



Traffic Guidelines Manual

ORIGINATOR Director, Bureau of Traffic Operations	2-15-6
CHAPTER 2	Signing
SECTION 15	Comprehensive Guiding Policies
SUBJECT 6	Community Wayfinding Signs

A. Purpose

This policy sets the uniform, Wisconsin state standards for signs, which communities *may* install by permit on conventional State Trunk Highways under DOT jurisdiction to provide directional guidance to public facilities and traffic generators within the community.

The 2009 MUTCD, Section 2D.50 provides guidelines and standards for Community Wayfinding signing. Substantial conformance of these signs to the MUTCD and DOT policy is required by state law. Poorly designed and/or cluttered guide signs will not meet these requirements and could adversely impact safety.

On local streets and connecting highways, local agencies have the authority to install destination signs for local attractions and generators. If there is deviation from state and national standards to the extent that highway signing would adversely affect driving behavior, local agencies *may* face liability problems.

Therefore this policy establishes the following to be applied to Community Wayfinding Signing on State Highways under DOT jurisdiction:

1. the qualifying criteria for Community Wayfinding Signing;
2. guidance on qualifying destinations or facilities;
3. clarification of sign design and installation standards, applicable to WisDOT
4. the application and permit process for roadways under WisDOT jurisdiction.

B. Definitions

Community Wayfinding Signs

These are the signs, allowed by permit, which are owned and maintained by the community and direct to

1. municipal area destinations such as Downtown, or Historic District,
2. individual destinations that are publicly leased or owned and operated for public use, such as City Hall, Convention Center, and local parks, or

3. privately owned non-profit facilities open to the public, such as a local museum or ice center.

Trailblazing Signs

In this context, these are community destination signs that direct subsequent turns on local streets to reach the destination.

Trailblazing (directional route signing) to state routes is the responsibility of WisDOT and will not be permitted on Community Wayfinding Signs.

C. Policy for Installation on State Trunk Highways

The Department will allow the local agency, by permit, to install and maintain community wayfinding signs on the right-of-way of the conventional state trunk highway system, subject to the destinations, design, location, and maintenance of the signs being reviewed and found satisfactory by the Department. These signs **shall not** be permitted on freeways or expressways.

WisDOT *may* fund the installation of wayfinding signs as part of a Community Sensitive Solutions project. For all Community Sensitive Solutions projects that include wayfinding signs, the sign design and locations **shall** be reviewed for conformity to WisDOT and MUTCD policies by the Region Traffic Operations. Wayfinding signs that are funded and installed as part of a Community Sensitive Solutions project **shall** be maintained by the community.

This policy does not apply to banners, which are addressed in TGM [13-12-1](#) or civic displays, which are addressed in TGM [13-12-5](#).

1. QUALIFYING CRITERIA FOR COMMUNITY WAYFINDING SIGNING PROGRAMS

Community wayfinding signs will not be permitted outside a readily apparent urban developed area, usually characterized by a reduced speed limit, nearby transition to curb and gutter, and dense residential and/or business development adjacent to the highway.

Geographical areas or districts within a community *may* be permitted Community Wayfinding Signing. Two or more adjacent communities in an urbanized area *may* coordinate a common signing program, but the department will issue separate permits to each individual municipality.

No countywide programs will be permitted.

The community must develop a Master Plan for Community Wayfinding Signing, which contains the following information:

1. A map of the community, including the city street/local road system, which clearly identifies:

- Exact locations of destinations and attractions to be included in this signing program.
 - State trunk highway approaches to city street/local road intersections where signing is proposed.
 - Which destination(s) and attraction(s) are to be signed on each state trunk highway approach at each city street/local road intersection.
 - City street/local road intersections where trailblazing signing is required to direct motorists to each facility.
2. A concept design of a typical community wayfinding sign, which *may* include the city logo, a street name and up to a total of three destinations/attractions. A maximum of three destinations *should* be displayed on a sign.

The Master Plan **shall** be submitted to the WisDOT Regional Traffic Engineer for review. This submittal **shall** be initiated and coordinated by the community and **shall** identify one contact or lead person in the community, through which all Department correspondence and contact will be made.

