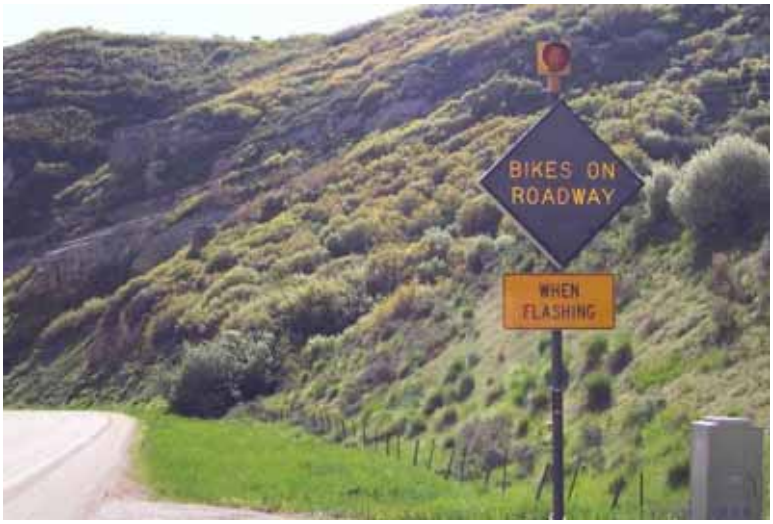
Planning & Design for Cycling – SIGN OF THE TIMES

In some earlier Planning/Design articles (*ChainLinks*, Aug/Nov 2002), we discussed some of the issues with providing for cyclists on rural roads and narrow bridges. A lot of the answer simply comes down to providing adequate clearance between cyclists and passing motorists. But it should also be acknowledged that finding that extra shoulder space on bridges or in tricky terrain can be very expensive.

As an intermediate treatment, warning signs could be installed to alert motorists to the potential dangers of encountering cyclists on a narrow road. However a standard yellow diamond warning sign is likely to be ignored if cyclists are actually relatively rare. Most rural cycle routes, with typically fewer than 100 cyclists a day, would fall into that category.

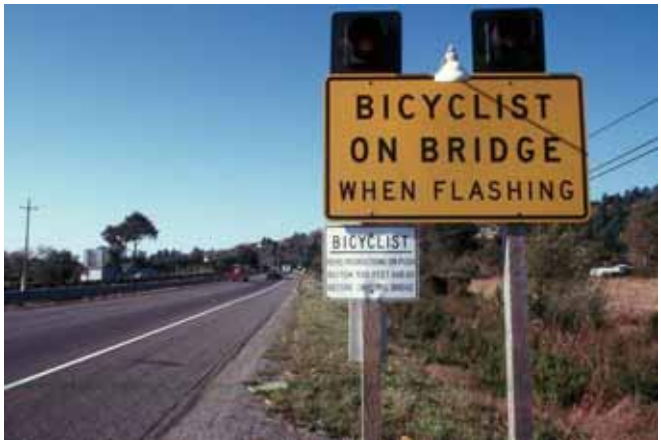
One innovative solution used in the US is to provide push-button devices that cyclists can activate before entering narrow sections of highway. These provide a more active warning (e.g. flashing lights) for a period of time, so motorists know that cyclists are in the vicinity.



Active warning sign on a narrow winding road near Steamboat, Colorado.

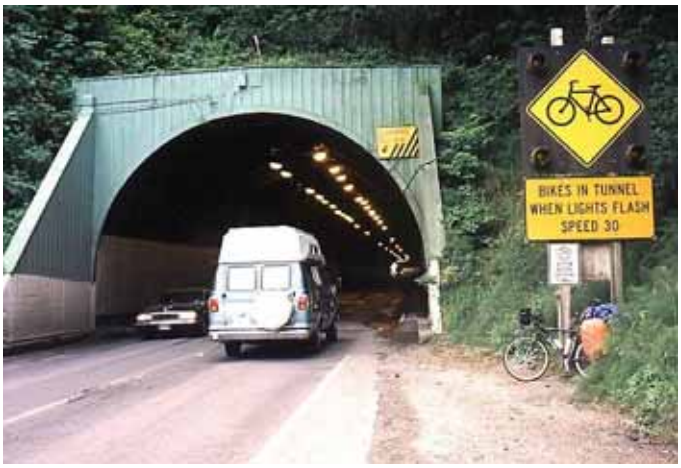
These provide a cost-effective solution (probably ~$20,000 per installation) when the costs of upgrading a highway, bridge, or even tunnel are too prohibitive at present.

Thinking it through, there's no real need for a system like this to have a push-button device that cyclists have to slow for. A loop detector in the shoulder could be installed instead to trigger the warning system; a design with a small kerb island could prevent other vehicles from straddling the loop and falsely triggering it.



Mad River Bridge, California

It is important to remember that these are ***interim*** treatments; ultimately a better cycling environment (on or off-road) needs to be provided. They are also dependent on motorists understanding the signs and acting appropriately, so some driver education is probably necessary. However we can probably all think of some locations where something like this would be of great benefit to cyclists.



Arch Cape Tunnel, Oregon

Some Relevant Reading

- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), 2002. *Innovative Bicycle Treatments*, 149 pp., gives details and contacts for these applications in the U.S. – order from ***www.ite.org***.

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