

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

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

January 28, 2004

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. Mark T. Hodges  
Mobility Management Division  
Virginia Department of Transportation  
Washington Building, 12th Floor  
1100 Bank Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Hodges:

Thank you for your January 20 email message to Mr. Scott Wainwright of our staff, requesting an interpretation of Section 3B.19 of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) regarding the use of a symbol pavement marking in the approximate shape and color of the Interstate Route Sign (M 1-1). The route sign symbol marking is elongated so that, from the road user's perspective, it appears to be the shape of the M1-1 sign.

Section 3B.19 (Pavement Word and Symbol Markings) contains text pertinent to this issue, including the following: "Word and symbol markings may include, but are not limited to, the following. Other words and symbols may also be used under certain conditions." That text is followed by a list of various regulatory, warning, and guide messages. Under the category of guide messages are listed "US 40," "STATE 135," and "ROUTE 40." Section 3B.19 also states that "Symbol messages are preferable to word messages." It also contains a Standard statement: "Word and symbol messages shall be white, except as otherwise noted in this Section."

Although the Interstate shield pavement marking symbol contains the colors red and blue in addition to white, such colors provide an enhanced message to road users. The use of these colors in a pavement marking symbol for directional guidance to an Interstate numbered route provides an accurate depiction of the highly recognizable Interstate Route Sign. Such a marking is instantaneously identifiable and very clearly supplements and enhances the roadside or overhead directional sign assemblies that include the M1-1 shield. As you pointed out in your message, there are physical and geometric conditions that make use of such a marking highly desirable to provide the road users with adequate directional and lane usage guidance information.

In consideration of the above, it is our interpretation that a red, blue, and white pavement marking symbol that accurately portrays the shape and color of the M1-1 sign, while meeting all other requirements of Part 3 regarding size, placement, etc., is in compliance

with the intent of Section 3B.19 and may be used where applicable on streets and highways, as determined by engineering judgment. This interpretation is limited to the Interstate shield pavement marking symbol and does not apply to other new pavement marking symbols that may be developed.

We plan to develop a detailed design layout for the Interstate shield pavement marking symbol and add it to the Standard Highway Signs book so that agencies will have a fully uniform design for this symbol marking.

Thank you for writing on this subject. If you have any questions, please call Mr. Wainwright at 202-366-0857. Please note that we have assigned your request the following official interpretation number and title: "3-162(I)-Section 3B.19 Interstate Shield Pavement Marking."

Please refer to this number in future correspondence.

Sincerely yours,

Regina S. McElroy  
Director, Office of Transportation  
Operations