



**Department Originating Policy:**

Public Works

**Department Contact:**

Nick Sandford  
507-328-7052

**Effective Date:**

July 20, 2021

**Last Revision Date:**

July 20, 2021

## Olmsted County Roadway Sign Policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish uniformity and consistency in the application, installation, and maintenance of traffic signs on Olmsted County's roadway system. This policy recognizes that the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MnMUTCD) is the standard for all traffic control devices on all public roads in Minnesota, and therefore all traffic control devices on Olmsted County's transportation system must conform to its

standards and specifications as specified in Minnesota Statute 169.06.

This policy officially recognizes the rule in the MnMUTCD that establishes minimum retro-reflectivity levels for traffic signs and describes how Olmsted County achieves compliance.

It is in the interest of Olmsted County and the public to prevent the excessive use of traffic signs on the county roadway system. A conservative use of traffic signs reduces maintenance costs and improves the effectiveness of the remaining signs. Limiting the excessive use of traffic signs achieves the following:

- Fulfills demonstrated needs
- Champions a command of attention
- Reduces clutter that impedes the conveyance of a clear and simple meaning
- Fosters respect by road users, and reduces conflicts that may restrict time for a proper response that cumulatively improves traffic safety for all users
- Pursues the goals of Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths partnership in Olmsted County

### Policy Statement

This policy provides standards and guidance for the Olmsted County Public Works staff to judiciously install and maintain traffic signs. All traffic signs on the Olmsted County roadway system shall conform to the MnMUTCD. Traffic signs not required to be installed by the MnMUTCD shall not be installed on the Olmsted County roadway system unless specified in this Policy or authorized by the County Engineer.

---

## **Policy / Procedures**

### **Sign Retro-reflectivity Management Method**

This section of the sign policy is intended to replace the Olmsted County Sign Retro-reflectivity Policy, dated February 7, 2012.

Olmsted County shall use the Blanket Replacement method for maintaining minimum retro-reflectivity levels for traffic signs. The MnMUTCD, Section 2A.8, describes this method as follows: "All signs in an area/corridor, or of a given type, should be replaced at specified intervals. This eliminates the need to assess retro-reflectivity or track the life of individual signs. The replacement interval is based on the expected sign life, compared to the minimum levels, for the shortest life material used on the affected signs."

The replacement of traffic signs shall be based upon the expected life of sign sheeting as determined by the manufacturer's warranty period or as documented by an engineering study. The replacement interval is not dependent on the traffic sign location or orientation.

Signs assessed using the retro-reflectivity management method will be applied to all signs and street identification signs on all Olmsted County roadways, with the exception of:

- Stop signs at Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) controlled intersections and highway ramps with state/county highways.
- Specific signs installed by others (Mn/DOT, transit agencies, and private signs as agreed upon by Olmsted County).
- Bike path and other pedestrian-control signs not pertaining to vehicle traffic installed by government entities other than the county.  
Signs on approaches to various streets installed by private business and/or property owners.

*Guidance:* Roadway segments that are repaved or reconstructed shall have priority for traffic sign replacement. The Traffic Engineer and Sign Crew Leader shall prioritize other roadway segments based upon the need, budget or other special circumstances.

### **Sign Replacement Priority in Response to Incident**

Sign maintenance staff will respond after receiving notice of a repair need to determine appropriate action with the following priorities:

- 
- Stop and Yield signs will be replaced as soon as possible once staff is notified and is the sign technician's top priority, generally replaced within several hours of notification.
  - Other Regulatory Signs will be replaced as soon as scheduling permits, generally replaced within three business days.
  - Warning Signs will be replaced as soon as scheduling permits, generally replaced within three business days.
  - Guide and all other signs will be replaced as scheduling permits, generally replaced within two scheduled work weeks

## **Regulatory Signs**

Regulatory signs inform roadway users of traffic laws or regulations and indicate the applicability of legal requirements that would not otherwise be apparent. Olmsted County shall utilize the guidance of the MnMUTCD regarding design and installation of regulatory signs.

*Speed Limit Signs:* Signs displaying speed limit shall only be installed and maintained for authorized speed zones. Speed limit signs shall not be installed for statutory speed limits unless authorized by the County Engineer (as set forth in Minnesota Statutes Section 169.14)

*Local Ordinance Signs:* Signs displaying County, Township or City ordinances shall only be installed and maintained when authorized by the local authority, approved by the County Engineer, and there is an agreement with the local policing authority to enforce the signage. The ordinance displayed on the sign shall only apply to traffic operations. A Township or City shall be responsible for the cost of material to fabricate an ordinance sign. When the sign is due for replacement or is damaged, as determined by Olmsted County, the Township or City shall be responsible for the cost of materials to fabricate the new sign.

*Mandatory Movement Lane Control Signs (R3-7):* Signs that indicate mandatory movement for lane control shall only be used on lane drop locations and not on auxiliary turn lanes. This will be indicated through pavement marking on County roadways.

*Dynamic Feedback Signs:* Signs with dynamic feedback capabilities may be utilized on a temporary basis (mobile signs) on Olmsted County roadway. These are typically deployed by the Olmsted County Sheriff's Department and coordinated with the Traffic Engineer. Permanent dynamic feedback signs will not be installed on County roadways unless an engineering study concludes that installing the permanent sign is the best tool for speed mitigation.

---

## Warning Signs

Warning signs are installed to call attention to unexpected conditions on or adjacent to the road that may not be readily apparent to the road users. Warning signs alert the road user to conditions that may require a reduction in speed or an action that is in the interest of safety and efficient traffic operation. However, it should be noted, the use of warning signs shall be kept to a minimum as the unnecessary use of warning signs tends to breed disrespect for all signs.

