



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

April 11, 2003

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. Fred M. Cain
4830 South 500 West
Topeka, IN 46571-9046

Thank you for your January 30 letter to Mr. Ernest Huckaby, Team Leader, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) requesting a change in the design of the route marker for the U.S. numbered highways. For reference purposes, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has assigned your request the following official request for change number and title: 2-511(c)-U.S. Route Shield Design.

Information and requirements for traffic control devices for roads open to public travel in the United States are set forth in the MUTCD which is available on the FHWA website at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov>. The requirements for the design of the U.S. Route shield is set forth in Section 2D.11 as follows:

Section 2D.11 Design of Route Signs

Standard:

The "Standard Highway Signs" book shall be used for designing route signs.

Other route sign designs shall be established by the authority having jurisdiction.

Standard:

U.S. Route signs shall consist of black numerals on a white shield surrounded by a black background without a border. This sign shall be used on all U.S. routes and in connection with route sign assemblies on intersecting highways. A 600 x 600 mm (24 x 24 in) minimum sign size shall be used for U.S. route numbers with one or two digits, and a 750 x 600 mm (30 x 24 in) minimum sign size shall be used for U.S. route numbers having three digits.



The design for the U.S. Route shield was adopted before 1961 and has remained unchanged for more than 40 years. Some States prior to 1961 used a design similar to the one illustrated in your letter. To improve the legibility of the U.S. Route shield with the fine detail illustrated in your letter, the States recommended and the Bureau of Public Roads adopted as a standard for all highway agencies to use on public roads in the 1961 MUTCD a design with improved legibility by using a cut-out of the shape of the U.S. Route shield and increasing the height of the numerals and their brush stroke width. These changes resulted in an increase in legibility distance of more than 25 percent and acceptance of this design by the States as the standard design.

In your letter, you suggest a change in the design of the U.S. Route shield to a "fine detail" design. This design creates a narrow width outline of the U.S. Route shield as well as a decreased height and width of the route numerals. In your opinion, this design appears to be more esthetically pleasing. For a change such as this to be considered, research is needed to demonstrate the legibility of your suggested design. If you have such research, please forward it to us at FHWA. Because signs must be read and understood by a wide variety of travelers, research and the results of experimentation are the basis for any change to the MUTCD. Until research is available, your request for change is denied. We would review your request again when research is available.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Mr. Fred Ranck at 708-283-3545.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelley J. Row". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

/ Shelley J. Row, P.E.

Director, Office of Transportation
Operations