



Memorandum

Subject: INFORMATION: Safety Issues Related to Use of
Acknowledgement and Advertising Signs on Toll Facilities

Date: February 28, 2007

From: /original signed by/
Jeffrey F. Paniati
Associate Administrator for Operations

In Reply Refer To: HSA

/original signed by/
Jeffrey A. Lindley
Associate Administrator for Safety

To: Division Administrators

Today's challenge of building, operating and maintaining the necessary infrastructure to support our Nation's transportation needs is immense. Agencies are looking for innovative ways to raise revenue, to help meet these growing needs. One such opportunity being pursued, particularly with toll authorities, is the use of sponsorship programs.

Sponsorship programs allow a company to sponsor an element of an Agency's operation (e.g. maintenance or beautification programs) through services or payment. In return for the company's services or payment, the company is recognized through acknowledgement signs. The use of acknowledgement signs in recognition of services received began with adopt-a-highway litter removal programs, but has grown in concept to include other highway-related services. The FHWA's policy on the use of acknowledgement signs, titled *Optional Use of Acknowledgement Signs on Highway Rights of Way*, and issued August 10, 2005 (attached), provides the specific applications for acknowledgement signs. The Policy also distinguishes the use of acknowledgement signs from advertising signs, and makes clear that the safe and orderly movement of traffic cannot be compromised with the use of these signs.

A number of toll authorities have been aggressive in advancing sponsorship programs as an opportunity to raise revenue for highway-related needs. As an example, one turnpike commission recently issued a request for proposals seeking companies to participate as sponsors in their new system-wide branding and sponsorship program. Under this program, companies have the opportunity to purchase the rights to sponsor three major inventory elements: toll plazas, first responder vehicles, and emergency communication systems. The commission indicates in its package that highway signage in this program is subject to applicable Federal and State laws, including the August 2005 FHWA Policy.



Of the major highway-related services that may be candidates for the acknowledgement sign program, among the most complex is the operation of a toll plaza. The toll plaza area represents a complex operation that each driver must navigate with extreme caution, and without distraction. Recent recommendations by the National Transportation Safety Board, and the ongoing study of toll plaza safety required by Section 1403 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), highlight the importance of worker and driver safety in this critical area.

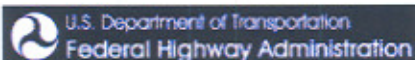
Safety is, in fact, the overriding issue when there is any doubt whether an acknowledgement sign is appropriate. The August 2005 Policy notes that acknowledgement signs may not be used “at key decision points where a driver’s attention is more appropriately focused on traffic control devices, roadway geometry, or traffic conditions.” Toll plazas and their entrance and exit areas are environments where all of these factors exist. The driver is being directed by a number of traffic control devices (including regulatory signs), roadway geometry requires careful maneuvering by the driver, and traffic conditions are typically such that a mix of vehicles and trucks are entering and exiting under high volumes. Thus, the toll plaza and its entrance and exit areas are generally not acceptable areas for the application of acknowledgement signs. Advertisement signs, which are also noted in the August 2005 Policy and distinguished from Acknowledgement signs, are generally not allowed for use on highway right-of-way.

Funding challenges are significant for the transportation industry, and innovative solutions for generating new revenue sources are encouraged. However, these solutions must consider safety and operational impacts first and foremost. Acknowledgement signs and advertising signs are options for revenue generation, but their use must be governed by federal policies.

Please share this information with toll authorities in your State, and take appropriate steps to assure these agencies are compliant with Federal policies. For more information or questions regarding the FHWA’s position on these issues, contact Messrs. Hari Kalla, Office of Transportation Operations, at (202) 366-5915 or John Baxter, Office of Safety, at (202) 366-9198.

Attachment

cc: International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association
Associate Administrators
Directors of Field Services
Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers
Resource Center Director



FHWA Policy Memorandums - Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Memorandum

Subject: **INFORMATION:** Optional Use of Acknowledgment Signs on Highway Rights-of-Way

Date: August 10, 2005

From: J. Richard Capka
Acting Administrator

Reply to HOTM-1
Attn. of:

To: Associate Administrators
Chief Counsel
Directors of Field Services
Resource Center Director and Operations Managers
Division Administrators
Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers

It is the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) policy to allow the use of signs to acknowledge the provision of highway-related services. State and local programs for acknowledgment signs are growing in popularity because they can provide additional revenue for highway facility maintenance programs. Therefore, we are issuing this guidance memorandum to set forth the distinction between advertisement and acknowledgment signs, and provide guidance on the content and placement of acknowledgment signs. Although the information contained in this memorandum is considered policy guidance, the FHWA intends to propose these provisions in the rulemaking for the next edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The proposed rulemaking will more clearly identify standards, guidance, and options and the public will have an opportunity to provide comments.

