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Route marker signs

From the earliest times of numbered and marked state trunklines in Michigan, the standard state route marker has been the shape of a diamond with a block letter "M" in the upper corner. Early on, the diamond was taller than wide, had the words "STATE TRUNKLINE" across the widest part and the "M" and the route number were of the same size. These early route markers would either be erected on stand-alone posts or on telephone and electric line poles along the highway. (Utility poles close by the side of the travelled-way were much more common in the first half of the 20th century.) Quite often, the "new" state trunkline marker of the late 1910s and early 1920s was applied directly over or adjacent to the colored bands designating one or more Named Auto Trails. By the 1930s, the diamond had been "squashed" down so that all angles were at 90 degrees. The ubiquitous Michigan diamond state route marker was reportedly designed by Allan M. Williams (1892–1979) who joined the Michigan State Highway Department as a project engineer in 1918 and, in conjunction with a $50 million dollar highway bond issue in 1919, he drafted the state's first complete highway map. Since Michigan began designating and signing its state trunkline highways at this time, it is quite possible Mr. Willliams did, indeed, design the original state trunkine route marker. While Williams became engineer-manager of the Ionia County Road Commission in 1919, he also continued in a dual role as project engineer for the state highway department until 1927 and held his position with Ionia County until his retirement in 1957. In January 1961, in response to a letter sent by a Mrs. Virgil Parker of Monroe, State Highway Commissioner John C. Mackie officially rejected the suggestion that Michigan's state trunkline route markers include the outline of the state in them instead of the familiar diamond shape which had been used for 43 at that point. Mackie stated, "Michigan's silhouette would produce an awkward shape difficult to mount on a sign" in his response to Parker. As the 1960s were still the era of cutout route markers, Mackie was likely referring to attempting to produce a two-peninsula cutout sign for the route markers (instead of a square or rectangular sign that is common today), which would've been quite difficult and costly to do. While not what would've been envisoned in Mackie's day, the two images at right are two modern-day possibilities as to what a state outline-version of the Michigan state trunkline route marker could look like. The top example shows how tiny the route number would need to be (and how utterly impossible it would be for three-digit routes), while the bottom example does allow for much larger numerals, a goodly portion of the outline of the Lower Peninsula would need to be obscured for this option to work. Since the 1961 suggestion by Mrs. Parker, there has been no known serious attempt to redesign the familiar Michigan diamond. In the early 1970s when U.S. federal government mandated updated and standardized traffic signage, the traditional Michigan "cutout" diamond was then incorporated with a square black sign "blank," as it is today. For four decades, the Michigan state trunkline marker has remained relatively unchanged. This page attempts to illustrate the many and varies types of route markers used on Michigan's highways, from Interstate, US and State highways to National Forest routes, Great Lakes Circle Tours, county roads and others. Pick a type of route marker to jump directly to it: Interstate | US Highway | State | County | Forest | Circle Tour | Byway/Heritage | Other Interstate Highway Markers (Mainline Routes) Original style Interstate route marker adopted in the late 1950s and in use into the 1980s. Newer-style Interstate route marker omits the state name, allowing for larger and easier-to-read numerals. Interstate Business Loop route marker, commonly used in Michigan. Interstate Business Spur route marker is less common due to a smaller number of these routes. Interstate Highway Markers (3-digit Loop & Spur Routes) Original style Interstate three-digit route marker adopted in the late 1950s and in use into the 1980s. Newer-style Interstate three-digit route marker omits the state name, allowing for larger and easier-to-read numerals. Three-digit Interstate Business Loop route marker, commonly used in Michigan. Three-digit Interstate Business Spur route marker is less common due to a smaller number of these routes. US Highway Markers Original "cutout" style US Highway route marker adopted in 1927 and in use into the late 1940s. Wider three-digit markers did not exist at this point. In 1948, the US Highway route marker began using the "new" FHWA typeface, but was otherwise