



Are Special Event Pavement Markings Cluttering Your Streets?

By Nate Vander Broek

Advice on removing and preventing unwanted markings in your community.

Every year, Kansas hosts a number of bicycle and foot races throughout the state. Examples include the Olsburg Road Race (an annual bike race that takes place near Tuttle Creek in north-central Kansas), and the AWI Disco Dash (a foot race that takes place in Dodge City and raises money for children and adults with developmental disabilities). In all, approximately 20 annual bicycle races/rides and 15 foot races are held in Kansas. While these events bring excitement, revenue and fundraising opportunities to cities and organizations, the pavement markings used to denote the route of the race can also bring visual clutter to the streets if the markings are not removed immediately after the event. It's especially a problem when the markings interfere with utility line markings or traffic control markings.

De Soto, Kansas has experienced this firsthand. A string of events in 2010 littered the streets of De Soto with pavement markings, some applied with permanent paint and lasting over a year (see photo on this page). City officials are mainly concerned that these markings resemble utility line markings or other official vehicular traffic control pavement markings, but they're also tired of the unsightly clutter it brings to the streets.

This isn't just a Kansas problem. Last year, the Amgen Tour of California, the largest cycling event in America, almost lost some of its permits to hold its event in particular communities due to the "graffiti" left behind on the road. Event organizers had to plead for cooperation with fans to keep the roads paint-free. Some fans mark streets with spray paint as a way of cheering on their favorite racer – "Go, Joe!"

Chuck Hodge, technical director of the tour, said residents who do not like the markings have been very vocal about the issue. Hodge wants "fans to realize that these are shared roads with the local communities and that we're only borrowing these roads for a day from the people that are there all year."

Some race organizations are trying to help. For example, to help make sure pavement markings from fans are not permanent, the Lance Armstrong Foundation distributed



City of De Soto



Washington State DOT

At left, pavement markings painted on a street in De Soto, Kansas.

Above, a "Dan Henry" directional marker for a bicycling event.



yellow chalk to fans along the route. Event organizers have also asked for law enforcement to monitor the route and explain to fans that it's not alright to mark the street with paint.

Remove those unwanted markings

If there are pavement markings left on the street, and the markings interfere with official pavement markings, your agency can remove the markings if you can't get the event organizers to do it. Section 17 of the Kansas Standard Traffic Ordinance prohibits unauthorized signs, signals or markings "which hide from view or interferes with the effectiveness of any official traffic-control device or any railroad sign or signal." It states that these markings can be considered a public nuisance and therefore the governing body has the power to remove the markings without notice.

Coordinate with event organizers

Of course, prevention is better than having to remove the paint. The best way to prevent unwanted permanent pavement markings is to coordinate directly with the event organizers early on, and set expectations.



A good example of doing this comes from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Event organizers are required to initiate the coordination process with a formal request to WSDOT, which is reviewed and then followed by a traffic engineering analysis. WSDOT issues a Letter of Acknowledgement when WSDOT's *Rules of the Road* (the State's general restrictions and privileges concerning traffic vehicle stops) will suffice for the event, or a Letter of Agreement is signed by event organizers if the event requires special traffic control.

After the event, WSDOT conducts a follow-up evaluation of the operation. To view the complete process in more detail, check out section 7.2 of WSDOT's Specialized Highway Uses document at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/fulltext/M51-02/Chapter7.pdf>.

Examples of guidelines and regulations

If coordination with the event organizer at an early stage isn't an option, creating some published guidelines or city ordinances can help ensure that event organizers follow your intentions. While not very common in Kansas, several states and cities have gone through this process.

WSDOT has some great examples for pavement markings guidelines for bicycle events, such as:

- The markings shall use non-permanent, chalk based or "fade-away" paint; permanent paint is prohibited as it does not wear off.
- "Dan Henrys", or directional pavement markings, must be placed to the right of the fog line if riders will be on a good rideable shoulder, and otherwise in the ordinary line of reasonable riding (see example on previous page).
- The markings should be visible to bicyclists but placed so they are unobtrusive to others.
- A "Dan Henry" marking should be about the size of an 8-1/4 inch paper plate.
- The markings must be placed away from traffic control devices and survey markers.

Chester, Connecticut's *Special Event Regulations and Procedures* provides an example of a brief, yet effective city regulation for these types of events. Chester's regulation prohibits paint markings, and instead suggests using tape markings or spray chalk. It prohibits signs that conflict with the view of those in normal traffic conditions. Further, all

event signs must be distinguishable from traffic signs by requiring the name of the event's sponsor on the sign. When asked about the effectiveness of the regulation, a Chester city official stated that everyone has followed the policy. "It's a small town, so if someone errs, we all know about it." To view Chester's regulations, go to http://www.chesterct.com/forms/street_sidewalk_use.pdf.

The City of Johnston, Iowa used to have a similar problem with paint cluttering their streets after years of hosting several annual foot races and an annual bike race. According to W. David Cubit, director of public works for the City of Johnston, "It got to a point where they needed to deal with the issue." To help solve the problem, the City initiated regulations to require all signs or markings be removed immediately after the event and also to prohibit permanent paint markings. Instead, the city allows a water-based paint that will dissipate after a few rains.

In addition to the new regulations, the city moved the foot races out of downtown to the city's extensive trail system. To view City of Johnston's regulations, go to <http://www.cityofjohnston.com/docs/documents/specialeventapp.pdf>.

And finally, the County of Santa Cruz, California Department of Public Works states that if markings have not faded to an acceptable level within 30 days, the permittee will be responsible for their removal. To view the County of Santa Cruz's regulations, go to <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Operations/pdf/Event-Triathlon.pdf>.

Conclusion

Having a running or bicycling event in your city or county doesn't have to lead to an eyesore for your residents. Communication is the best way to prevent unwanted nuisances. Work directly with event organizer to set expectations. Let them know that permanent paint is not allowed and instead suggest spray chalk or tape markings. Set regulations that require that all event signs or markings not interfere with traffic or utility signs or markings. And finally, enforce the removal of all markings and signs immediately following the event. Fond memories, not markings, should be the only lasting impression of the event. ■



Sources:

- Kansas Standard Traffic Ordinance, Section 17, Display of Unauthorized Signs, Signals or Markings. <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/towns/Lewis/city/trafficsigns.htm>
- Washington State Department of Transportation, Specialized Highway Uses. <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/fulltext/M51-02/Chapter7.pdf>
- Chester, Connecticut Special Events Regulations and Procedures. http://www.chesterct.com/forms/street_sidewalk_use.pdf
- Johnston, Iowa Special Event Application. <http://www.cityofjohnston.com/docs/documents/specialeventapp.pdf>
- County of Santa Cruz, Department of Public Works, Special Events Permit Application Package. <http://www.dpw.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/Operations/pdf/Event-Triathlon.pdf>
- Holcombe, B. (2010, May 14). Road paint threatens Tour of California permits. VeloNews. http://velonews.competitor.com/2010/05/news/road-paint-threatens-tour-of-california-permits_116144