

# Ed Sackley

January 17, 2019

Mr. Paul Selden, Chair and Committee Members  
Kalamazoo Region Bike Route Committee

Dear Paul and Fellow Cycling Enthusiasts,

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts and express support for your work -- specifically, the facilitation and full implementation of the Southwest Michigan Bikeway (“Map 7”). I am encouraged by grassroots efforts throughout our greater Kalamazoo community to enhance the Southwest Michigan Bikeway’s interconnectivity, appeal, usefulness, safety and fun! My pedaling covers about 500 miles per year within Kalamazoo County and I love living here. We’re poised to demonstrate to local cyclists and visitors from all over that our Bikeway is not only well-built, but user-friendly and well-executed.

I have been very fortunate to travel in over 100 countries around the world and have enjoyed hiking and cycling on six of the seven continents. Had I been able to find a fat tire bike in Antarctica, it would have been seven. As a globetrotting cyclist, I understand the potential impact of language and wayfaring on my two-wheeled activities. Accordingly, I’ve developed deep appreciation for the willingness of far-flung cultures to welcome folks like me to their streets, sidewalks, bikeways and paths in ways that soften or eliminate those impacts. The way their messages are delivered differs, of course, but there’s one thing consistent in all the “best practice” cases I’ve observed. Every element is designed and executed from the users’ perspective.

Eight days ago, I returned from a two-week visit with family in Yokohama, Japan. It’s a vibrant city of 4.5 million people and hundreds of thousands of them ride bicycles every day. Their “Green Matrix System” is an extensive spiderweb of paved and unpaved non-motorized, mixed-use trails that connect parks, forests, shopping areas, recreation facilities, schools and neighborhoods. Although I cannot comprehend their language’s katakana and kanji character sets, I had absolutely no difficulty in navigating the 14.5 km trail segment I enjoyed every day. The creators made it easy for everyone.

The Yokohama planners employed a sophisticated and well-integrated and themed system of directional and informational signs, waypoints, kilometer markers (essential to any trail system) and “You Are Here” overview maps that made it nearly impossible for users to become lost or disoriented. They were supported by the unique “Green Matrix” network designation and consistent design elements. It literally felt like the system had wrapped its arms around me. Outside the Matrix, approaches shared the same spirit. Although external signage was guided by the design elements of the municipality, it directed users into the Matrix and back out into the community much like our highway ramps. Interestingly, railway roundabouts were abundant as spurs intersected. The railway system has its own identity and users feel comfortable regardless of their activity (cycling, walking, jogging, dog walking, or just sitting on benches). One additional benefit I appreciated was the tendency to go off and explore new areas and trails

because I always knew where they would lead. It also struck me that since Yokohama is by no means a tourist destination, their trailway and signage system was just developed for the locals. I'm glad they did.

Those of you who know me also know that I can go on forever about my passions. I'm almost done. My recent Japanese experience is just one of many I can recount. Whether it's on the footpaths of England and Scotland, the rolling hills of Kenya, the streets of Buenos Aires or the Southwest Michigan Bikeway, distinctive and meaningful signage not only complements a trail system, it brings it to life. Going forward, our community must continue to demonstrate its innovation and leadership. The proposed M1-8a sign concept is a great conceptual model which, when complemented by destination/distance/directional placard signs and arrows, will help our community wrap its arms around all who will enjoy our Southwest Michigan Bikeway and its connections.

See you on the trails!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Sackley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Ed Sackley  
Former Portage City Council Member and Planning Commissioner  
Member, Gear Geezers

P.S. In the interest of full disclosure, my friend, Samwell Danford, rode his trail bike to Uhuru Peak atop Mt. Kilimanjaro (19,341 feet) without the benefit of signage.

cc: Steve Deisler, Texas Township Zoning/Planning Administrator