BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

In the Matter of:	)	
Proposed Revisions to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways	)	Docket No. FHWA-2020-0001

COMMENTS OF ALEXANDER HADIARIS, STUDENT
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This comment is submitted in response to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) proposed revisions to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD). I am a first-year law student at Boston College Law School with an interest in increasing the use of my bicycle around the Boston area. I write to comment on my support of the proposed new sections concerning Buffer-Separated Bicycle Lanes and Separated Bicycle Lanes. I appreciate your consideration of my comments regarding these proposed revisions to the MUTCD.

INTRODUCTION

The FHWA issued a notice of proposed amendments (NPA) and request for comments on December 14, 2020. The FHWA extended the comment period from March 15, 2021 to May 14, 2021. The Secretary of Transportation is given authority under 23 U.S.C. 109(d), 315 and 402(a) to promulgate these provisions, and FHWA is delegated this authority under 49 CFR 1.85.

The proposed revisions of the MUTCD are created in response to the need to update standards and guidance for the continued safety of public roads. These revisions will culminate in the 11th edition of the MUTCD. Two of the proposed revisions, Section 9E.06 and Sections 9E.07, include sections to provide Support, Standard, Option, and Guidance statements for Buffer-Separated Bicycle Lanes and Separated Bicycle Lanes.

I support the efforts of the FHWA to streamline the incorporation of bicycle infrastructure onto our public roads, particularly cities. The importance of these revisions is evident by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (FHTSA) statistics which state that in 2018, 79% of pedalcyclist (nonmotorized vehicle powered solely by pedals) deaths occurred in urban areas – areas that can most benefit from improved bicycling infrastructure. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812884. Moreover, I offer the following thoughts in further support of the addition of the proposed bicycling sections, especially at this moment:

1. The Global Increase in Bicycling and Success of Pop-Up Bicycle Lanes
2. Infrastructure Preference of Low-Income Bicyclists
3. Methods of Combating Increased Traffic Congestion
4. Goals of the Biden Administration

1. THE GLOBAL INCREASE IN BICYCLING AND SUCCESS OF POP-UP BICYCLE LANES

In a study conducted in European cities during the Covid-19 Pandemic, researchers found that adding bicycling infrastructure by way of pop-up bicycle lanes resulted in an increase in bicyclists in those cities. Sebastian Kraus & Nicholas Koch, *Provision COVID-19 infrastructure induces rapid increases in cycling*, Proc. of the Nat'l Acad. of Sci of the U.S., Apr. 2021, at 3.

The study revealed the greatest increase in bicyclists in cities with high population density and cities with populations that heavily relied on public transportation.

Therefore, by adopting the Manual's recommendations, cities like Boston could potentially see substantial increase in the number of bicyclists due to the density of the city and ridership of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

Research also has shown that bicycle demand has increased during the pandemic potentially signaling a widespread change in commuter behavior. Christina Goldbaum, *Thinking of Buying a Bike? Get ready for a Very Long Wait*, NEW YORK TIMES (May 18, 2020), https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/nyregion/bike-shortage-coronavirus.html. Individuals have invested in bicycles due to a global disruption and providing protective infrastructure could transform this boom into long term bicycle use. This recent disruption in behavior due to the pandemic and the success of pop-up bike lanes in certain European cities suggests a population ready for further implementation of bicycling infrastructure. Bicycling appears to be at the forethought of many Americans, and now is the opportune time to provide the lanes necessary for new bicyclists to safely enjoy the roads. Moreover, because cities are where most pedalcyclists deaths occur, this number has the potential to increase due to the number of new riders on the roads absent better infrastructure.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE PREFERENCE OF LOW-INCOME BICYCLISTS

According to a study, low-income bicyclists preferred protected bicycle lanes. It is important to remember that the recent popularity surrounding bicycle use, particularly in cities, is not the sole reason to adopt the recent provisions. As individuals continue to receive vaccinations and possibly return to old behaviors, it is possible this group of new bicyclists return to past

methods of transportation, but low-income riders will likely continue to rely on their bicycles. These bicyclists deserve better protection on the roads.

