



TRAFFIC AND SAFETY MANUAL

Chapter 2 - Signing 2D - Guide

Community Wayfinding Signs

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Purpose

This section sets the uniform standards for signs, which communities may install by permit on conventional State primary highways under Iowa DOT jurisdiction to provide directional guidance to public facilities and traffic generators within the community.

The 2009 Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Section 2D.50 provides guidelines and standards for community wayfinding signing. 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 traffic 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.

This document establishes the following to be applied to community wayfinding signing on State highways under Iowa DOT jurisdiction:

1. The qualifying criteria for community wayfinding signing.
2. Guidance on qualifying destinations, facilities, or traffic generators.
3. Clarification of sign design and installation standards.
4. The application and permit process for roadways under Iowa DOT jurisdiction.

Definitions

Community wayfinding signs. These are signs, allowed by permit, which are owned and maintained by the community and direct traffic to destinations or attractions within the community.

State Primary Highway. This is a roadway that is under the jurisdiction of the Iowa DOT. The highway will have either a federal or state route number.

Installation on State Primary Highways

The DOT will allow the local agency, by permit, to install and maintain community wayfinding signs on the right-of-way of State primary highways. The installation of the signs is subject to approval of the destinations, sign design, and sign location. These signs shall not be permitted on freeways, expressways, or ramps of interchanges.

1. Qualifying Criteria for Community Wayfinding Signing Programs

Community wayfinding signs will not be permitted outside a readily apparent urban devolved 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.

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 City.

No countywide programs will be permitted.

The community must develop a master plan for community wayfinding signing, which contains the following information:

- A. A map of the community, including the city street system which clearly identifies:
 - Locations of destinations to be included in this signing program.
 - Locations along state primary highways where signing is proposed.
 - The destinations that are proposed for each sign.
 - Additional signing off State primary highways required to direct traffic on local roads.
- B. A concept design of a typical community wayfinding sign which may include the city pictograph, and up to a total of three destinations. A maximum of three destinations is allowed on the sign.

The master plan shall be submitted to the Iowa DOT District office 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 will be made.

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. The destinations should also qualify for signing under Iowa DOT signing policy 620.01.

Destinations that qualify for Tourist Oriented Direction Signs (TODS) may also qualify for wayfinding (i.e. golf courses or veterans memorials). Only one sign for the destination for each direction will be allowed, either wayfinding or TODS, not both.

- A. Municipal area destinations such as downtown, historic district, or town center
- B. Individual destinations that are publicly leased or owned and operated for public use such as local parks, schools, colleges, universities, stadiums, auditoriums, libraries, convention centers, hospitals, or fairgrounds.
- C. Privately owned non-profit facilities open to the public, such as local museums, camp grounds, or trail heads.

Common destination requests which are not allowed for signing include:

City Halls, County Courthouses, fire departments, police stations, aquatic centers, medical clinics, veterinary clinics, or local cemeteries.

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 State Traffic Engineer. The wayfinding signs shall be placed at the point where the driver needs to leave the State primary highway to reach the destination. Trailblazing on State primary highways is not allowed. An example of trailblazing is where a wayfinding sign directs a driver from one State primary highway to a second State primary highway. Then a second wayfinding sign is needed to turn off the second State primary highway to reach the destination.

Community wayfinding signs shall not display advertising for a commercial product or service.

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 pictograph.

Pictograph. Only one community pictograph may be incorporated in the top of the sign subject to Iowa DOT 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 city may be used.

If a city 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 motorist 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 is to be used on any sign, it shall be used on all signs in the community program.

Individual pictographs for destinations and attractions shall not be permitted.

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. 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. The background colors of orange, red, yellow, purple, or the fluorescent versions of these colors shall not be permitted. 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 Size. Highway B, C or D font as specified in the Standard Highway Signs manual is preferred. A similar font is allowable, unless the style detracts noticeably from legibility. The minimum letter size is 4" upper case, 3" lower case. In areas where the posted speed is 40 MPH or above, the minimum letter size is 6" upper case, 4.5" lower case.

Arrows. Arrows shall be as tall as the adjacent upper case lettering. The arrows shall not have an encircling accent, or contrasting mini-backgrounds. The arrow style shall be as shown in the MUTCD.

Arrows shall be on the left side of the sign for destinations to the left, and on the right side of the sign for destinations to the right.

Straight ahead destinations are not normally used, except when the State route turns, and the driver leaves the route by continuing straight ahead. An exception is made for the first wayfinding sign on a route entering the City. A maximum of two straight ahead destinations may be shown on the sign. These destinations shall be located directly off the straight ahead route. The straight ahead destinations cannot be located on another State primary highway.

Destinations. Each sign should be limited to three destinations. Destinations shall be displayed in the following order:

- Straight ahead destinations (if used)
- Left-oriented destinations (closest to furthest)
- Right-oriented destinations (closest to furthest)

4. Sign Installation Standards

Signs shall be installed by the City or by the Iowa DOT. Wayfinding signs shall be installed on a separate post and shall not be combined with other City signing or Iowa DOT signing.

If signing is approved on the State primary highway, any necessary supplemental signing directing traffic along local City roads to the destination shall be installed before signing is installed on the State highway.

Sign supports shall meet the National Cooperative Highway Research Program 350 breakaway standards (NCHRP 350). After 12/31/2019, the posts shall meet the standards found in the Federal Highway Administration Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH).

Sign installation and placement shall be in accordance with the Federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards, section 2A.16.

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 with existing traffic signs is five times the posted speed limit. For example, if the posted speed limit is 30 MPH, the preferred spacing is 150 feet. The minimum spacing is three times the posted speed limit. For a 30 MPH zone, the minimum is 90 feet.

Signs installed on the State primary highway system shall have their locations approved by the State Traffic Engineer.

5. Custom Sign Caps

Another option that is open to Cities that wish to distinguish their destination signs is to design a custom cap for standard DOT destination signs. The cap is designed and provided by the City. The bottom portion of the sign is designed and provided by the Iowa DOT. The cap is then mounted above the standard DOT destination sign.

The cap should be no larger than 20 percent of the bottom part of the sign. The 20 percent is calculated based on a sign with three destinations.

Examples of custom caps are shown below:



6. Application and Permit

Sign destinations, designs, and locations on State primary highways shall be approved by the Iowa DOT District Office. The District Office will work in coordination with the State Traffic Engineer. Upon receipt of a master plan for community wayfinding signing, the District Office will review the plan for the following:

- Appropriate qualifying destinations
- Direct and effective routing to the destinations including trailblazing on local roads.
- Appropriate sign locations
- Individual sign designs
- Roadside conditions and constraints.

Once the master plan has been approved, the City shall complete a Traffic Control Device Application (form 810071). This form assigns ownership of the signs to the City, and states that the City is responsible for future maintenance of the signs. The City shall be responsible for the fabrication costs of the sign panel.

All sign panel designs should be reviewed and approved by the District Engineer before fabrication.

For community wayfinding signs that are in poor condition, faded, or poor reflectivity, the Iowa DOT will request that the City replace the wayfinding signs. If the signs are not replaced after 90 days, the Iowa DOT will remove the signs.

Roadway reconstruction, or installation of new regulatory, warning or guide signs may necessitate relocation or removal of community wayfinding signs.

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