

New Street Signs Going Up



A NEW STREET SIGN is hoisted aloft by city workmen at Admiral boulevard and Oak street today, in the start of a projected 5-year program of replacement of signs at the city's 10,000 intersections. A worker at right holds one of the new markers, green-and-white and larger than the old yellow-on-black signs of the style held by the workman at left.

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INSTALLATION of new and larger street signs in Kansas City started today.

The signs are green and white and about 50 per cent larger than the present ones. They are being installed first in the downtown business district.

The city traffic department plans to install the signs during coming weeks in the area from First street to Twenty-seventh street and from State Line to Troost avenue. The signs will be put up at 1,700 intersections this year.

If the same rate of installation prevails, O. J. Falin, traffic director, estimates signs will be replaced throughout the city in about five years. The city has about 10,000 intersections.

The new signs are to be posted at the northeast corners of intersections. At present, the signs may be found at any of the four corners. In business areas and at major intersections, a second pair of signs will be installed on the southwest corner.

The signs are aluminum with green and white reflectorized paint. They bear 4-inch white letters, in contrast to 3-inch letters on the present signs.

The design and colors were approved by the municipal art commission.

The cost of the sign program will be an estimated \$200,000. It is being financed with E-tax money.

Many of the street signs now in use are 25 years of age or older, Falin said.

Unsightly Signs in City To Be Removed Next Week

The Greater Kansas City Sign Industry association is going to cleanup many derelict signs around the city next week in observance of national electrical sign week.

Mayor Ilus W. Davis today proclaimed a "scrap-old-signs campaign" next week.

Tuesday morning, volunteer crews furnished by 15 association members are to assemble near the City hall for instructions.

Two of the largest signs to be removed are the old Missouri electric stores roof sign at 1417 Grand avenue and the old Bentor theater marquee at Independence avenue and Benton boulevard, Harry F. Hays, association president, told Mayor Davis.

The volunteers will remove signs Tuesday and during the rest of national electrical sign week that runs Sunday through September 24.

Hays suggested that perhaps some code could be established whereby derelict signs would have to be removed. Mayor

Davis said that bonds are posted now for signs that extend over city property.

Hays said that releases have been obtained for about 20 derelict signs, or 50 per cent of those located in a survey by employees of electric sign companies.

"This indicates to us," Hays said, "that Kansas City is below cities of comparable size in the number of derelict, unused signs.

Mayor Davis agreed, but pointed out also that just one unsightly, abandoned sign could make a large sector unattractive.

The Scrap-Old-Signs campaign is part of a nationwide effort by the electrical sign industry to support the beautification program launched this year.

"The electrical sign industry is sympathetic to the idea that areas with scenic and aesthetic values are important to a community," Hays said in emphasizing the electrical sign industry is a "strong supporter of the beautification theme."

European Symbols Replace Words On the American Road

American travelers familiar with the highways and byways of Western Europe generally agree that the road markers and signs there are much easier to follow, once they get the hang of it. Pictures and symbols that can be identified at a glance are used almost exclusively instead of words. These depictions do vary from nation to nation. The same uniform system has been adopted in many other parts of the world—Africa, the Middle East and as far away as Southeast Asia.

A car with skid marks under it means slippery when wet, regardless of whether the sign is observed near Petra in Jordan, Parma in Italy or Pretoria in South Africa. By 1975 it will be the same in Peoria, Ill., and Phoenix, Ariz.

The decision to adopt the international system in the United States was made by the Federal Highway Administration. Although the cities and states are free to work out their own timetables, the change-over must be completed in four years. To ease the transition, many of the new signs will be a mixture of symbols and words. For complete uniformity the lettering will be eliminated eventually.

Already about 100 of the new symbols have been installed along Kansas City streets. In each instance one of the old signs has been left in place at the same intersection to provide motorists a handy comparison. "Ours is not so much a work schedule, as an understanding schedule," says Delbert F. Karmeier, city transportation director. "We don't want to confuse people by rushing the change-over. As fast as they adjust to the new signs we will put in more of them."

Many compelling reasons have prompted the United States to follow the rest of the world. Uniformity is one consideration. The size, color, shape and wording of signs vary extensively from state to state and from city to city. Even in this metropolitan area there are no set standards for all of the cities and towns that make up Greater Kansas City.

Quick identification is another reason. If vision is unbroken, it is possible to spot and understand a symbol two blocks in advance. The same message, conveyed in words, would not be legible more than a half block away. Eye pollution is also reduced. Karmeier says that the new signs are 20 per cent smaller but are easier to grasp because they can be comprehended in a glance.

