



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
1401 EAST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

**GREGORY A. WHIRLEY**  
ACTING COMMISSIONER

September 23, 2005

Ms. Regina S. McElroy, Director  
Office of Transportation Operations (HOTO)  
Federal Highway Administration  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Request for Permission to Experiment  
Historic Triangle Wayfinding Signs**

Dear Ms. McElroy:

In accordance with the provisions of Section 1A.10 of the 2003 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) requests permission to experiment with wayfinding signs. Details are contained in the attachments which include the specific experimentation request, a copy of the 2005 Frazier Associates report titled "Historic Triangle Wayfinding Sign System Study", and one set of drawings showing sign layouts and locations.

If you need any further information or have any questions regarding the experiment, please contact Mr. Philip Hopkins, Assistant Division Administrator – Traffic Engineering Division. He may be reached at (804) 786-2918 or [Jphilip.Hopkins@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:Jphilip.Hopkins@vdot.virginia.gov).

Your favorable consideration of this proposal will be appreciated.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory A. Whirley".

Gregory A. Whirley

Attachments

cc: Mr. Roberto Fonseca-Martinez

**Historic Triangle Wayfinding Sign System  
MUTCD Request for Permission to Experiment  
Virginia Department of Transportation  
September 22, 2005**

**Problem Statement:**

Chapter 2D of the 2003 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) establishes the standards for wayfinding signs on conventional roads. Additional draft guidelines were developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and distributed on March 8, 2004; however, these have not been incorporated as part of the MUTCD. Standards are provided for background colors, legend colors and size, enhancement markers, and graphics.

The "Historic Triangle" in Virginia is named for the historic areas comprising and surrounding Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown Virginia. This area is one of the premier tourist attractions in the nation. In March 2005, Frazier Associates prepared the Historic Triangle Wayfinding Sign System Study. Assisting Frazier Associates was a planning group including representatives from the City of Williamsburg, James City County, York County, the College of William and Mary, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Bush Gardens/Water Country USA, the National Park Service, the Williamsburg Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). A copy of the Frazier study and corresponding sign plans are included with this request to experiment.

The results of the Frazier study, was a series for wayfinding signs leading from I-64 to historic sites in Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown. On I-64 there would be a Supplemental Guide sign in each direction at the boundary of the geographical area defined as the "Historic Triangle". This sign would introduce the traveler to the color-coding with graphics used throughout the wayfinding system. Gateway signs would be used at the beginning of major corridors and trailblazer signs used to direct travelers to specific destinations. A dark blue background will be used with white lettering for the legend. A unique red and white graphic will be used throughout to enhance the traveler's ability to depict and follow these signs. Due to the historic nature of the area, some trailblazer sign panels will have a unique curvature to the top of the sign to give it a more historical look. Additionally, the "Colonial Williamsburg" legend will have a script font, which is used on other signing throughout the area.

There may be conflict between the proposed background color with a red and white graphic, the panel design for type B trailblazers, and the script font for the legend, versus the wayfinding standards in the 2003 MUTCD.

**Scope of Experimentation:**

The Virginia Department of Transportation proposes to experiment with the following wayfinding signing and supplemental freeway guide sign designs consistent with the FHWA draft Wayfinding Guide Signing dated March 8, 2004:

- permit additional background colors to fit in with a specific region,
- permit pictographs (graphic displays) that enhances the travelers recognition of the wayfinding sign system for a region
- permit special panel designs to reflect the unique character of a region
- permit supplemental guide signs on freeways/expressways to introduce the traveler to the wayfinding sign system

#### **Research and Evaluation Plan:**

Wayfinding signs will be fabricated and installed as indicated in the Frazier study. The costs for fabrication and installation of these signs will be borne by the three local jurisdictions involved. A customer service survey will be developed to determine driver reaction to the sign colors, design, fonts, and placement. This will include their ability to read, locate, and follow the signs. This survey may be conducted at visitor centers and/or major destinations and/or by telephone.

Several of the corridors will be selected for before and after crash analysis to determine if the signs have any impact on crashes. At a minimum, the crash data will include one year before and one year after sign installation.

This experiment will not address Chapter IV of the Frazier report relative current signs on I-64.

#### **Certification Statement:**

VDOT certifies that the proposed traffic control devices (signs) are not protected by a patent or copyright.

#### **Duration:**

It is expected that the Historic Triangle wayfinding signs will be installed by the July 1, 2006. Accident data from the period July 1, 2006 through 2007 will be used for the analysis of crash data for the after condition. Since there is a six-month lag in obtaining the accident data, the crash data analysis will not be started until June 2008. The final report will be prepared by December 2008.

#### **Restoration Agreement:**

VDOT agrees to remove all experimental signs unless the experiment is deemed successful and official rule making action is requested to amend the MUTCD to include this signing practice. Removal will occur within three months of notification by FHWA that the results were not successful.

VDOT agrees to terminate the experiment immediately upon determination that significant safety or operational hazards are directly or indirectly attributable to the experiment.

**Reports:**

VDOT agrees to provide FHWA with semi-annual progress reports for the duration of the experiment and agrees to provide a copy of the final results on the experiment to FHWA within three months following completion of the experiment.