This policy memorandum on acknowledgment signs replaces the previous policy memorandum dated October 29, 2003, and applies to both corporate and volunteer sponsorship programs. The term "highway" is used in a generic way throughout this memorandum to apply to all streets and roadways open to public travel. The guidance provided in this memorandum applies to new and modified installations and is intended to promote a degree of national uniformity and consistency. Existing acknowledgment signs already installed do not have to be changed. However, we encourage State and local highway agencies to consider the guidance provided in this memorandum when replacing or upgrading existing signs. While this guidance provides flexibility to the States and local highway agencies, attempts should be made to follow good, basic engineering practices such as simplifying sign message content, reasonable sign sizes, and minimizing driver distraction.

Acknowledgment signs are a way of recognizing a company or business, or a volunteer group that provides a highway-related service. Acknowledgment signs include sponsorship signs for adopt-a-highway litter removal programs, maintenance of a parkway or interchange, and other highway maintenance or beautification sponsorship programs. Acknowledgment signs should clearly indicate the type of highway services provided by the sponsor. The FHWA recognizes a distinction between signing intended as advertising and signing intended as an acknowledgment for services provided. Advertising generally has little if any relationship to a highway service provided. The advertiser basically wants to get its recognizable message, company emblem, or logo before the public, and if possible, information on how or where to obtain the company's product or services. In most cases, if the sign goes beyond recognizing the company's contribution to a particular highway service at a specific highway site or includes telephone numbers or internet addresses, the sign is more properly classified as an advertising sign and not an acknowledgment sign.

Use of highway right-of-way for advertising purposes is not allowed. This policy position is consistent with the principles and intent of several laws including 23 U.S.C. §1.23(b), 23 U.S.C. §109(d), and 23 U.S.C. §131. The MUTCD Section 1A.01 states that "Traffic control devices or their supports shall not bear any advertising

message or any other message that is not related to traffic control." This position is founded on safety and operational concerns, particularly as related to driver distraction. Highway signs and other traffic control devices convey crucial information. In order for road users to perceive and respond appropriately to critical information, we must make sure that its conspicuity is preserved so that the safe and orderly movement of traffic is not compromised.

If a State or local highway agency elects to have an acknowledgment sign program, then that agency should develop an acknowledgement sign policy. This policy should include requirements that eligible sponsoring organizations must comply with State laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, religion, color, age, sex, national origin, and other applicable laws. State or local agencies must also be aware of and comply with the general provisions for signs as covered in Chapter 2A of the MUTCD and sign design principles covered in the Standard Highway Signs Book. The acknowledgment sign policy should conform at a minimum to the considerations for sign design and placement covered below.

Sign Placement:

With respect to placement of traffic control signs, regulatory, warning, and guide signs have a higher priority than acknowledgement signs. In fact, acknowledgment signs are the lowest priority of information-type signs and may only be placed where adequate spacing between higher priority signs is available. In no case shall the acknowledgment sign be placed such that it obscures road users' view of other traffic control devices. The following minimum spacing is recommended:

1. On roads with speed limits of less than 30 mph, acknowledgment signs should not be placed within 150 feet of any other traffic control signs, except parking regulation signs.
2. On roads with speed limits of 30 to 45 mph, acknowledgment signs should not be placed within 200 feet of any traffic control signs, except parking regulation signs.
3. On roads with speed limits greater than 45 mph, acknowledgment signs should not be placed within 500 feet of any traffic control signs, except parking regulation signs.

Due to public safety concerns, acknowledgment signs shall not be allowed at the following locations:

1. On the front, back, adjacent to or around any traffic control device, including traffic signs, signals, changeable message signs, traffic control device posts or structures, or bridge piers.
2. At key decision points where a driver's attention is more appropriately focused on traffic control devices, roadway geometry, or traffic conditions. These locations include, but are not limited to exit and entrance ramps, intersections controlled by traffic signals or by stop or yield signs, highway-rail grade crossings, work zones, and areas of limited sight distance.

If the placement of an acknowledgment sign conflicts with newly installed higher priority signs, or traffic signals, or temporary traffic control devices, or other priority devices, the acknowledgment sign should be removed, covered, or relocated.