*General Installation/placement:* Warning signs are installed when an engineering study deems the sign to be effective and the issue needing warning is not obvious. There are only three warning signs that are required by the MnMUTCD; Railroad Crossing (W10-1), Low Clearance (W12-1) when less than 12 inches above legal maximum height, and No Train Horn (W10-9P). All other warnings are used based on engineering judgment, system considerations, and County practices.

*Elimination of warning signs:* As stated in the MnMUTCD, warning signs may be removed when an engineering study has found the sign to be ineffective, the hazard has been eliminated at specific locations, or based on research of ineffective signs.

When a condition is readily apparent, signs have been shown to be ineffective or counter to safety. These types of warning signs will not be installed on the County roadway system, or will be removed from the system. (Supporting research ‘Minnesota’s Best Practices for Traffic Sign Maintenance/Management Handbook’— Report No. 2014RIC20)

The presence of warning signs for occasional conditions has been shown to be ineffective in changing drivers’ behavior for the occasional hazard the sign may be warning for. Therefore, these types of signs will not be installed or will be removed from the system.

The removal process may occur under several conditions: when corridor wide sign work is being conducted, when the sign is no longer effective (has been damaged or is no longer a functional sign) or through the County’s sign management practices updates. Signs that meet these criteria include, but are not limited to, Deer Crossing, Slippery when Wet, Playground, Farming, and Truck Crossing signs.

There may be other warning signs that can be removed based on review of the conditions and need for the sign. For example, a regular review of School Bus Stop Ahead signs (S3-1) will be done to ensure that the signs are being used in the appropriate locations.

---

## Guide Signs

The street name sign and directional guidance sign are the primary traffic signs to help direct unfamiliar motorists to destinations along the County roadway system. However, signing for a specific regional attraction or facility that generates significant volume of motorists unfamiliar with the local area can be beneficial. Guide and information signs are intended to provide notice to motorists unfamiliar with the area to better facilitate travel and turn maneuvers to the destination. Roadway signing is not intended to be an advertising medium. Olmsted County will utilize the guidance of the MnMUTCD regarding design and installation of guide signs unless specifically outlined in this policy.

*Traffic Generator (White on Green or Brown Signs):* This signing is meant for traffic generators that are major regional attractions or facilities that draw motorists from beyond the local community. They are significant for the cultural, historical, or recreational experience and public appeal of the generator. Signing will not be provided if the facility is readily visible or if effective directional signing is present or can be provided outside of the County right-of-way. Signing of this type is to help direct traffic, and straight ahead signing will not be permitted. Retail, business, or manufacturing centers are not eligible for guide signing, and the use of logos are not permitted on traffic generator signs. Criteria 1 or criteria 2 (parts a through e) must be met to qualify for consideration for traffic generator signing:

- 1) Facilities that qualify for white on green or brown (depending on facility) signing on the state or interstate system under generator sign criteria in the MnDOT Traffic Engineering Manual, Chapter 6 that require supplemental signing on the County system to identify the route to the generator.
  
- 2) Facilities that generally attract non-local persons or groups unfamiliar with the location of the generator. Information regarding the generator will be used to determine the benefit of the signing to the motorists including the following:
  - a. Public or private but open to the general public and provide a historical, cultural, or recreational experience.
  - b. Generates approximately 250 vehicles daily (measured based on site information and traffic generation tools).
  - c. Open a minimum of 5 days a week, during normal business hours (typically eight hours per day).
  - d. Open at least 6 months of the year. (signing indicating seasonal operation may be required.)
  - e. Generators with access directly to the County system are not eligible unless the access/facility signing for the generator is poorly visible to the motorists on the highway and on-site changes cannot be reasonably made to allow the generator's on-site signs to be more visible.

---

*Specific Service (White on Blue Signs):* The County roadway guide signing system relies primarily on advance street name signing and traffic generator signing to provide guidance to motorists. However, signing for some specific services or tourist-oriented businesses that are not readily visible by the traveling public can be beneficial. The County shall utilize the guidance provided in Chapter 2K of the MnMUTCD, Section 6-7.09.02 of the MnDOT Traffic Engineering Manual, and Minnesota State Statute 160.292 through 160.297 unless otherwise specified in this policy.

Signing will not be provided if the facility is readily visible from a County road or if effective directional signing is present or can be provided outside of the County right-of-way. Signing of this type is to help direct traffic, and straight ahead signing will not be permitted. The facility must be located within 2 miles of the signed intersection, and only one intersection will be permitted to be signed per facility. Advance signs or logos will not be permitted. All intersections to be signed must be located in a rural area, and signs shall be located on County right of way that does not impede other traffic signs.

Specific service facilities that are eligible include:

- 1) Resorts
- 2) Motels
- 3) Restaurants
- 4) Campgrounds
- 5) Gasoline Service/Retail Motor Fuel Businesses
- 6) Places of Worship
- 7) Rural Agriculture Businesses
- 8) Tourist Oriented Businesses

The specific service facility applicant will be required to sign an agreement with the County and installation and fabrication costs shall be paid for by the facility at the current fee as determined by the County. The fee will be based on the cost to fabricate and install the signs. The agreement, sign condition, and a renewal fee shall be assessed every 5 years.

*Political and Private Signs:* These signs are not permitted within the County road right of way under state law. County crews shall remove unlawfully placed signs within County right of way and inform the property owner and/or the person/business represented on the sign that it has been removed and the location where it can be picked up.

## **Enforcement**

This policy will be enforced by the Olmsted County Public Works Department.

## **History**

Policy Implemented - July 20, 2021