WAYFINDING AND BRANDING GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES

It is important that trail users have access to information to enhance their experience. Trail information can be disseminated in a wide variety of formats, including kiosks, brochures, websites, guidebooks, and on-trail signs and blazes. Even with good trail guides and websites available, trail signage is indispensable. If trail users are uncertain about trail location or direction, they may become disoriented. They may also be unaware of opportunities to make connections to certain destinations via the on-street network, which will be particularly important information to communicate along the urban trails in Klamath Falls.

A standardized wayfinding system is a means of creating a cohesive and consistent brand and enhancing the overall appearance of the trail system. This increases awareness of where a connected system exists, potentially leading to increased use of the system. A trail wayfinding plan should provide specific and detailed design recommendations, as well as information about installation of trail signs. It is important to ensure that signs do not overwhelm the trail in complexity or number. A balance must be reached between providing signage for users to find their way and avoiding "sign pollution."

The following topics are covered in these guidelines:

- Objectives of a wayfinding system

- Sign design

- Sign Locations

- Maintenance

These guidelines are meant to inform a future effort to develop a comprehensive wayfinding and signing system for the urban trails in Klamath Falls. Such an effort could be completed with the help of a professional private company, completed internally by agency staff, or prepared as part of a partnership with local trail groups. However the project is moved forward, the following agencies, as owners of the various trails in the urbanized area of Klamath Falls, should be involved in the process:

- City of Klamath Falls

- Klamath County

- Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)

- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)

- United States Bureau of Reclamation

OBJECTIVES OF A WAYFINDING SYSTEM

The recommended objectives for a wayfinding system for the urban trails in Klamath Falls are:

- improve the trail user experience;

- create a consistent brand;

- improve travel within and between various trails and on-street connections;

- increase comfort and confidence in navigating the trail system;

- enhance the safety of people, vehicles, and property;

- promote trail use for multiple purposes (e.g., transportation, recreation).

Beyond navigation and ease of movement, consistent and thorough wayfinding can contribute greatly to the identity and sense of place within a trail. When visitors can easily recognize a consistent aesthetic throughout a place comprised of elements (such as gateways, directional signs, parking signs, and informational kiosks) they have greater confidence that the area they are in is safer, more established, more cared for and generally have a more positive experience than in places that have no clear identity. People often naturally gravitate towards areas that they can quickly identify and recognize, thereby increasing the traffic along the trail and to the area in general, helping stimulate economic vitality.

Effective wayfinding communicates the right information at the right time. By developing a hierarchy of information delivery, the user is not overloaded with information: they are given just enough information to find their way to a destination and to understand their location in relation to the environment in which they find themselves. Studies show that an optimum level of information can be understood and retained, beyond this level the user becomes disoriented and information delivery becomes less effective.

A branded and cohesive wayfinding system for the trail can help in successfully drawing not only locals, but visitors through consistent sign messages and signs posted at key decisions point allowing for ease of travel. Consistency in sign style, colors, and materials will help brand the trail thereby drawing attention and recognition to it along with stimulating the economy. Holistically, wayfinding is a key component in telling the story of the trail.

SIGN DESIGN

The following section provides basic guidelines to consider in developing the sign design.
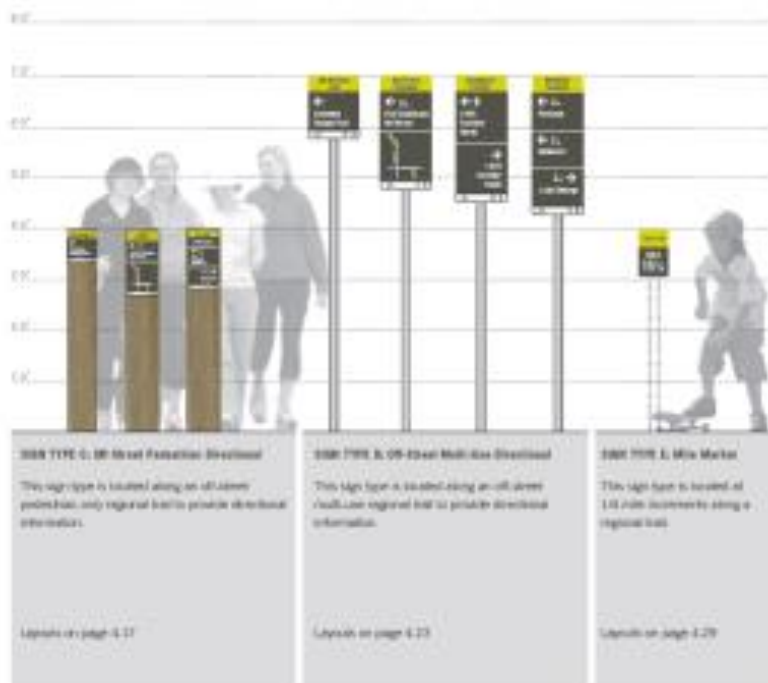
General Guidelines