If a community obtains DOT approval for Community Wayfinding Signing, no new requests for traffic generator signing, which would qualify for Community Destination Signs, will be approved within the community.

2. QUALIFYING DESTINATIONS OR FACILITIES

Destinations or attractions must be of general interest to the traveling public and **shall not** be a retail, business or manufacturing center. The individual destinations **shall be** publicly leased or owned and operated facilities for public use or privately owned non-profit facilities open to the public.

Destinations which qualify for either Supplemental Traffic Generator signing or Community Wayfinding Signing,

- *should* be included on the Community Wayfinding Signs,
- *may* be on permitted supplemental signing,
- but **shall not** be on both at the same intersection approach.

A specific destination **shall** only be displayed on one sign structure in each direction on a highway unless straight ahead signing is also approved by the Regional Traffic Engineer.

This type of signing **shall not** display advertising for a commercial product or service.

IH, USH or STH directional signage **shall not** be allowed on Community Wayfinding signs.

3. SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS

Shape

The shape of the signs **shall** be rectangular and *may* have rounded corners. A rounded or other regular geometric shape on the top will be allowed to accommodate a logo.

Pictograph

Only one community pictograph *may* be incorporated in the top of the sign subject to WISDOT approval. If used, it **shall** be simple and easily recognizable. The height of the pictograph **shall not** exceed two times the height of the upper-case letters of the principal legend on the sign. For coordinated programs, a unique pictograph for each municipality *may* be used.

If a community name is to be displayed at the top of the sign panel, instead of or in addition to a pictograph, the lettering **shall** be of a size, font style and high color contrast for motorists to read at the posted speed.

All signs in a Community Wayfinding Signing program **shall** have the same format. If a community pictograph, and/or name, and/or street name, is to be used on any sign, it **shall** be used on all signs in the community program.

Pictographs for destinations and attractions **shall not** be permitted, since the traveling public will not recognize pictographs of local destinations.

Facing

Sign panel legends and backgrounds **shall** be reflective to meet the minimum standards of High Intensity sheeting.

Fluorescent reflective sheeting of any color **shall not** be permitted on these signs.

The sign **shall not** contain any animated or moving parts, flashing or moving lights, or flashing disks.

Color

Colors **shall** meet the standards for highway colors specified by the Federal Highway Administration. Color combinations **shall** have high contrast. Two-color combinations which *may* be used are:

- a. White or yellow on blue, green or brown.
- b. Blue, green, black or brown on white.
- c. Red or orange on white, but not the reverse.
- d. A third color, if used, must provide suitable contrast (i.e., not red on blue).

The background colors of orange, red, yellow, purple, or the fluorescent versions thereof, fluorescent yellow-green and fluorescent pink **shall not** be permitted on Community Destination Signs. One background color is preferred. A third color for the logo area *may* be used, or that area *may* be reversed in color. Color plaques or accents **shall not** be used under arrows or destination names. Lettering, arrows, and border **shall** be the same color.

Border

Border is optional. If used, it **shall** be plain, retroreflective, not decorative, and the same color as the letters.

Lettering & Sign Size

A minimum Series B font as specified in the Standard Highway Signs manual is preferred. A similar font is allowable, unless the style detracts noticeably from legibility.

The preferred letter size is 6" Upper Case/ 4 ½" Lower Case. In areas, where the posted speed is less than 35 mph, a minimum 5" Upper Case/ 3 ¾" Lower Case or 5" Capital Letters will be allowed.

The resulting sign width **shall not** exceed five feet adjacent to a roadway posted at 35 MPH or above. The sign width **shall not** exceed four feet adjacent to a roadway posted at 30 MPH or below.

Arrows

Arrows **shall** be as big in dimension as the lettering, and the same color as the adjacent lettering. The arrows **shall not** have encircling accents, or contrasting mini-backgrounds.

Arrows **shall** be left of the message for left destinations, and right of the message for right destinations.

Ahead arrows **shall not** be used except in combination with left and/or right arrow(s) and destination(s) to pull through to one major area destination, such as DOWNTOWN, or direct ahead to one or more qualifying destinations where the through route turns. When used, ahead arrows **shall** be on the left side of the top line.

