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Proposed Guidelines for Standards for the Installation of Supplemental Guide and Logo Signs Along the Maine Interstate System

Maine Department of Transportation

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Memorandum

To: Senator Ed Mazurek
Representative Ken Theriault
Members of the Joint Standing Committee
on Transportation

From: Nina A. Fisher, Legislative Liaison

Date: February 25, 2014

Re: **Interstate Guide and Logo Signage**



MaineDOT

Legislative Background

During the First Regular Session of the 126th Legislature, LD 407, *Resolve, Relating to Guide Signs on Highways*, was enacted and signed into law. The Resolve required MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) to draft a set of guidelines that would create standards for the installation of supplemental guide and logo signs along the Maine interstate system. (See copy of Resolve attached.)

Proposed New Standards

The proposed standards drafted by the Maine Turnpike Authority and MaineDOT are based upon national guidelines set forth in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), but are customized to better accommodate the needs of Maine travelers and businesses and Maine's rural nature. These proposed new standards do not impact standard interchange signs listing towns or roads off an exit (generally white lettering on green signs.) They relate only to supplemental guide signs (generally white lettering on brown or green signs) and logo signs (white on blue signs with logos.)

1. Supplemental Guide Signs

Supplemental guide signs are used to provide information regarding destinations accessible from an interchange other than places displayed on the standard interchange signing. Their intent is to aid travelers by providing directional information to significant traffic generators. They are optional, and in accordance with federal policy, their purpose cannot be advertising or promotion. For this reason, these signs are generally paid for by MaineDOT or the MTA.

Although on-board navigation systems and smart phones call into question the ongoing need for such signage, requests for limited interstate sign space continue unabated. They are green and

white and the national standards set forth in the MUTCD allow travelers to have a similar experience when traveling the interstate system nationwide. To be readable and informative, there are several technical issues to consider.

- Spacing of signs on the interstate is critical – a motorist travelling at 55 to 75 mph can devote a limited amount of attention to reading signs – therefore mandatory signs and regulatory signs must take precedence
- Signs need to be simple with limited messages in order to be effective
- Signs that are too close together or have complicated messages are ineffective and create potential safety hazards
- Signs that are too far away from the interchange they refer to are ineffective and often frustrating to the motorist
- Signs that direct motorists to destinations large distances from the interchange can be ineffective and frustrating to motorists. This is especially true when there is a lack of clear “continuity” signage on local roads to guide motorists the rest of the way once they have left the interstate (as is often the case today)
- Because of limited space and the principle that supplemental guide signs are meant to serve the public at large, signage should be based on objective criteria such as distance from the interstate and attendance requirements.

MaineDOT and the MTA have looked into other interests and activities that occur throughout the State of Maine and have considered the informational needs of those areas as well. The proposed changes to the supplemental guide sign policy adjust the national guidelines to fit Maine’s needs. These changes include allowing the following signs to be installed in advance of interchanges where specific criteria are met:

- Major colleges and universities
- Major military installations
- Federal and state Parks
- Major recreational areas
- Airports & other transportation facilities
- Veterans memorials and cemeteries

The proposed standards for supplemental guide sign will also:

- Incorporate national standards that address each of the issues mentioned above - sign spacing, sign content, and criteria for types of destinations warranting signs
- Give greater flexibility to stay current with signage. Many of the signs currently mandated by the Legislature were created in 1957. The state’s most frequently visited areas may have changed a bit since then and some of the specific destinations on currently mandated signs no longer exist
- Minimize the number of signs and the lines of text on signs to increase their effectiveness for motorists and increase highway safety
- Define standards for categories of destinations which could qualify for signs and distance from interchange / attendance requirements for those destinations

- Make clear that any specific service or attraction that qualifies for a logo sign (see 2 below) will not be eligible for a supplemental guide sign
- Include a category for Major Recreational Areas designed to allow signage for those destinations most often sought by visitors to Maine, allowing these areas to be signed. The Major Recreational Area category is flexible; allowing transportation agencies to develop criteria which will make sure this signage is kept current. MaineDOT and MTA are working with the Bureau of Tourism in developing this criteria

2. Logo Signs

Logo signs are blue and white road signs used on the interstate system that display the logos of businesses prior to an interchange. Businesses currently pay a fee (\$1,200 yearly) to have their logos displayed on a large panel alongside other business. MaineDOT has a Logo Program which is subject to routine technical rules, and is administered by a private company, Maine Logos, LLC. Whether or not interstate sign bill becomes law, MaineDOT will undertake rulemaking to update the logo signing program.