Figure 1 Sign Located on Springwater Trail in Portland

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Trail signs are key elements to effective, safe wayfinding. It is important to understand that the design and implementation of wayfinding signs—including trail signs—are directed and governed by rules and standards. A*ny signage within a public roadway right-of-way must be approved by the managing agency (i.e., City of Klamath Falls, Klamath County, ODOT).* When applicable, these agencies standards should be followed instead of the guidelines below. For instance, Chapter 8 of the current ODOT *Sign Policy and Guidelines* (Reference 1) lays out acceptable signs that can be used for trail identification and wayfinding purposes on the State highway system. Figure 1 provides an example of a sign that meets these guidelines. The Intertwine Regional Trails Signage Guidelines (Reference 2)

Figure 2 Example of Different Sign Design by User Type and Location (Source: *The Intertwine Regional Trails Signage Guidelines***)**

provides an example of design guidelines for a regional trail system in Oregon and illustrates how off-street signs may differ from on-street signs (see Figure 2 for an example).

Content

The basis for producing trail signage is to provide information to trail users. It is appropriate to provide more information about a trail than simply marking a line on a map. It is therefore important to first fully understand what information is desired and to review the information you wish to present to be sure it is helpful and appropriate for each specific trail. For instance, the standard sign in the OODT guidelines includes destinations and the estimated time to ride a bicycle there (as opposed to mileage only, which not all users may understand – See Figure 1 for an example). Walking time could potentially be added, too.

Figure 3 Large Kiosk Sign in Downtown Portland

Where the urban trails meet recreational trails, consider providing information on how accessible the trail is so that people can judge whether it is appropriate for their abilities.

A variety of information formats may be used to convey trail information. Consideration should be given to providing written information in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, multiple languages, or an audible format, particularly at popular trailheads (e.g., the Main or Wiard entrances to the OC&E Trail). Figure 3 provides an example of a kiosk style sign that is most appropriate in areas where pedestrians have space to linger and there are several destinations (e.g. Downtowns). In addition, simplified text and reliance on universal symbols (see Figure 4 for an example) would provide information to individuals with limited reading abilities or limited understanding of the English language.

As part of creating a complete brand, it is important that Klamath Falls implement a cohesive wayfinding system that reinforces limits, provides direction, and reduces sign clutter by co-locating various directional

Figure 4 Pedestrian Scale Wayfinding Sign Using Symbols in Butler Park – Austin, Texas

system signs where possible. Also of importance is the necessity to develop a system for evaluating content for potential inclusion in the wayfinding system.

To that end, a team needs to be formed to develop methodologies to quickly and objectively determine a content eligibility for inclusion in the wayfinding system. Signed content needs to be reviewed to determine if items could be grouped together into a larger group. For example, if there was a trailhead that offered more than one amenity you would sign to the trailhead and not each amenity (note "SE Neighborhoods" destination in Figure 1). This larger grouping helps reduce sign clutter by reducing the number of destinations needed to be signed on each panel, allows the group of destinations to be signed from a further distance since less destinations are required to be signed per panel, and the grouping provides added weight to the destinations by showing them as a collection of resources that tell a bigger story and may be more appealing to a user with limited time. When resources are grouped, the individual resources are signed individually at critical turning points for each of the individual resources and on signs with available room at very close proximity to the resource.

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This process of determining content will setup guidelines that can be used to determine when content should be added in the future. Documentation of these guidelines helps future managers of the wayfinding plan to continue to develop the system in a consistent manner.