Destinations

Destinations/attractions on a community destination sign **shall** be displayed (from top to bottom of sign) in the following sequence:

- ahead destination (if used);
- left-oriented destinations/attractions (closest to furthest);
- right-oriented destinations/attractions (closest to furthest).

Community Wayfinding Signs *should* be limited to three destinations per sign.

4. SIGN INSTALLATION STANDARDS

Signs **shall** be installed by the community on separate supports furnished and typically used by the community. They **shall not** be combined with other signing by the community or the Department.

If signing is approved on the state trunk highway directing to a facility, any necessary

trailblazing signing **shall** be installed on the city streets/local roads by the community before signing is installed on the state trunk highway.

The community **shall** affix an identification code number label to the back of each sign in accordance with State Statute Section 86.19(5) and Traffic Guidelines Manual Subject 2-1-30.

Sign supports **shall** meet the National Cooperative Highway Research Program 350 breakaway standards. (NCHRP 350)

Sign installation and placement **shall** be in accordance with WisDOT Standard Sign Details A4-3, A4-4, and A4-8, A4-9, A4-11, or A5-9, as applicable.

Signs **shall** be placed in advance of the intersection where a turn would be required. Only one sign **shall** be permitted in each direction approaching an intersection and it *should* be located on the right side of the roadway.

The preferred sign spacing is 200 feet from any other highway sign. The minimum spacing **shall** be 100 feet.

Signs erected on the state trunk highway system **shall** have their locations approved by the Regional Traffic Engineer. Signs at all locations *should* be installed with due care to be visible, and to not obscure other traffic control devices. Further guidance on location is contained in Section 2A.16 of the 2009 MUTCD.

5. APPLICATION AND PERMIT

Sign destinations, designs, and locations on State highways under DOT jurisdiction **shall** be approved by the WisDOT Regional Traffic Engineer. Installation of these signs **shall** be through this permit process.

Upon receipt of a master plan for Community Wayfinding Signing, including the typical standard sign design and the identification of the community contact person, the Regional Traffic Engineer will review the plan for

- appropriate qualifying destinations,
- direct and effective routing to the destinations, including trailblazing on local roadways,
- appropriate sign locations,
- individual sign designs, and
- roadside conditions and constraints.

In order to expedite the process, the community *should* prepare the master plan in compliance with the guidelines in this policy. Any necessary denials or revisions *may* cause a return of the plan to the community contact person, resulting in a delay of the permit.

The permit will consist of an approved master plan attached to a permit letter signed by the Regional Traffic Engineer, and *may* include the necessary standard sign installation

details mentioned above.

All sign panel designs *should* be reviewed and approved by the Regional Traffic Engineer before fabrication.

The community **shall** be responsible for the construction, installation and maintenance of the community wayfinding sign structures and sign panels at its own expense.

If community wayfinding signs are not properly maintained, the community **shall**, upon request by WisDOT, replace or remove the signs at its own expense. If not replaced or removed within 30 days of notification, WisDOT will remove the community wayfinding signs at the expense of the community.

Roadway reconstruction and/or installation of new regulatory, warning or guide signs *may* necessitate relocation or removal of community wayfinding signs by the community at its own expense.

D. Grandfather Clause

Existing permitted Community Wayfinding Signs will be allowed to remain temporarily without modification or replacement until the end of their useful life, or December 31, 2015, whichever comes first. Unpermitted signs **shall** be removed as soon as possible, unless they meet the standards contained in this policy. In that case, the community *may* apply for a retroactive permit by submitting the required master plan.

SAMPLE PERMIT FORM LETTER

**Copy and paste to your Region letterhead.
Provide date, contact name, and address
Modify as needed.**

RE: Community Wayfinding Signing Permit

This letter **shall** serve as the Community Wayfinding Signing Permit for (city, village, town) of (name) to install and maintain guidance signing on STH (number) as contained and approved in the attached master plan.

No additions or changes will be allowed without a revised and approved master plan.

WisDOT Standard Sign Installation Details, A4-3, A4-4, and (others as needed), are attached. Adherence to these standards is required.

Sincerely,

(signature)

(name, P.E.)
(Region) Traffic Engineer