unchanged in shape. It remained in use into the 1970s. Although it seems it may not have been adopted nationally, Michigan did use a wider variant of the 1948 cutout US Highway route marker for three-digit highways into the 1970s as well. This "Outline Sign" was used in from 1948 into the 1960s for junction, target and overhead route marker assemblies. A wider three-digit marker also existed. While the US Highway maker was revised in 1961 to include a black "sign blank" background, Michigan continued using the 1948 version until this 1971 modified version was adopted. The state converted to this style still used today. The modern-day three-digit US Highway route marker, also adopted in 1971 when Michigan converted from using the 1948 version. The modern-day three-digit US Highway route marker using the narrower "Series C" of the FHWA typeface to accommodate larger numbers. As Michigan has two US Highways with two "1"s in their designations, many US-131 and US-141 route markers have been posted using the two-digit route shield. State Highway Markers These are two representations of early state trunkline route markers from the 1920s, one wrapped around a utility pole (L) and the other an independently-mounted sign (R). A more standard state highway route marker was settled upon in 1926 concurrent with the adoption of the first U.S. Highway route marker. When the U.S. Highway route marker was modified to use the "new" FHWA typeface in 1948, the Michigan state trunkline marker followed suit with regard to the numerals. The "block M" remained as it was, however. Again, when the FHWA updated the U.S. Highway route marker specification in 1971 to use black "sign blanks" as a background, Michigan followed suit to create its current style of route marker. Another rendition of the present state highway marker, this one showing how three-digit route numbers appear using the "Series C" FHWA typeface. To date, the only reassurance or other independently-mounted state highway markers in an elongated format appear along M-553 in Marquette Co. A very unique route, Mackinac Island's M-185 is the only "motorless state highway" and sports unique signage, including distances from the visitor center. Yet another unique trunkline route, the CAPITOL LOOP in downtown Lansing functions as a loop off I-496, but has its own unique markers. Intercounty & County Route Markers The standard Intercounty Highway route marker, although this one is unique in that A-2 is the only 'two-character' route. The marker was created in 1967 by the National Assoc. of Counties as part of their National Uniform County Route Marker Program. Another IntercountyHighway route marker, this one uses a hyphen between the letter and numbers. There is no concensus between the "with" and "without" hyphen styles and both styles may be seen along the same route. Some counties in Michigan sign their own county routes, such as Gogebic illustrated above, using the standard National Assoc. of Counties route marker. Many other counties opt to use an older style of county route marker: a square white (or sometimes green) blank with the county name and route number in the center. Federal Forest Highway & Forest Road Markers Federal Forest Highway route markers appear in several of Michigan's national forests. These are high-quality, well-maintained (usually all-weather) highways. Secondary Forest Road sign, used on roads generally open to automobile travel and closed to ORV use. These roads can range from paved to one-lane gravel. Low-Standard Forest Road signs are used for roads which may be open to motorized use or may be closed to all but ORV or foot traffic. These range from one-lane gravel to two-track. The National Forest Scenic Byway sign is used in many places across the U.S., specifically in Michigan on the Black River Harbor Scenic Byway north of Bessemer. Great Lakes Circle Tour Markers The Great Lakes Circle Tour sign, used very sparingly in Michigan, although it does appear once in awhile. The Lake Erie Circle Tour route marker, appearing in only two Michigan counties: Monroe and Wayne. The Lake Huron Circle Tour route marker as it appears along Lake Huron shoreline routes in both peninsulas. The Lake Huron Circle Tour Loop route marker is used in the DeTour Village area. The Lake Michigan Circle Tour route marker is found along many miles of Michigan trunkline. The Lake Michigan Circle Tour Loop runs along M-109 in Leelanau Co. The Lake Michigan Harbor Tour is a locally-posted route in the Saugatuck-Douglas area. The Lake Superior Circle Tour route marker appears often throughout the U.P. The Lake Superior Circle Tour Loop marker appears along at least two highways in the U.P. The Lake Superior Circle Tour Scenic Spur formerly ran via M-77 from Seney to Grand Marais until c.2014. Pure Michigan Byways/Heritage