Design

From a community vision to existing signage, many things can be a factor in shaping a wayfinding system and refining it to the area. Each place has a unique character, which gives it a sense of place and distinctiveness. Building on the understood place identity and themes will enrich the design process, and ensure design ideas emerge from the character of the place, rather than adding it on at the end as an imposed and separate element. An identity can be conveyed in the use of color, materials and form and the method and means of communication. For instance, the Bike Boulevard sign in Figure 5 and mile marker sign in Figure 6 each help provide a unique sense of place.

Figure 5 Bike Boulevard Sign - Madison, Wisconsin

Signage should present a consistent message. For this reason, a consistent palette of colors should be used throughout the wayfinding system. Using the same colors increases legibility of the wayfinding system, enabling faster recognition and expectations of the signs as a user approaches. Since the wayfinding system needs to compete with the local environment and landscape, the color choices for signs must be strong but not overwhelming to the environment.

Finish & Contrast

We recommend a format that adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) minimum requirements regarding presentation of information on signs used to provide direction or identify spaces. Letter characters and backgrounds for both identification and directional signs must have a non-glare finish. Characters and symbols will have at least a 70% contrast with their background. Light characters on a dark background read more easily, especially at night, early morning, and dusk.

Content Layout

An effectively designed sign face is clear, concise, simple, and legible with well-spaced typography and plenty of space in the margin. Text for signs should be left-justified and use both capital and small-case lettering (except for wooden directional signs, which use all capital lettering). The chart below is a guide to determine the minimum letter size based on the desired maximum distance at which a proposed sign is to be viewed.

Table 1 Capital Letter Heigh Based on Viewing Distance[1]

Viewing Distance (feet)	Capital Letter Height (inches)
0-20	0.75
21-27	1
28-41	1.5
42-55	2
56-83	3
84-111	4

[1]The ODOT Sign Policy and Guidelines lays out these design elements for its signs and should be followed where applicable. These guidelines are meant for off-road applications.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Reference 3) guidelines recommend listing destinations in the following way: destinations straight-ahead are signed first, followed by destinations to the left, then destinations to the right, and within each direction, destinations are ordered closest to furthest. Trail sign designs often allow for alternative arrangement of content due to type of content and structural design/shape.

Environmental Considerations

When designing a wayfinding system it is imperative that the material selection matches the environmental conditions in which they will exist. Signs may be constructed using different types of materials, which may vary depending on the type of sign being produced. Factors to consider when choosing materials include budget, aesthetics, durability, maintenance costs, and replacement cost due to vandalism or theft.

Specifications of durable materials for the sign program shall take into account the environment, temperatures and climate within Klamath Falls area. In all cases the manufacturer guidelines will be the primary reference for material suitability.

Wood - Traditionally used for many types of trail signs since it is a natural material, aesthetically pleasing, and readily available

Plastics, Fiberglass (fiber-reinforced polyester), and Composites - These are widely available, easily adaptable, weather-resistant, fairly inexpensive, and a good choice for smaller signs and for signposts. Reflective material may be desirable for sign surfaces for high visibility in the dark. Plastics may not be appropriate in more primitive locations.

Metal - Aluminum is widely available, lightweight, durable, and most useful for traffic control signs. However, aluminum is more expensive and may not be appropriate for larger signs, especially where a more natural appearance is desired. Steel is more affordable and durable, but it weighs more than

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aluminum and requires special treatment to inhibit rust (stainless or galvanized steel). Steel and aluminum should be coated to prevent weathering damage. Powder coating and anodizing will give an even hard wearing finish.

Stone - Best used for cairns where other methods of marking trails are impractical, and as a decorative base for larger signs that require posts or as a significant entry signs.

Vinyl Surfaces (3M) - Poor colors for sunny environments include black, dark reds, and green will get the most gradation and will be noticeable faded in a 3 to 5 years. Protective surface treatment includes UV resistant clear coat.

Other Considerations

- If using nails to attach a sign then use aluminum nails. Aluminum resists corrosion better than other metals and will not damage a saw when a future cut is made across a hidden nail.

- When driving nails into trees, be sure to leave a sufficient length protruding (approximately ½ inch) to allow for future tree growth. An exception can be made in areas of frequent vandalism or theft.

