



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

May 17, 2004

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. Frank Pearson
Regional Traffic Engineer
New York State Department of Transportation
250 Veterans Memorial Highway
Hauppauge, NY 11788-5518

Request for Interpretation: 2-551(I) – "CMS Display of Travel Time"

Dear Mr. Pearson:

Thank you for your April 27 letter requesting an official interpretation for the use of Changeable Message Signs to display travel time. Your request has been reviewed and found to be consistent with the guidelines detailed in Section 2A.07 of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD):

Option: Changeable message signs, both permanent and portable, may be used by State and local highway agencies to display safety or transportation-related messages. State and local highway agencies may develop and establish a policy regarding the display of safety and transportation-related messages on permanent and changeable message signs that specifies the allowable messages and applications, consistent with the provisions of this Manual.

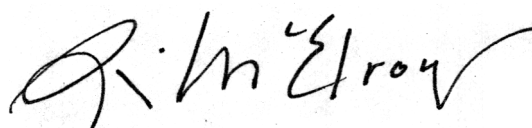
Guidance: When a changeable message sign is used to display a safety or transportation-related message, the requirements of Section 6F.55 should be followed. The message should be simple, brief, legible, and clear. A changeable message sign should not be used to display a safety or transportation-related message if doing so would adversely affect the respect for the sign. "CONGESTION AHEAD" or other overly simplistic or vague messages should not be displayed alone. These messages should be supplemented with a message on the location or distance to the congestion or incident, how much delay is expected, alternative route, or other similar messages.

It is the interpretation of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that your proposal to use static motorist information signs to provide travel routes and travel destination times is not only consistent with the MUTCD but will also help road users make more informed decisions about their trips. We would be appreciative if you can keep us apprised of your observations as a result of installing the travel time signs on this INFORM Northern Parkway upgrade project.



If you have questions or wish additional information, please feel free to call Mr. Fred Ranck, Safety/Design Engineer at FHWA's Resource Center at Olympia Fields, Illinois. His telephone number is 708-283-3545.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. S. McElroy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a checkmark-like flourish at the end.

Regina S. McElroy
Director, Office of Transportation
Operations

cc: Mr. Jim Baron, ATSSA



STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
250 VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY
HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. 11788-5518

SUBIMAL CHAKRABORTI, P.E.
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

JOSEPH H. BOARDMAN
COMMISSIONER

April 27, 2004

Federal Highway Administration
Office of Transportation Operations (HOTO)
400 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20590


Request for Interpretation
Travel Time Sign (TTS)
INFORM Northern Pkwy Upgrade
Q400-516(503)

Dear Sir or Madam:

Enclosed please find our Request for Interpretation for the use of Travel Time Signs (TTS) as part of the above noted project. We feel that the signs are consistent with the Manual and will provide motorists with extremely useful information. This information will allow motorists to make informed decisions as to route, as well as indicate the duration of their trip along the route they have selected. Attached please find a copy of an e-mail from our Regional FHWA Office supporting our request.

Please feel free to contact Mr. Emilio Sosa of my staff at 631-952-6733 for any additional information. Thank you for your consideration of our proposal.

Very truly yours,


FRANK PEARSON, P.E.
Regional Traffic Engineer

Enc.

FP:ECS:RL

**Travel Time Sign (TTS)
Request for Interpretation
INFORM Northern Parkway Upgrade
Q400-516(503) - PIN 0516.50.321**

**Emilio C. Sosa, PE
Director of INFORM
NYSDOT Region 10
631-952-6733**

Travel Time Sign (TTS) Request for Interpretation

This request for interpretation is being sought in order to use a motorist information type static sign fitted with Changeable Message Sign inserts in order to convey real time travel times to motorists. Currently, this function is being performed at various locations around the country through the use of Changeable Message Signs (CMS). Two examples of the signs/messages from Georgia are shown in figures 1 and 2. These signs indicate travel time to a destination or travel time by alternate routes to a destination. However, when the CMS are needed to convey other pertinent real time information to motorist such as incident information, construction information or other advisories the travel time information can no longer be conveyed to motorists. In addition, when CMS are used for travel time messages the majority of the message is repetitive (static) and requires a significant amount of text.

