

Any alteration to a certified course normally nullifies its certification. The only kind of course where you can move the start/finish without recertifying would be a CLOSED LOOP; i.e., a course that finishes at EXACTLY THE SAME POINT as it starts and where runners are HEADING IN THE SAME DIRECTION when they finish as they were heading when they started. In this kind of course, the location of the start/finish is somewhat arbitrary (for example, if you back up the start/finish a short amount you'd automatically add the same distance to the start that you remove from the finish).

In all other cases, any adjustment to the course requires a new certification. In some cases, a minor adjustment that doesn't alter the course distance (for example removing a short distance at the finish and adding that same distance at the start) may not require re-measuring the whole course. But it would still require sending me a new certification application with an appropriately modified map and precise description of the adjustment procedure (and the usual certification review fee). And I would then have to write a new certificate with a new course number. Such an adjustment without re-measuring the whole course is possible only if the originally certified course is still intact (e.g., no alteration due to construction) with its original start and finish still exactly findable. And the segments being added and removed would each have to be measured at least twice using either steel tape or the calibrated bicycle method.

If such an adjustment is done using calibrated bicycle, it may not be necessary to calibrate the bike (i.e., ride a calibration course) in case the segments being removed and added are reasonably short and if your measurements of those segments are all done on the same day within a span of a few hours. The adjustment must nevertheless be done in such a way as to ensure that the segment being added is at least as long as the segment being removed. To this end, the segment being removed must be ridden at least twice, and you must pick the LARGER number of counts obtained on that segment. Then, do at least two rides of the segment being added, and add counts to ensure that the least number of counts obtained on this segment is as high as the larger number of counts obtained on the segment being removed. Both segments must be ridden along the runner's Shortest Possible Route (SPR).

Also, a warning about SPLITS: When adjusting a course, do not assume that intermediate split points have their exact nominal distances. If you have a 5 km course which has been altered an unknown amount by construction between the 4 km point and the finish, it may be tempting to measure only a 1 km distance from the 4 km split to a new finish. But normally, we've certified only the full 5 km race distance and intermediate splits are approximate; the 4 km split cannot be assumed to be certified unless we've actually written on the certificate that the distance from start to 4 km split is certified as a 4 km course. Thus, while it may be tempting to do only an adjustment using the existing 4 km split, you'll probably have to re-measure the whole course.

Bob Baumel  
USATF Oklahoma Certification Chairman