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TOURIST ORIENTED

DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

TOURIST-ORIENTED DIRECTIONAL SIGNS (TODS)

Tourist-oriented directional signs are official signs erected by the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) within the rights-of-way of primary routes in rural areas.

These signs are intended to identify and give directions to activities or sites of significant interest to the traveling public. Businesses, sites, and attractions may qualify if they meet the requirements.

This guide is intended only to provide helpful and concise information about this program.

Questions may be directed to Advertising Management staff at 515-239-1296.

For a complete listing of regulations, you may refer to Iowa Administrative Code 761 IAC 119 and the Federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices chapter 2K.

In the event that this publication introduces any inconsistency or question regarding the administration of the program, the aforementioned regulations as interpreted by the Iowa DOT shall prevail.

GENERAL LOCATION REQUIREMENTS

TODS signs may be placed in advance of at-grade intersections for qualifying businesses (not interchanges). These intersections must be located outside of any designated urban areas.

Generally, locations within towns of a population of 5,000 or less will qualify.

However, for towns with a population of 5000 or more, check with Advertising Management staff as to whether the location will qualify, since urban area boundary lines do not necessarily coincide with city limit boundary lines.

Placement of the signs will also depend upon available green space off the shoulder and available longitudinal space between other official signs leading up to the intersection itself.

Trailblazing signs (smaller version / wayfinding type) may be required, depending upon the turns necessary to access the business, site, or attraction.

If the Iowa DOT determines that trailblazing is necessary on the local street system, the approval will be contingent upon the local jurisdiction agreeing to arrange for the placement.

TODS signs may NOT be placed:

- In order to direct traffic from one primary route to another primary route, if that route carries a higher traffic volume.
- For businesses, sites, or attractions which are readily recognizable from the primary highway far enough ahead of the entrance to allow the motorist time to safely make the turn into the entrance.
- For businesses, sites or attractions that are located beyond ten miles of the intersection where the signs will be placed.

GENERAL PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Businesses, sites and attractions must comply with all applicable laws concerning public accommodations without regard to age, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religious, or disability.

Buildings principally used as residences must have a convenient, separate, and well-marked entrance.

QUALIFYING TYPES OF BUSINESSES, SITES, AND ATTRACTIONS

A multi-agency signing committee meets monthly to review applications for the program.

These reviews examine the applications, photographs, and other information obtained during a site review conducted by Iowa DOT staff. Subject to committee approval, the following types are generally permitted:

1. **Motorist service businesses** including gas, food, lodging, or passenger vehicle repair.

2. **Tourist attractions of significant interest to tourists as a historic, cultural, scientific, or religious site, or as a site of natural scenic beauty or naturally suited for outdoor recreation.**

3. **Agricultural business activities of significant interest to the traveling public.** Enabling the qualification may be the provision of tours and

brochures, or the provision of services or products which are of interest to the traveling public and immediately available on site.

4. **Other commercial activities, businesses, services, or sites which are of significant interest to the traveling public.** A major portion of the products or services provided must be tourist- or motorist-oriented.

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Businesses, sites and attractions must be open to the general public during regular and reasonable hours and not by appointment, reservation, or membership only.

The current months, days, and hours of operation shall be conspicuously posted on the premises.

Seasonal businesses must be open for a minimum of four consecutive weeks per year, and shall agree to the placement of "CLOSED" panels when not in operation or if the hours of operation do not meet the minimum program requirements.

For the four categories described, the minimum hours of operation are as follows:

1. Motorist services: eight hours per day, six days a week, except for vehicle repair services or repair facilities, which shall be open a minimum of eight hours a day, five days a week.

2. Tourist attractions: 40 hours a week, five days a week.

3. Agricultural business activities: 40 hours a week, five days a week.

4. Other commercial activities: 40 hours a week, five days a week.

PROGRAM FEES

The fee for a set (two) of TODS signs is $700. This covers the administrative fees, design, fabrication, and installation of the signs by the Iowa DOT.

This fee is not requested until the applicant is approved. An annual fee of $50 for each sign is due on June 30 each year.

The initial cost for a trailblazing sign is $26 each. Separate installation fees may apply locally. If "CLOSED" panels are necessary, a fee of $40 per sign is charged if the Iowa DOT installs and removes the panels.

An agreement may be arranged so that the applicant can perform his/her own installation/removal each season.

SIGN MESSAGES

The general standard is that the message on the sign shall reflect the name of the business, site or attraction. The following are exceptions:

1. If the name of the business, site, or attraction does not fit within the space provided and is limited by the size of the sign, it may be shortened.

2. If the name of the business, site or attraction does not sufficiently convey the type of experience the tourist or motorist will encounter, a descriptive word may be added. Example: "Bob's Sliders" may be modified to "Bob's Sliders Cafe".

3. An additional word determined to be of significant interest to motorist services may be added. Example: "Short Stop Convenience" may have "Diesel" added. This allowance is not intended to extend to a general listing of amenities (advertising). Example: "Indoor Pool" cannot be added to "Mike's Motel."

The Iowa DOT makes the final determination, but will share the final design with the applicant prior to fabrication of the signs.

Please allow at least two months from the date of application to the desired date of installation.

WHERE TO OBTAIN APPLICATION FORMS AND INFORMATION

Advertising Management
Office of Traffic and Safety
Iowa Department of Transportation
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50010
Phone: 515-239-1296
Website: www.iowadot.gov/iowaroadsigns

Federal and state laws prohibit employment and/or public accommodation discrimination on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission at 800-457-4416 or Iowa Department of Transportation's affirmative action officer. If you need accommodations because of a disability to access the Iowa Department of Transportation's services, contact the agency's affirmative action officer at 800-262-0003.

MM 921 10/11/2016