Currently, on MaineDOT-administered interstate highways where speed and space allows, there are three (3) blue logo sign panels per exit, one each for food, lodging, and gas. (The MTA does not have logo signage for food and gas as they provide those services.) Each sign panel has room for six (6) logo signs, and they are currently allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis. That is, if a particular type logo sign panel is full with six logo signs, that logo sign remains as long as the contract with the business is current. This currently occurs even if there is space available on the two types of logo sign panels. Although this has not been a major issue statewide, in more populated areas where signage space is significantly limited (example – Augusta), this limits the ability of businesses to participate in the program.

The proposed logo sign changes would allow greater participation of more businesses in three ways.

First, in cases where a logo sign is full (say the food panel), it is proposed that food logos be allowed to purchase space on the other logo sign panels where space allows (on the lodging or gas signs, for example.)

Second, it is proposed to add a fourth logo sign panel for “attractions”. Attractions would be allowed for historic sites, cultural sites, amusement parks, arenas, areas of natural beauty, leisure activities (golf and casinos), museums, recreational areas, for profit secondary schools and zoos/botanical gardens/wild life preserves/aquariums. Proposed standards would be adjusted to meet Maine’s rural needs. Compared to national standards, the proposed Maine standards rules will dramatically increase the mileage from the interchange to the attraction, and dramatically decrease the attendance required for these attractions on the guideline criteria in areas where the average annual daily traffic (AADT) is less than 5000.

Third, in the rare cases where demand for logo signage exceeds supply, even with the addition of a fourth logo sign panel, the proposed rules call for ending the first-come, first-serve policy in such cases and allocating the limited space by two methods: lottery and bidding. That is, half

the logo space would be decided by lottery, and the winning businesses would have a logo sign for the current annual fee of \$1,200 per year for three years. At the end of the three years, MaineDOT would undertake another lottery, thereby allowing more businesses to participate for a modest annual fee. The other half of the logo space would be decided by the market. That is, about half of the logo sign space would go to highest qualifying bidder. This method of allocation would provide more certainty for larger businesses that do not want to be subject to the uncertainty of a lottery, and more properly reflect the value of limited sign space. If space is left vacant after the bidding process, it would be allocated by lottery.

3. Numbers and Lists: Practical Results of Proposed Changes

Maine currently has about 105 supplemental guide signs on its interstate highways (43 on MaineDOT-administered highways and 62 on the Maine Turnpike), with an estimated 225 sign messages (up to three messages/destinations allowed per supplemental guide sign). These numbers represent one direction only, obviously, they would need to be doubled to represent both north and south-bound signage along the interstate system.

Of the estimated 225 sign messages currently on supplemental guide signs, 68 sign messages (or 30%) would be impacted in some way (24 or 11% on MaineDOT-administered highways and 44 or 19% on the Maine Turnpike.) Of the sign messages impacted:

- 13 sign messages would be removed, but would be eligible for a supplemental guide sign elsewhere on the interstate system (at the appropriate exit).
- 29 sign messages would be removed, but would be eligible for logo signs (16 on MaineDOT-administered highways and 13 on the Maine Turnpike).
- 26 sign messages that do not qualify for any signage under the proposed standards would be removed (8 on MaineDOT-administered highways and 18 on the Maine Turnpike).