Route Markers Pure Michigan Byway route marker. Historic Heritage Route marker. Recreational Heritage Route marker. Scenic Heritage Route marker. Other Route Markers The Blue Star Highway route marker is used along a portion of the former route of US-31 in Van Buren Co. The Oceana Circle Tour route marker appears along a locally-designated route in Muskegon and Oceana Cos. The Polar Equator Trail route marker can be found in Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency and Alpena Cos. The Red Arrow Highway route marker is used along the former route of US-12 in Van Buren and Berrien Cos. The Shoreline Trail route marker appears on a locally-designated route in Muskegon Co running along the Lake Michigan shoreline. In 2004, US-23 from Standish to Mackinaw City was designated as the Sunrise Side Scenic Highway and these route markers are posted along the route. This "US-41 Scenic Route" marker was used from the late-1960s until 1999 along US-41 in northern Keweenaw Co. The Mackinaw Scenic Shortway Route was posted along a mixture of state, county and local roads from 1938 until 1942. In August 1964, the Michigan State Highway Dept experimented with signing the exits along I-94 using a milemarker-based system (far from the norm at the time—most other states numbering their interchanges in the 1960s still used the sequential numbering system). White-on-blue signs like the one at left were attached to the top the existing white-on-green freeway signs at each exit. These signs were replaced with "standard" exit signage a decade later beginning in 1974 when the MSHD began numbering and signing exits on the other freeways around the state. Controversy on M-22 In 2012, the M-22 route marker became the center of a legal and financial debate over whether a business can trademark a specific state highway route marker and prevent others from selling merchandise with the depiction of any other state highway route on it, not just the original one trademarked. In 2003, Matt and Keegan Myers began making and selling t-shirts and stickers featuring an approximation of the M-22 route marker (they don't utilize the actual FHWA typeface for the numerals "22") and started using the slogan, "M-22 is not just a road; it is a way of life." However, after a gift shop owner in Emmet County began making and selling M-119 route marker decals (ironically, properly rendering the "119" using the FHWA typeface), the Meyers' brothers threatened legal action. This got the State of Michigan involved in 2012 with the Attorney General issuing an opinion that route markers, such as the M-22 sign, are not copyrightable. A new level was reached in September 2016 when the State filed suit against the Meyers' company. Please see the M-22 Route Listing for more details. Acknowledgements: Nearly every route marker image above was created by Christopher J. Bessert and, therefore, all original graphics are copyrighted ©2008–2016 Christopher J. Bessert, All Rights Reserved. Please do not reproduce or otherwise use them without permission. Any commercial use is prohibited. While certain components of these markers are not "copyrightable," these graphics are copyrighted. If you'd like to use one of them, please ask first! However, some acknowledgements and credit are necessary. Many thanks to Michael Adams and his "Roadgeek" typeface series used to create many of these rotue markers. Additional thanks to Bruce S Cridlebaugh and his "USHighwaysOldStyle" typeface used for the 'original style' US and State route markers. Richard C. Moeur's "Sign Manual" website provided a few of the graphic bases used in creating these markers. Many thanks to Barry Camp for his assistance with the Capitol Loop marker. James Lin's "Highway Route Markers" website provided much inspiration. The "Sunrise Side Coastal Highway" image is courtesy Michigan's Sunrise Side, Inc. The two earliest state trunkline markers ("M-2" and "M-11") were reproducted from a Rand McNally & Co. "Junior Auto Trails Map of Michigan," 1926. Additional Information: For more information on Michigan's state trunkline (and other) route markers, visit the following off-site sources: Sign denoting the route number of a highway Not to be confused with Highway location marker. The shields for Interstate highways (left) and U.S. routes (right) can be seen on this set of reassurance markers in Southwest Virginia indicating two sets of wrong-way concurrencies A highway shield or route marker is a sign denoting the route number of a highway, usually in the form of a symbolic shape with the route number enclosed. As the focus of the sign, the route number is usually the sign's largest element, with other items on the sign rendered in smaller sizes or contrasting colors. Highway shields are used by travellers, commuters, and all levels of