- Place waymarks at eye level of the user, when possible.

- Be sure to mark trails in both directions, first from one direction and then from the opposite direction, in order to gain each perspective. It may not be appropriate to simply put markers on opposite sides of the same sign post or tree.

- Trails need to be continuously marked, including when they follow roads (e.g. on-street bikeways).

- Avoid placing waymarks so that more than one is readily obvious from the previous. One well-placed marker is better than several poorly placed markers.

- Be sure to keep vegetation pruned from in front of waymarks at all times.

SIGN LOCATIONS

Once sign messages are determined, sign locations can be established at the critical decision points along the trails and connecting on-street network: key intersections, points of entrance into the trails, and required turns to specific destinations. Signs should be located where they can easily be seen by trail users and should present information in a format that is easy to understand by all users. Trail markings should be visible, yet unobtrusive, balanced according to the characteristics of the trail. The text should be limited to what is necessary and should be supplemented by graphics that are universally understood.

MAINTENANCE

The following are some tips to help plan for maintenance of the system.

Management and Maintenance

Providing trail signs comes with a responsibility for long-term management. Management should be in place to ensure that trail signs are maintained in good order and that the signs continue to reflect the nature of the trail. This is particularly important on the Klamath Falls system where multiple agencies will have jurisdiction over the signs.

Management can be handled through the establishment of an inter-jurisdictional committee that oversees the funding, maintenance, and expansion of the sign program. A single point-person should be assigned the responsibility of day to day management of the system.

Special Considerations

In-house fabrication will likely be limited to graphics and lettering for changing messages, poles, foundations, and installation. An initial stock of parts should be included in the base bid of each phase of the project. This stock can include poles (painted), sign panels (painted/no lettering), brackets, and other parts.

Best Cleaning Practices

Maintenance Schedule - Signs should be cleaned at least annually, twice a year is preferred.

Dirt and Grime - Use a mix of Simple Green and water.

Removing Graffiti - Use a mild Enamel Thinner.

Removing Stickers - Recommended products are Goof Off and/or Goo Gone.

New Sign Types

Any additional sign types shall be designed to be consistent with the design of the wayfinding system. This includes color, materials and overall aesthetics.

Priority for Sign Installation and Removal

If the system needs to be installed in phases, it is recommended that complete sign routes be installed. This will be the most effective way of providing a complete route to each destination.

Removal of existing signage should happen simultaneously or before, but as close as possible to, installation of the new signs. This will ensure that some level of direction or guidance is in place while the system is being installed.

General Maintenance

Short Term General Maintenance (0 – 4 Years)

Planning and Design - Minor corrections and adjustments help the system operate efficiently. This may include additional signs, or adjustments based on new circulation patterns.

Physical Maintenance (Materials) - Annual cleaning and typical maintenance (wear and tear repairs), new panels, tightening of fasteners, replacement parts due to vandalism or auto damage.

Physical Maintenance (Locations) - Relocation may be necessary based on problem sign locations.

Long Term General Maintenance (5 – 9 years)

Planning and Design - Additions and deletions of destinations and/or messages and overall routing review may be necessary, based on physical changes to the area.

Physical Maintenance (Materials) - Materials begin to fade, warranties may expire, and a more concentrated effort is required to maintain the system. New panels, replacement parts, and sign replacement may be necessary.

Physical Maintenance (Locations) - Relocation may be necessary based on new routing or circulation.

System Life Span (10 – 15+ years)

Planning and Design - Complete review of the system and its effectiveness based on new destinations that may have opened or attractions which have closed. In addition, new circulation/routing and construction projects may affect the system. Design elements may be reviewed for consistency with the area's identity and marketing initiatives.

Physical Maintenance (Materials) - Materials begin to reach their life span, full sign replacement may be necessary for some signs if they have not been maintained in the past.

Physical Maintenance (Locations) - Relocation may be necessary based on new routing or circulation.

REFERENCES

1. Oregon Department of Transportation. *Sign Policy and Guidelines*. Last Update: September 2015. http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/TRAFFIC-ROADWAY/pages/sign_policy.aspx.

2. Metro. *The Intertwine Regional Trails Signage Guidelines*. May 2012.

3. US Department of Transportation. *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, 2009 Edition*. May 2012. http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/.

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