Lists of the impacted sign messages are attached.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND THIRTEEN

H.P. 282 - L.D. 407

Resolve, Relating to Guide Signs on Highways

Sec. 1. Policy and specifications relating to guide signs on all roads open to public travel. Resolved: That the Department of Transportation, referred to in this resolve as "the department," and the Maine Turnpike Authority, referred to in this resolve as "the authority," shall develop a proposed policy and specifications relating to guide signs that will be consistent with the national standard for installing traffic control devices, including guide signs, on all roads open to public travel. For the purposes of this resolve, the national standards for installing traffic control devices, including guide signs, are in the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and are developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials; and be it further

Sec. 2. Participants. Resolved: That the department and the authority may invite interested parties to participate in the development of the proposed policy and specifications under section 1 as needed; and be it further

Sec. 3. Duties. Resolved: That, after the update to the national standards for guide signs during the summer of 2013, the department and the authority shall examine the new national standards and develop recommendations to do one of the following:

1. Adopt the revised 2013 national standards, including any subsequent amendments, as the standard for all traffic control devices, including guide signs, in the State;
2. Adopt the national standards, including any subsequent amendments, for all traffic control devices, including guide signs, with a state supplement that is in substantial conformance with the revised 2013 national standards; or
3. Adopt a state manual on uniform traffic control devices, including guide signs, that is in substantial conformance with the revised 2013 national standards, including any subsequent amendments; and be it further

Sec. 4. Report. Resolved: That, by January 15, 2014, the department and the authority shall separately or jointly submit a written report of the findings under this resolve and any recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing

Committee on Transportation. The Joint Standing Committee on Transportation may submit a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature relating to the subject matter of the report.

To Be Removed from Current Location, Qualifies for Supplemental Guide Sign Nearer To Relevant Exit

Exit	Description	Additional Information
52 MTA*	Rockland Camden/Damariscotta Pemaquid Region	Proposing sign be changed to Penobscot Bay Region - Rockland Camden. Damariscotta/Pemaquid Region does not qualify for recreational area sign. Damariscotta Lake State Park may qualify if attendance threshold is met.
157 MTA*	Peaks-Kenny State Park	(Sign located at Mile 104) Does not meet distance from interchange guidelines - should be signed in Newport.
113 MTA*	Bar Harbor/Acadia Trail	Bar Harbor is too far away from an MTA Interchange but proposing a sign with Acadia National Park and Downeast Region; Bar Harbor is signed in two locations through MaineDOT.
7-36 MTA*	York Beach; Ogunquit Beach; Wells Beach; Kennebunk Beach; OOB	All towns already listed on Interchange signs. Consider Ogunquit Beach sign SB for Exit 19. Consider sign NB in Kittery "Maine beaches next 6 exits".
42 MTA*	Sebago Lake West Shore/Long Lakes Region/Raymond	Sebago Lake will receive sign at Exit 63 as major beach. Exit 48 does not have enough room. West Shore does not qualify as a recreational area for a separate sign. Town of Raymond does not qualify. Long Lakes Region included with Bridgton Lakes Region sign at Exit 48.
52 MTA*	Coastal Route 1, Bath - Brunswick	Proposing sign be changed to Mid Coast - Bath Brunswick with Rt. 1 trailblazer.
52 MTA*	Boothbay Harbor Region	(Sign located at Mile 10) sign needs to be moved from MM 10 to Exit 52, combined with Mid-Coast sign.
52 MTA*	Rockland Camden/Damariscotta Pemaquid Region	Proposing sign be changed to Penobscot Bay Region - Rockland Camden. Damariscotta/Pemaquid Region does not qualify for a recreational area sign. Damariscotta lake State Park may qualify if attendance threshold is met.
63 MTA*	Bethel Recreational Area	(Sign is located at Mile 39) would not qualify at this location on Turnpike, but move to Exit 63 and combine with Sunday River/Mt. Abram Ski Area sign.
75 MTA	University of Maine at Farmington	Currently signed on the MTA -- better location would be on I-95, Augusta/Belgrade.
187 MTA	University of Maine at Machias	Sign located at Mile 107, will be moved to a more suitable exit on I-95 (MaineDOT)
113 MTA*	Acadia National Park, Mid-Coastal Area (Route 3 - Augusta to Belfast)	Acadia National Park to be included on sign with Downeast Region - Exit 182A or via Route 3 Exit 113. Signing for Mid-Coast to be at Exit 52. Penobscot Bay Region is being signed for Exit 109 (Rockland Camden).
157 MTA*	Moosehead Lake Region, Big Moose Mountain	(Sign located at Mile 8) MTA sign at this location be removed. Qualifies for MaineDOT signing further north on Interstate.