government for identifying, navigating, and organising routes within a county, state, province, or country. Simplified highway shields often appear on maps. Purposes There are several distinct uses for the highway shield: Junction signs inform travelers that they are approaching an intersection with a numbered highway. Guide signs inform travelers which way to go at intersections, usually with an arrow pointing the way. These include: Directional assemblies, which combine highway shields with separate cardinal direction signs and arrow signs on the same post, and Direction, position, or indication signs, which include highway shields as part of the sign legend. Reassurance markers are used after major junctions and periodically in between to confirm the route and direction. Trailblazer assemblies are posted on other roadways to "blaze the trail" to the highway in question, usually with a "TO" banner plate above the shield Some jurisdictions place highway shields on highway location markers (kilometre or mile markers). Highway shields by country This transport-related list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it. Australia Main article: Highways in Australia Australia has maintained distinctly different trends pertaining to highway shields in the past and will continue in this vein somewhat, despite the conversion to alpha-numeric routes and shields. Alpha-numeric route numbering has been in use in Tasmania since the 1970s, and was introduced in the mainland states from 1996, with the state of Victoria being the first to implement the policy on the mainland. Prior to this conversion and concurrently, Federal Highway (gold-on-green squared-off bullet), National Highway (black-on-white squared-off bullet), State Highway (blue bullet) and Tourist Route (white-on-brown rounded pentagon) shields existed. In Victoria Freeway shields were used (white-on-green with 'F' prefix) until the late 1980s, while during the 1990s Queensland and New South Wales implemented a hexagonal blue-on-white Metroad system of urban arterial routes. The Western Ring Road (now M80) in Melbourne initially used a shield quite similar to the U.S. Interstate shield, albeit with 'Ring Road' written instead of 'Interstate' and with 2 peaks rather than 3. To further complicate matters, with the introduction of the alpha-numeric system, roads that are federally funded (or Federal Highways) have a squared-off bullet encompassing the alpha-numeric designation. Freeways and dual-carriageway roads often use an 'M' prefix, particularly in Victoria. In addition, trapezoidal signs are placed every 5 km on major regional highways and freeways indicating the distance to the post office of the next city or major town on the route. These signs usually only have the first letter of the destination; two or three letters are used if there is ambiguity between nearby towns or when the place name consists of two words. Brazil Main article: Brazilian Highway System Federal and state highways shields are standardized in Brazil by the National Transit Department (DENATRAN), but implementation is not always consistent nor even existent. In many states, highway names appear on highway location markers and guide signs with no highway shield. BR-101 federal highway shield as it appears in Rio Grande do Sul state BR-116 federal highway shield as it appears in Rio de Janeiro state RS-389 state highway shield in Rio Grande do Sul SP-270 state highway shield in the state of São Paulo Canada Main article: Numbered highways in Canada Each province dictates the type of shields used as highway transportation is a provincial responsibility. However, the green and white signage for the Trans-Canada Highway is used nationwide. Alberta Shields for core highways in Alberta use black route number on a white squared-off bullet, while shields for local highways (500-986) use black route number on a white oval. Both variants feature the provincial wordmark across the top, although it may be omitted on certain guide signs. British Columbia Standard shields for highways in British Columbia use blue route number on a white bullet, with the provincial shield of arms placed at the top. Certain highways (e.g. Crowsnest Highway, Southern Yellowhead Highway and Nisga'a Highway) use their own variations on the default provincial highway shield. Ontario Major or 400-series highways in Ontario have different kinds of shields depending on usage: Roadside reassurance markers take the shape of a bullet with a crown on top. Default colour scheme is black text on white background, although the Queen Elizabeth Way uses blue "QEW" on gold, and provincially-maintained toll highways (407, 412 and 418) use white route numbers on blue. These shields used to be emblazoned with "The King's Highway" across the top, but the wording has been