview Campus well in advance of the intersection of Parkview Av and Drake Rd. WMU could still erect primary SWMB signs along Campus Dr. at its discretion; local directional signs to various buildings along Campus Dr already exist.

Question 2b

Should we recommend deleting the loop shown on the KATS maps connecting the intersection of Drake Rd and Parkview Av to the node at the College Circle/Campus Dr. intersection (more or less in front of Elson S. Floyd Hall)?

Disposition

The group answered, "Yes." Local directional signs to various buildings along Campus Dr already exist.

Question 3

Should some of the SWMB routes to/from WMU's Main and Parkview campuses be signed as such with the primary M1-8a sign, and add campus-oriented D1-series starting at an agreed-upon distance of campus? For example, a long SWMB route connects Climax to WMU's Parkview Campus (there are a number of comparable campus-oriented routes), so, should D1-series signage direct traffic all the way between the Parkview Campus and Climax? (See related question below.)

Disposition

The group answered a conditional "yes." The group agreed that primary SWMB signs should still be installed along these routes, if only to maintain the various longer east-west and north-south SWMB regional corridors. At the very least, D1-series plaques should begin to be posted within a distance of 3-5 miles of each campus and at turns along the route. As experience is gained, additional D1-series signs could be installed further from each campus. *Comment: Farther from each campus, it may be reasonable to direct users to an intermediate jurisdictional border such as Portage or Kalamazoo, and install campus-oriented signage from there.*

Question 4

How far away from the WMU campuses, should their D1-series directional signage begin?

Disposition

Per the previous question's disposition, D1-series plaques should begin to be posted within a distance of 3-5 miles of each campus, and at turns along the route. At this meeting it was agreed that at a minimum, directions to WMU's Parkview (BTR) campus should be added to the intersection at Parkview Av / Oakland Dr, and, directions to WMU's Main campus at the intersection of Drake Rd. / West Michigan Av. As experience is gained, additional D1-series signs could be installed further from each campus. *Comment: The question of whether distances should be posted on the D1-series signs within a distance of one mile remains to be discussed; distances can be measured to the nearest tenth of a mile.*

Question 5

What are Western Michigan University's preferred destination labels for the D1-series plaques?

Disposition

The group offered the following ideas as "brainstorms."

- WMU-Main
- WMU-Main Cps
- WMU-Main Cmps
- WMU-CEAS
- WMU-BTR
- WMU-BTR Park
- WMU-BTR Cmps
- WMU-Pkvw Cps
- WMU-Parkview
- WMU-Parkview C
- WMU-Parkview Cps
- WMU-Oakland Dr

D1-Series Signing Principles Offered for Comment to Date

This was another in our series of meetings for those most interested in the local and long-term implications of the principles and local implications that we hope will emerge from this series of discussions. The principles below are offered in draft form. Their local application remains to be agreed upon.

Principle: Local Destination Naming

KRBRC is currently taking the position that, as part of a destination's larger place making and community development efforts, the named destinations are being encouraged to state their preference for legends appearing on the D1 signs leading to and within their borders. *Comment: An emerging consensus about the D1-series destination names, based on numerous public community surveys, has been reported on in previous KRBRC Meeting Notes.*

Principle: Using Established Destination Names

In cases where the municipal destination name is synonymous with a central business district or

seat of government, from destinations outside that municipality, change the legend sign at the municipal border to "Downtown" or to the name of its civic center if that name is established. (See notes, April 18, 2023). Comment: This principle is similar to how Interstate highways count down their mileage signs to a city's central business district.

Principle: Using Jurisdictional Border Names

In cases where:

- no simple name for a (municipal) destination "center" is commonly associated with the
- municipality as a whole
- a single municipal center is not a safe destination to direct cyclists
- the municipal "center" is not on a planned Southwest Michigan Bikeway route,

then

- the D1-series signs can state the name of the municipality and the mileage element of the D1 legend can count down to the jurisdiction border. SWMB primary signage can then continue at that point, and additional D1-series signs can then provide direction within the municipality. *Comment: This principle is similar to how Interstate highways count down their mileage to state borders, then count down mileage from the state border to other named destinations within the state.*

Other principles may emerge over time. The titles on the principles are suggestive and for convenient reference during KRBRC meetings. The titles are not meant to be official in other senses of the word and may change, as well.

References

As a public service, Bike Friendly Kalamazoo maintains resources concerning bike routing on various pages on its web site at <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org> and a web page dedicated to resources concerning the Southwest Michigan Bikeway at <https://bikefriendlykalamazoo.org/sw-mi-bikeway/>

Thank you to our meeting host, Dr. Jun Oh. Please report corrections to Paul Selden.