The proposed static signs with CMS inserts would allow travel time information to be continuously conveyed to motorists, regardless of whether the INFORM CMS were being used to convey other real time information to motorist. These two systems are complimentary and would give motorists information on road condition/status and travel time to a destination. The Travel Time Signs would use Route/Facility shields in order to minimize the amount of text needed to convey the information. This would make the information easier for motorist to interpret possibly to a point that would make it subliminal. Examples of the proposed signs are shown in figures 3 and 4. In addition, because of the use of Route/Facility shields, the travel time to multiple destinations can be displayed on one sign. The use of traditional CMS to display travel times for multiple destinations is restricted due to the complexity of the message required. The use of these signs would also be very cost effective when compared to overhead CMS and their associated structure.

The use of motorist information signs for the transmission of real time information is currently allowed by the manual. These signs are currently used to inform motorist to tune to a particular radio frequency, usually a Highway Advisory transmitter or local radio station, for traffic or weather information when beacons, which are part of the sign, are flashing. In addition, the use of CMS inserts is not unique to this application. Various facilities around the country use Speed Limit signs with CMS inserts. These signs are used to establish different speed limits depending on facility conditions.

Based on the above, we believe these signs are consistent with Sections 2A.07, 2D.48 (Figure 2D.12), 2E.21 and similar sections of the national MUTCD. We request your concurrence with this Request for Interpretation.

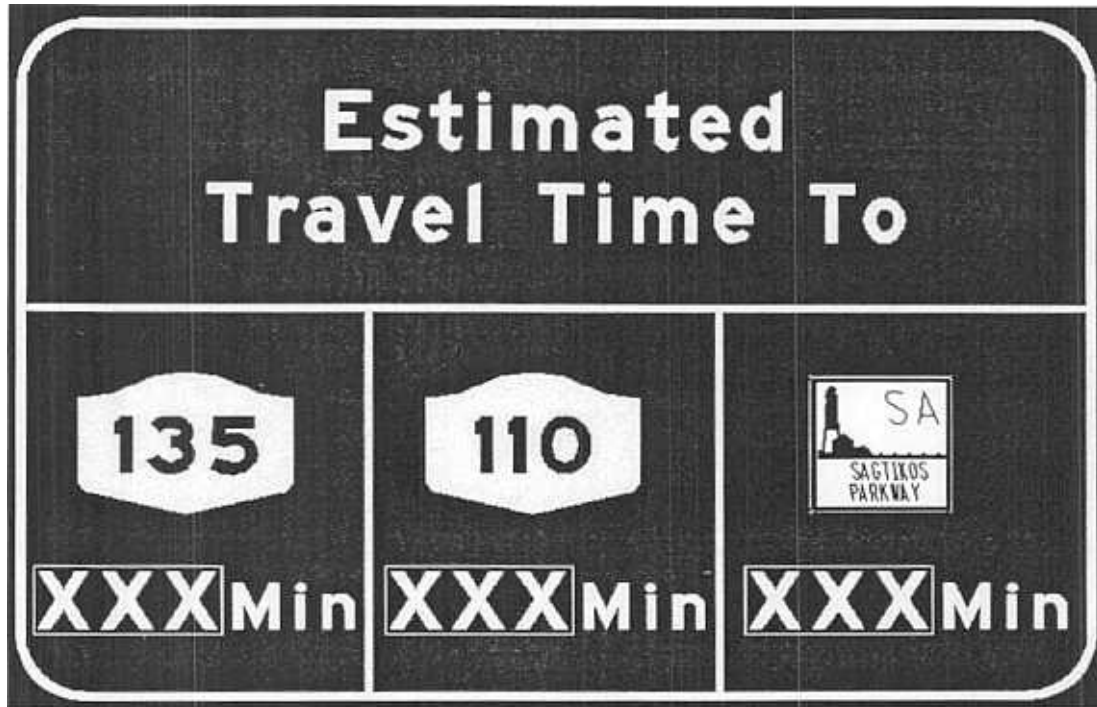
Please don't hesitate to contact me if additional information is needed.

CA 🍁 **GDOT-CMS-2**
TENTH ST / EXIT 250
13 MI AHEAD
TRAVELTIME: 12-13 MIN
12/26 14:32 © 2003 GDOT

Figure 1

CA 🍁 **GDOT-CMS-15**
TRAVEL TIME TO I-285
ON I-75: 5-7 MINS
ON I-85: 8-10 MINS
12/26 14:32 © 2003 GDOT

Figure 2



Figure