removed since the 1990s. Markers on guide signs take the shape of a crown silhouette, with the route number placed within. The exception is the private 407 Express Toll Route, which uses black route number on a white oval marker for both purposes. Secondary provincial highways use an isosceles trapezoid as markers, while tertiary provincial highway markers use a rectangle with rounded corners. Numbered roads maintained by Ontario's counties, regional municipalities and single-tier municipalities use an inverted isosceles trapezoid as markers. Default colour scheme is black text on white background, although certain jurisdictions use their own colour combinations (e.g. white on blue in Niagara, gold on black in Peel, and gold on green in Halton). On the other hand, instead of an inverted trapezoid, the single-tier city of Toronto uses a roundel for its municipally-maintained freeways, the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway. The design is two-tone gold-on-green, with the road name in white on the green outer ring, and either the cardinal direction (for reassurance markers) or an arrow (for guidance to the freeway) in black on the gold inner disc. The city's other roads, such as Allen Road, do not have their own shields. Typical Ontario primary/400-series highway sign using a bullet-shaped shield Marker on guide signs for primary/400-series highway in the shape of a crown silhouette 407 Express Toll Route using an oval marker Typical Ontario secondary road sign using an isosceles trapezoid shield Typical Ontario tertiary road sign using a rectangle Typical Ontario county/regional road sign using an inverted isosceles trapezoid Toronto municipal freeway shield, used on Don Valley Parkway and Gardiner Expressway Quebec Shields for controlled-access autoroutes in Quebec use white route number on a blue bullet, with a white stylised drawing of a dual carriageway and an overpass on red across the top. Other provincial routes use white route number on a green French shield with three white fleur-de-lys across the top, while forest routes use white route number on a blue French shield with three white stylised trees across the top. Germany German Autobahns as the nation's federal controlled-access highway system use a blue shield with a blue background color. Other federal highways use a yellow shield. Autobahn Number Federal Road Number Hong Kong The Hong Kong Strategic Route and Exit Number System states that the standard shield should consist of a yellow, bullet-shaped shield with the route number in black color. It is used on all numbered routes in Hong Kong. Japan Main article: Road signs in Japan The national highways of Japan use a triangular blue shield with a white route number. The expressways use a rectangular green shield with a white letter and number combination with the name of the route written in Japanese and English. Routes on urban expressways are signed with a green shield with white numbers. The Shuto Expressway system also uses this sign but with the route name written in kanji-characters above the number. Prefecture-maintained routes use a hexagonal blue shield with a white route number, letter, or combination of both. National route shield Expressway shield Urban expressway shield Shuto Expressway shield Prefecture route shield Malaysia Main article: Road signs in Malaysia According to the Manual on Traffic Control Devices Standard Traffic Signs by Malaysian Public Works Department, a standard Malaysian highway shield consists of a yellow hexagon shield with black border line which resembles the Public Works Department's logo itself. The highway shield standard is used for all expressways, federal and state roads in Malaysia, which can be distinguished through the numbering scheme used (please refer to the Road signs in Malaysia article for details). New Zealand Main article: New Zealand State Highway network New Zealand shields are similar to the bullet-shaped markers used in Hong Kong, but are red rather than yellow. South Africa See also: Road signs in South Africa The Southern African Development Community Road Traffic Signs Manual specifies designs for "confirmation route markers" for numbered national, provincial, regional and metropolitan routes. The national route marker is pentagonal, the provincial route marker is diamond-shaped, and the regional and metropolitan route markers are rectangular. The background is blue when used on a freeway and green for other roads. There is a white border and the lettering is yellow.