Although it is a bonus, the new conformity will make American motoring simpler for foreigners, particularly the large number of visitors from Canada and Mexico where the same system has long been in use. Americans driving in Europe also should find the going easier. Instant



Instant Recognition

The new symbol and the old sign on the Southwest Trafficway.

recognition of international symbols should make motoring safer and a more pleasant experience. Western Europe led the way at the dawn of the motor age. Although it has taken a long time, the United States will finally catch up by 1975.



Picture Symbols

New international picture signs, like the one shown at Oak and Red Bridge Road, have replaced the old roll-out stop signs at all Kansas City school crossings. Motorists will be required to stop whenever a pedestrian steps off the curb into the street. (Star photo by Roger Reynolds)

Stick Figures

New Signs on Crosswalks

By Sue London

The old middle-of-the-road portable stop signs that have become so familiar in crosswalks near Kansas City schools will be replaced this year with permanent international recognized symbol signs.

There are two versions of the new sign. One pictures boy and girl stick figures standing alone to warn the motorist he is approaching a school crosswalk. The same figures pictured between diagonal lines tell the motorist he has arrived at the crosswalk.

The old signs were collected last spring and replaced with the increasingly familiar yellow and black symbol signs in accordance with the National Highway Safety Act.

But the interpretation of the new signs is left up to city ordinances which vary on determination of when children or pedestrians have the legal right of way.

In Kansas City a child standing on the curb at a crosswalk does not have the right of way. But the motorist is required to stop when the child steps from the curb into the street. The ordinance applies whether or not the child is within the two painted lines.

courts still will determine exact penalties for every case.

Pamphlets to educate motorists on the new symbol signs will be sent with the city's next newspaper. **K.C. STAR AUG 26 1973**

But there might be some confusion as to how to interpret the same signs in other municipalities.

In other area towns the child has the right of way when he is on the curb preparing to cross the street.

Captain Adelman said the new signs may be confusing but added that if the motorist is careful when he approaches the first warning sign, the new system should pose fewer problems than the old roll-out stop sign.

Area elementary school principals are hoping drivers will have become educated about the new signs by the time school opens.

City Signs Called Inadequate

By Robert L. Carroll

A Member of the Staff

Kansas City can be a hard place to find, a special city sign committee has found. The committee is preparing recommendations for new signs and changes on present ones to make it easier for travelers and residents to find their way.

Ward H. Haylett, Jr., chairman of the committee appointed by the mayor four months ago, said yesterday a final report is expected to be finished in late July. Some preliminary findings have become apparent, he said.

"Our charge from the mayor was to find the airport and to find downtown," he said. "We think they are inadequate: and insufficiently marked and in some cases erratically marked."

In many cases, he said, signing could be improved by

keeping the same boards and trusses over the highways but changing the wording. On the drive down from Kansas City International Airport, for example, the sign marking an exit would read "Downtown Kansas City" instead of "Broadway."

"If you're from Tongue or Tuscaloosa," Haylett said, "who knows Broadway? Getting off the interstates and into downtown, there is confusion about how to get where. If it simply said 'Downtown Kansas City' or 'Downtown via Broadway' or 'Via 13th' or whatever, that's another thing."

References to Kansas City by name on the interstates are rare, he said.

In contrast, he said, drivers on I-70 nearing Columbia see signs saying "Columbia Next Four Exits."

Another recommendation to be in the final report is for "trailblazer" signs throughout the city pointing the way to places such as the Liberty Memorial, the convention center, the Kemper Arena, the sports complex and the World Trade Center.

The recommendations are not to involve radical changes such as new type faces, Haylett said, but rather improvements to augment the existing system.

"We're trying to adopt international symbols whenever possible," he said.

The committee noted in an interim report that the state highway department has put up new airport signs at important interchanges on routes to K.C.I. but concluded more signs are needed to help peo-

ple find their way to the airport and back to town.

Preliminary recommendations are for better signs on I-70 from the east and west and on I-35 from the south showing the way to I-29 and the airport, similar new signs on the 6th Street Freeway and on the N. Broadway Extension to the airport and on I-29 southbound from the airport to the city.

The final report is to go to the city council for adoption in the form of a resolution and then be sent on to the state highway department by the city transportation department.

"It's our intention," Haylett said, "every week or two, or certainly every 30 days, to request an update or a reply from each of those agencies on what action is being taken."

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