A large group of Americans who bike to work come from households earning less than $50,000, many of which earn less than $10,000. Anne Lusk, *Bike-friendly cities should be designed for everyone, not just wealthy white cyclists*, THE CONVERSATION (Feb. 2019, 6:31 AM), https://theconversation.com/bike-friendly-cities-should-be-designed-for-everyone-not-just-for-wealthy-white-cyclists-109485. Moreover, in a study surveying bicycle practice preferences in a lower income neighborhood, cycle tracks were the preferred bicycle facilities as opposed to less protective measures such as painted or stenciled lane markings. Anna Lusk, Albert Anastasio, Nicholas Shaffer, Juan Wu & Yanping Li, *Biking practices and preferences in a lower income, primarily minority neighborhood: Learning what residents want*, Preventative Medicine Rep., Jan. 2017, at 235. Cycle tracks are protected lanes. Although buffer-separated bicycle lanes offer less protection, areas unable, for any reason, to adopt the gold standard of a separated protected lane would still find more protection in a buffer-separated lane than a painted or stenciled lane.

3. METHODS OF COMBATING INCREASED TRAFFIC CONGESTION

While these types of bicycle lanes may cause added congestion, this can be mitigated by congestion pricing and dynamic pricing. By devoting more space to either buffer-separated or separated bicycle lanes, especially in older, developed cities with little room on the streets, there is potential for further congestion on the roads. As an individual who relies on a car and wants to shift some of those miles to bicycling, I understand the possible hesitation for this type of implementation on our public roads.

Congestion pricing may be one of the solutions to offset the reduced road space resulting from bicycle infrastructure. Congestion pricing is a way in which for cities to manage the number of cars on the roads during certain hours by raising prices for use of the roads. Nicolas V. Serna, *Managing Traffic in Massachusetts: Assessing the Potential Income Equity Impacts of Congestion Pricing in Greater Boston*, April 2019 at 6. According to the study, in order to not put a burden onto lower income households, congestion pricing attempts to take into account the socioeconomic backgrounds of drivers coming into cities via different routes. Availability and quality of public transportation also factored into the study as individuals may require alternative forms of transportation due to the raised prices.

By adopting congestion pricing, especially in areas which experience high influx of commuters from outside the city, cities may sufficiently reduce the number of cars on the roads during peak hours so as to warrant buffer-separated or separated bicycle lanes.

Moreover, "dynamic pricing" rates on meters may prove another method of reducing congestion within cities and provide sufficient room for buffer-separated and separated bicycle lanes. Lisa Creamer, *Increase in Metered Parking Costs Led To More Spaces, Say Boston Officials*, (Feb. 21, 2018) https://www.wbur.org/news/2018/02/21/metered-parking-program-more-space. Dynamic pricing assesses the availability of spaces in a neighborhood or district and adjusts the price of the meter accordingly. According to Boston Officials, results varied in the city depending on the neighborhood. The city stated that the extra revenue from the raised prices would be reinvested into other transportation projects, potentially reducing car dependency.

Congestion pricing could work in conjunction with dynamic pricing as the extra revenue raised from the increase in parking meter costs could be reinvested into public transportation, which was a relevant factor in the success of congestion pricing.

4. GOALS OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Wednesday, May 31, 2021, President Biden unveiled a $2 trillion dollar plan to improve the country's infrastructure. The President called the bill, "a once-in-a-generation investment in America." Jim Tankersley, *Biden Details $2 Trillion Plan to Rebuild Infrastructure and Reshape the Economy*, The New York Times (March 31, 2021; updated April 15, 2021), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/business/economy/biden-infrastructure-plan.html. Part of the proposed plan includes $20 billion for the improvement of "Road safety for all users, including increases to existing safety programs and a new Safe Street for All program to fund state and local 'vision zero' plans and other improvements to reduce crashes and fatalities, especially for cyclists and pedestrians." https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/. Although the plain language does not include investment specifically in buffer-separated and separated bicycle lanes, the safety measures can be inferred, and by adding to the revisions to the MUTCD, these types of safety measures can offer cities necessary guidance on creating buffer-separated and separated bicycle lanes.

The goals of the Biden Administration coupled with the timing of the proposed revisions to the MUTCD offer a unique opportunity to implement the proposed revisions concerning bicycle safety.

CONCLUSION

Adding the proposed revisions regarding buffer-separated bicycle lanes and separated bicycle lanes will offer guidance to cities to implement these needed traffic devices. The country is experiencing a disruption in bicycling behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leading many

to try out bicycling, some for the first time. Moreover, lower income riders make up the majority of bicycle commuters, which should provide sufficient incentive for the FHWA to adopt the proposed revisions to the MUTCD.

Adding these types of lanes will likely reduce road space for cars in already congested cities, but cities should be able to implement certain measures including congestion pricing and dynamic pricing to counter these effects.

The revisions to the MUTCD arrive at an opportune time as the current administration is pushing for upgrades in infrastructure across the country, and I hope the FHWA adopts the proposed sections.

Respectfully submitted,

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