[1] National route marker (freeway variant) Provincial route marker Regional route marker Metropolitan route marker South Korea The expressway shields are shaped like U.S. Highway shields and colored like Interstate shields with red, white and blue, the colors of the flag of South Korea. The national route shields are a blue oval, and local route shields are a yellow square. Expressway National Route Urban Expressway Taiwan Main article: Highway system in Taiwan The national highway shields are in the shape of the Prunus mume, the national flower of Taiwan. Provincial highways have triangular shields similar in shape to that of the national highways of Japan, with different colored backgrounds to distinguish between ordinary roads and expressways. The county and city highways have a square shield, while its spur roads as well as township and district roads have rectangular ones. National Highway Provincial Highway Provincial Expressway County and City Highways County and City Highways (Spur) Township and District Roads United States The default state route marker in the United States—used in six states for their primary routes. See also: Numbered highways in the United States and U.S. Route shield The United States' Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) gives standard designs for highways in the Interstate Highway System and U.S. Route system. The Interstate shield is the only trademarked highway marker in use in the United States, and the U.S. Route shield was inspired by the Great Seal of the United States. The MUTCD also provides default designs for state highways (the circular highway shield) and county highways (a blue pentagon with yellow text).[2] However, states are free to use any design for their numbered routes; as of 2021[update] only five states (Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, and New Jersey) use the default shield on their primary systems, and all others use a custom design. Oklahoma used the default until 2006, when it changed to a state outline. Maryland uses the default sporadically for locally maintained sections of state-numbered highways, most often in Baltimore, but otherwise uses a different design. Virginia and West Virginia use the default for their secondary state routes but different designs for their primary state routes. There are several additional designs used in the other states and territories. State outlines are used for primary numbered routes in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri, Nevada, new signs in North Dakota, Ohio, and Oklahoma, and for secondary numbered routes in Texas. Tennessee and South Carolina also incorporate state outlines into their shields. Other options include basic geometric shapes besides a circle (like squares in Illinois, and diamonds in Michigan and North Carolina), or a design representing the state (like Pennsylvania's keystone design, Utah's beehive, Kansas' sunflower, and New Hampshire's Old Man of the Mountain). Washington uses a silhouette of George Washington's bust. New Mexico uses the default circle but adds a Zia sun symbol inside the circle around the number. Every state but California uses a square or rectangular sign for its state highways, mainly to save money on both custom cutting and to be contained on a rectangular sign with other route markers. Wisconsin's symbol is a nod to its former triangular shields, while utilizing a second rectangular outline to better fit a number at full-height. Some U.S. counties and townships also have unique shield designs, though most use the MUTCD default. Alternatives to shields Main article: Road designation or abbreviation Many countries worldwide, such as the United Kingdom and France, do not use shields, instead relying on text representations of highway numbers. Road numbers (the term "highway" is not in general use in the UK) are prefixed by a letter indicating the type of road, for example M1, A1, B123 in the UK; A1, N1, D1 in France. These are sometimes highlighted with a different background color, depending on the class of highway and the context of the sign. The Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals specifies that "road identification signs" consist of the route number framed in a rectangle, a shield, or the relevant state's route classification symbol (if one exists).[3] The extent to which such signs are used varies between countries. In the United States, route shield pavement markings sometimes accompany physical highway shield signs or serve as replacements for them. References ^ SADC Road Traffic Signs Manual, Volume 1: Uniform Traffic Control Devices. National Department of Transport (South Africa). May 2012. p. 4.7.7. Archived from the original on 4 September 2014. Retrieved 1 September 2014. ^ Staff. "Section 2D.11". Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Federal Highway Administration. ^ "CONVENTION ON ROAD SIGNS AND SIGNALS" (PDF). United Nations. pp. Art.17, p.14. Retrieved 2007-11-17. External links Media related to Highway signs at Wikimedia Commons Retrieved from "

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