



# Traffic Guidelines Manual

ORIGINATOR State Traffic Engineer	2-15-5
CHAPTER 2	Signs
SECTION 15	Comprehensive Policies
SUBJECT 5	Destinations on Signs

## A. General

The display of appropriate destinations on guide signs can be particularly helpful to drivers, regardless of the type of road or highway. It is the purpose of this policy to set specific standards and guidelines for the selection of destination names for various types of guide signs on each classification of highway. General guidance is provided in the following sections of the 2009 MUTCD.

- Section [2D.37](#) Destination Signs (D1 Series)
- Section [2D.36](#) Distance Signs (D2 Series)
- Section [2E.07](#) Characteristics of Urban Signing
- Section [2E.10](#) Amount of Legend on Guide Signs
- Section [2E.12](#) Pull-Through Signs
- Section [2E.13](#) Designation of Destinations
- Section [2E.30](#) Interchange Guide Signs
- Section [2E.33](#) Advance Guide Signs
- Section [2E.35](#) Other Supplemental Guide Signs
- Section [2E.36](#) Exit Direction Signs
- Section [2E.39](#) Distance Signs
- Section [2E.40](#) Interchange Sequence Signs
- Section [2E.41](#) Community Interchanges Identification Signs
- Section [2E.42](#) NEXT X EXITS Sign

## B. Definitions

1. Freeways are defined as divided arterial highway facilities that have full controlled access, by means of grade separation at interchanges only.
2. Expressways are defined as divided arterial highway facilities that have partial control of access and generally with grade separations at major intersections.
3. Conventional Highways are defined as either divided or undivided roadway facilities that have no control of access or grade separations at intersections. These highways

can be two lane or multilane facilities.

4. A Major State Trunk Highway (Major STH) is defined as
  - a. A state highway operated as a freeway,
  - b. A highway designated as part of the National Highway System, or
  - c. A state highway route or segment approved as such by the State Traffic Engineer, based on its character as a principal route for (1) cross-state traffic; (2) traffic between major cities in Wisconsin and adjacent states; or (3) traffic from major cities to major northern resort areas.
5. A Standard Highway is defined as any conventional state or local highway which is not a Major STH.
6. Urban Areas are defined as
 

An established urbanized area, based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census and adjusted by metropolitan planning organizations and the DOT;  
Two or more contiguous cities and/or incorporated villages; or  
A single city or incorporated village which is not contiguous with any other.
7. National Control Cities are Chicago, Milwaukee, Beloit, Rockford, Janesville, Madison, Wisconsin Dells, La Crosse, Albert Lea, Eau Claire, St. Paul, Sheboygan, and Green Bay.
8. Regional Control Cities are defined as
  - a. Urban areas in Wisconsin or within 60 miles of the state line with a population in the most recent decennial census of 30,000 or more
  - b. Other communities, such as Sturgeon Bay, Woodruff, Minocqua, and Lake Geneva, which are approved by the State Traffic Engineer based on their character as widely known tourism destinations, and
  - c. Urban areas on or north of Highway 64 with a population exceeding 3500, and urban areas south of Highway 64 with a population exceeding 10,000.
9. Communities are defined as
 

Any urban area, or  
An unincorporated village which is identified on the Official State Highway Map, and is not adjacent to or within an urban area.

### C. Principal Destination Calculation

A Principal Destination is defined as a community served by a standard highway and located within 25 miles of a major state trunk highway, as measured along the standard highway, and having a location and population such that

$$\frac{P_p}{P_c} \geq \frac{D_p}{D_c} \quad \text{where}$$

$P_p$  = Population of Principal Destination (from official state highway map)

$D_p$  = Distance in whole miles from the major STH to the Principal Destination

$P_c$  = Population of the community closest to the major STH and in the same direction from it (from official state highway map)

Dc = Distance in whole miles to the closest community

If more than one community meets the above criteria, the community for which the term

$$\frac{Pp}{Pc} - \frac{Dp}{Dc}$$

is the greatest **shall** be selected.

Notes: When measuring distances Dp and Dc, it is recommended that consistency be applied in what points are being measured to.