Sign Design:

State or local highway agencies may develop their own acknowledgment sign designs and may also use their own pictograph logo and/or a brief jurisdiction-wide program slogan as part of any portion of the acknowledgement sign. However, all such designs shall be consistent with the following provisions:

- Does not contain any contact information, directions, slogans (other than a brief jurisdiction-wide program slogan, if used), telephone numbers, and internet addresses.
- Use the Standard Highway Signs alphabet series fonts. This does not apply to the sponsor acknowledgment logo.
- Have a sponsor acknowledgment logo that is not more than 1/3 of the total area of the sign. The reason for this is to keep the main focus on the highway-related service and not on the sponsor logo. The sponsor

acknowledgment logo may contain text, a sponsor logo, or both.

- Does not contain any messages, lights, symbols, and trademarks that resemble any official traffic control devices.
- Does not contain any light-emitting diodes, luminous tubing, fiber optics, luminescent panels or other flashing, moving, or animated features.
- Does not distract from official traffic control messages such as regulatory, warning, or guidance messages.

Examples of design layouts (D14-1, D14-2, and D14-3) are included as an attachment for consideration by State and local agencies interested in developing acknowledgment sign designs. These examples are intended as a starting point for those agencies that may be developing a new or modifying an existing acknowledgment sign program. If there are any further questions about this issue, please contact Mr. Hari Kalla at 202-366-5915 or via email at hari.kalla@fhwa.dot.gov.

Attachment: (PDF 233KB)

Page 1 shows the first of 3 sample acknowledgement signs with appropriate sizes and dimensions.

Page 2 shows the second of 3 sample acknowledgement signs with appropriate sizes and dimensions.

Page 3 shows the third of 3 sample acknowledgement signs with appropriate sizes and dimensions.

You will need the [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to view the PDF on this page.



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Last modified: August 15,
2005

SAMPLE DRAWINGS

- Dimensions in this drawing are for illustration purpose only.
- All signs shall be designed according to specifications presented in the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Chapter 2A and the Standard Highway Signs (SHS) Book.



*Series 2000 Standard Alphabets.

D14-1

**Series C or D may be used depending upon length of legend.

ADOPT A HIGHWAY

ALTERNATE LEGENDS:
 ADOPT A HIGHWAY (STREET) (ROADSIDE)
 HIGHWAY (ROADSIDE) (PARKWAY) MAINTAINED BY
 LITTER PICKUP (REMOVED) BY
 LANDSCAPING BY
 SNOW REMOVED BY
 SPONSORED BY

COLORS: LEGEND — WHITE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 BACKGROUND — BLUE (RETROREFLECTIVE)

INSET — BLUE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 SPONSOR LEGEND — WHITE (RETROREFLECTIVE)

X-XX

SAMPLE DRAWINGS

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*Series 2000 Standard Alphabets.

D14-2

**Series C or D may be used depending upon length of legend.

ADOPT A HIGHWAY

ALTERNATE LEGENDS:

ADOPT A HIGHWAY (STREET) (ROADSIDE)
 HIGHWAY (ROADSIDE) (PARKWAY) MAINTAINED BY
 LITTER PICKUP (REMOVED) BY
 LANDSCAPING BY
 SNOW REMOVED BY
 SPONSORED BY

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L
36	30	.75	2.5	3 D	2	2 C	12	2.75	2.5	15.904
72	48	1.25	4	6 D	3	4 C	17	3	3	31.812

M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U
8.314	14.122	15	VAR	VAR	2.25	1	.375
16.635	28.256	33	VAR	VAR	3	1.5	.625

COLORS: LEGEND — WHITE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 BACKGROUND — BLUE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 INSET — BLUE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 SPONSOR LEGEND — WHITE (RETROREFLECTIVE)

SAMPLE DRAWINGS

- Dimensions in this drawing are for illustration purpose only.
- All signs shall be designed according to specifications presented in the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Chapter 2A and the Standard Highway Signs (SHS) Book.



D14-3

ADOPT A HIGHWAY

*Series 2000 Standard Alphabets.

ALTERNATE LEGENDS:

ADOPT A HIGHWAY (STREET) (ROADSIDE)
 HIGHWAY (ROADSIDE) (PARKWAY) MAINTAINED BY
 LITTER PICKUP (REMOVED) BY
 LANDSCAPING BY
 SNOW REMOVED BY
 SPONSORED BY

COLORS: LEGEND — WHITE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 BACKGROUND — BLUE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 INSET — BLUE (RETROREFLECTIVE)
 SPONSOR LEGEND — WHITE (RETROREFLECTIVE)