

Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) Frequently Asked Questions

What's the difference between Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) and Specific Information Signs (SIS)?

While there are several differences between these programs related to costs, manufacturing, and application, the main distinction is where these types of signs can be permitted. Based on [Wisconsin State Statute 86.195](#), there are designated SIS-routes across the state that allow for Specific Information Signs to be erected and maintained. Within the designated SIS-routes, Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs are not permissible. All other non-SIS designated routes are generally eligible for TODS.

What types of businesses qualify for the Attraction category?

If the business does not fall into either the Gas, Food, Lodging, or Camping categories, they may apply as an Attraction. Per [Wisconsin Statute 86.196](#) and [Administrative Code Trans 200.08](#), applications in the attraction category will be forwarded to WisDOT by the county for review by an Advisory Council made up of members from the tourism industry. To qualify, the business must be deemed to have significant interest to the travelling public, be open a minimum of 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, for at least 3 consecutive months, and provide restrooms and drinking water. See [TEOps 2-15-59](#) for a list of types of businesses that *may* be considered attractions.

How do I apply for a Tourist-Oriented Directional Sign?

Fill out a [DT1864](#) form and submit it, along with a check for \$100 per requested sign, to the county in which the TODS would be installed (check is payable to the county). Once the county receives the application, they will review it or forward it to WisDOT for review, and will contact you regarding the decision.

*If you are interested in signing on a designated SIS-route, you would need to apply for the [Specific Information Sign](#) program.

*If you are interested in signing on a local or county road, contact the respective county.

Are there any restrictions on where TODS can be installed?

With respect to state roadways, TODS are not eligible to be installed:

- On designated SIS-routes
- At the intersection of two state roadways
- Inside defined Federal Urban Area boundaries, which are areas with populations of 5,000 or greater
- If the business has direct access (i.e. a driveway or entrance) to the state roadway
- If the business is located more than 5 miles from the intersection where TODS would be installed
- If the business has permitted outdoor advertising within 1000 feet of the intersection where TODS would be installed -OR- if the business has illegal outdoor advertising
- If there is not enough space to install new signs at the intersection
- If the intersection is already at maximum capacity with regards to the number of approved TODS.

What fees are involved?

Businesses approved for TODS are responsible for the following fees:

- 1.) Administrative: This fee, which is \$100 per sign, is initially due with the application, and covers the county's administrative costs. If the application is approved, the county retains this fee, which covers

the initial five-year permit period (based on installation date). If the application is denied, the county will return the administrative fees.

- 2.) Fabrication: If approved, the business will be provided a list of manufacturers qualified to make TODS to WisDOT standards. The business is responsible for all manufacturing costs and will be invoiced directly by the chosen manufacturer.
- 3.) Installation: This fee, payable to Wisconsin Department of Transportation, is due once the signs are dropped off/shipped to the county for installation. Costs are \$250 per sign if new 4x6 posts are needed, or \$100 per sign if the sign is being installed on existing 4x6 posts.

Are there any ongoing fees involved with the TODS program?

Yes, after the initial 5-year permit expires, the county will contact the business regarding renewing the permit, at which time the administrative fees would once again be due (\$100 per sign). Upon payment, the TODS permit is renewed for another five years.

In addition, any costs involved with repairing damaged TODS or posts, replacing worn TODS, or removing TODS (if the business wants to take possession of the signs) would also be the responsibility of the business.

I've been approved and the signs are made, where do I send the installation fees?

All installation fees, whether it is for a new TODS installation, repairing/replacing an existing TODS, or removing a TODS, should be made payable to Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The check can either be dropped off at the county highway office, who will forward it to WisDOT, or it can be mailed directly to WisDOT at: Wisconsin Department of Transportation Attn: Casey Amans, 3609 Pierstorff St, Madison, WI 53704. Please coordinate with the county as needed.

There are already existing TODS assemblies at my requested intersection, why is my installation fee \$250 per sign and not \$100 per sign with the existing posts?

Due to the addition of a new sign, longer posts are typically needed to maintain proper vertical clearance. If minimum ground clearance can be maintained using the existing posts, the county will add your sign and the installation fees would be \$100 per sign. If it is determined that longer and/or newer posts are needed, then the installation fees would be \$250 per sign.

In most cases, the \$100 per sign installation fee applies when replacing an existing sign and the posts are otherwise in good condition, not when adding an additional sign.

Why do I need supplemental signing on the local or county roads?

The TODS program is intended to inform the travelling public of Gas, Food, Lodging, Camping & Attraction establishments in the area and provide safe guidance to their locations. If the business is not located directly on the crossroad to the state roadway (i.e. additional turns are required once off the state roadway), then WisDOT may require supplemental signing as part of the TODS approval. If so, the business will be advised to work with the county and/or local community to install supplemental signing prior to having the TODS installed. If requested supplemental signing is not approved, the TODS should not be installed.

My existing TODS were damaged, how do I get them fixed?

If you have existing TODS that were damaged in a traffic or weather-related incident (or is no longer serviceable due to wear), contact the county to have the sign replaced or repaired. All manufacturing and installation costs to repair or replace the sign(s) are the responsibility of the business.

The repair/replacement fees are: \$250 per sign if new 4x6 posts are needed; or \$100 per sign if the existing 4x6 posts can be re-used (fees do not include sign fabrication costs). If the business elects not to repair their TODS, the county will remove the sign and posts. Should the business want to take possession of the removed sign(s), there is a \$100 per sign removal fee. All repair/replacement fees are payable to Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

If the county (or Department) notices a TODS is damaged, or in need of replacement due to wear*, they may contact the business regarding repairing or replacing the sign. The county will not perform any repair or replacement work on TODS without approval from the respective business due to related costs; however, TODS may be removed from the roadway due to damage, wear, or violation of WisDOT policy.

*The expected lifespan of a TODS sign is 10-12 years.

Can I install the TODS myself if approved?

No, all TODS installations, repairs, and removals are to be done by the county highway department or WisDOT (or its approved contractor).

My business changed names, do I need to re-apply?

Yes, name changes do require the cancellation of the existing permit and the issuance a new permit. You will need to re-apply with the county and would be responsible for all respective administrative, fabrication, and installation fees to update the sign(s).

My business is closing, who do I notify to have the TODS removed?

If your business will no longer be in operation, contact the county highway department to have the TODS removed from the roadway. If you want to take possession of the removed signs, there is a \$100 per sign removal fee, payable to Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Who should I contact if I have other questions regarding TODS?

If you are interested in applying for the TODS program, contact the highway department of the county in which the TODS would be installed. You may also contact Casey Amans with the Department of Transportation at casey.amans@dot.wi.gov or (608) 245-5344.

If you are currently involved with the TODS program and have questions about your existing signs, contact the highway department of the county in which they are installed.