Where the through highway passes adjacent to or within the closest community, Dc will approach zero, and  $\frac{Dp}{Dc}$  will approach infinity.

Dc

Therefore, in this case, the closest community **shall** be the principal destination.

**D. Policy**

**Destination Selection Table**

On Hwy Intersecting		Standard STH	Major STH	Interstate Highway
Standard Highway	Ahead Destination	Next Community	Regional Control City (1)	(2)
	Crossroad Destination	Next Community	Principal Destination	Principal Destination
Major STH	Ahead Destination	Next Community	Regional Control City (1)	(2)
	Crossroad Destination	Regional Control City	Regional Control City	Regional Control City
Interstate Highway	Ahead Destination	Next Community	Regional Control City (1)	National Control City
	Crossroad Destination	National Control City	National Control City	National Control City

- (1) If the major STH is constructed and signed as an expressway or freeway, an ahead destination is generally not displayed except as a pull-through sign at a system or directional interchange.
- (2) An ahead destination is generally not displayed except as a pull-through sign at a system or directional interchange.

**Specific Selection Criteria**

1. **On Standard State Trunk Highways.** Destination signs (D1 Series) *should* be used on the Standard State Highway approach to a numbered interstate. If designated, the “ahead” destination **shall** be the closest community on the through route. The first choice of destination names for the interstate **shall** be the closest national control city in each direction. The first choice of destination name for other

freeways **shall** be the closest regional control city in each direction.

If the intersecting route does not serve a national control city, then the regional control city, next community, or principal destination *may* be designated.

Unincorporated communities, meeting the qualifying criteria in Definition 9, *may* be displayed on Destination Signs (D1 Series) on conventional state highways.

Unincorporated communities **shall not** be displayed on Distance Signs (D2 Series) unless the community is designated a regional control city according to the Definition 8.b. However, they *may* be identified as unincorporated on the I2-3 name sign.

2. **On Major State Trunk Highways**, use Regional Control Cities according to Definition 8 and selected as follows:

- a. Select urban areas meeting the criteria of Definition 8.a. and 8.b.
- b. If less than two meet the criteria of 8.a. or 8.b., select urban area(s) meeting the criteria of 8.c.
- c. If the distance between areas selected above exceeds 160 miles, select urban areas between them, which meet the criteria of 8.c.

Unincorporated communities **shall not** be displayed on freeway or expressway Exit Signs, unless the community has been designated a regional control city according to the Definition 8.b.

3. **On Interstate Highways**, use national control cities, except regional control cities or principal destinations *may* be selected as appropriate for intersecting highway destinations.

4. Urban areas with more than one city or village.

- a. On highways, which serve the largest city in the urban area, only the largest city **shall** be named and **shall** be considered to represent the entire urban area.
- b. A smaller city or village *may* be named on highways which do not serve the largest city.
- c. Destination signs **shall not** be erected within an urban area directing to a city or village within the same urban area, except:
  - 1) On major state trunk highways, signs *may* direct to the central business district of the largest city.
  - 2) On highways near the edge of urban areas, signs *may* direct to the largest city in the urban area which is served by the crossroad.
  - 3) In bi-state urban areas, signs *may* direct to the largest out-of-state city.

5. Control cities beyond the end of a highway.

- a. A national or regional control city located beyond the end of a highway *may* be considered to be served by that highway if the connecting route:
  - 1) Is of the same or higher classification, **and**
  - 2) Continues in the same general direction as the ending highway, **and**
  - 3) Carries considerable through traffic from the ending highway.

6. Bi-state urban areas.
  - a. In determining the population of an urban area, part of which is in Wisconsin and part of which is in an adjacent state, for the purpose of selecting regional control cities, the population of the in-state and out-of-state cities **shall** be added. Directional signs *may* name the largest Wisconsin city and/or the largest out-of-state city, as provided in Criteria 4.c.3) above.
7. Other Supplemental Guide Signs.

Additional communities are allowed on other supplemental guide signs. Only one supplemental guide sign with cities/communities **shall** be allowed per interchange, maximum of two cities/communities per sign.
8. When opportunity presents itself (improvement project, refurbishment project, etc.), the destinations on primary and supplemental guide signs *should* be re-evaluated to ensure conformance to this policy.