*** = Legislatively Mandated**

To Be Removed, But Qualify for Logo

Exit	Description	Additional Information
35 MTA*	Saco Hotel and Conference Center	
75 MTA*	Lost Valley	
36 MTA	Amusement Theme Parks	Theme Parks are entities that qualify for logos. They are entities that are not consistent generators as they hold intermittents events. This would allow space for other entities to be signed in the future.
42 MTA	Scarborough Downs	
42 MTA	Speedway	
46 MTA	Kaplan University	
48 MTA	Narrow Guage Railroad	
48 MTA	Portland Sports Complex	
63 MTA	Pineland	
63 MTA	Shaker Village	
80 MTA	Kaplan University	
80 MTA	Lewiston Sports Complex	
112A MTA	Augusta Civic Center	
109, I-95	Augusta Civic Center	Stadiums/Arenas are entities that qualify as logos.
109, I-95	Kaplan University	For Profit Post-Secondary School
183, I-95	Bangor - Mansfield Stadium	Stadiums/Arenas are entities that qualify as logos.
182, I-95	Bangor - Sawyer Arena	Stadiums/Arenas are entities that qualify as logos.
182A, I-95	Bangor Children's Museum	Museum's are a qualifying entity for logo signage.
182A, I-95	Bass Park - Bangor Auditorium	Stadiums/Arenas are entities that qualify as logos.
2BS, I-195	Amusement Theme Parks	Theme Parks are entities that qualify for logos.
3S, I-295	Kaplan University	For Profit Post-Secondary School
5, I-295	Portland - Ball Park/Ice Arena/Expo	Stadiums/Arenas are entities that qualify as logos.
6AB (NB) I-295	Arts District	
7 I-295	Cumberland County Civic Center	Stadiums/Arenas are entities that qualify as logos.
7 I-295	Old Port Exchange	
7 I-295	Narrow Guage Railway	Museum's are a qualifying entity for logo signage.
8, I-295	Kaplan University	For Profit Post-Secondary School
3AB, I-395	Beal College	For Profit Post-Secondary School
3B, I-395	Bass Park - Bangor Auditorium	Not a significant traffic generator and as such shouldn't have guide signs.

*** = Legislatively Mandated**

To Be Removed

Exit	Description	Additional Information
7 MTA*	York Harbor Cape Neddick	These are parts of the Town of York and do not qualify separately as major recreational areas or municipalities.
36 MTA*	Miles of Scenic Beaches	Old Orchard Beach already on Interchange Guide Signs.
63 MTA*	Hebron Academy	Does not meet qualify for logo as it is not a for-profit postsecondary school. It also does not meet distance or student attendance requirements.
63 MTA*	Norway - South Paris, Oxford Hills Region	Does not meet threshold for a supplemental guide sign or a major recreational area sign.
75 MTA*	Andover Rumford Recreational Area	Does not meet requirements for major recreational area.
109 MTA*	To 201 South - Hallowell	Does not meet guide sign policy criteria for population threshold or location.
113 MTA*	China Lakes Region	China Lakes does not qualify as a major recreational area in order to remain
182 MTA*	Roosevelt Campobello Park, Quoddy State Park	(sign located at Mile 107) Does not meet 100 mile maximum distance.
19 MTA*	Sanford Recreational Lake Region	Sanford is on the Exit 19 Interchange Guide Sign.
80 MTA*	Winthrop Lakes Region	Winthrop listed on Exit 109 Interchange signs.
112 MTA*	Belgrade Lakes Region	Belgrade is on the Interchange Guide Signs for Exit 113 which disqualifies it for a supplemental sign.
19 MTA	Auto Museum/Trolley Museum	Has already been removed in one direction; museum has closed.
32 MTA	Arundel	Exit 25 NB Kennebunkport is a larger destination then Arundel. Exit 25 SB Sanford is a larger destination. Arundel is not large enough to get a supplemental guide sign.
52 MTA	Topsham	Does not qualify due to distance and population.
75 MTA	Black Mountain Ski Area	Does not meet vertical drop or trails for supplemental sign guides. Does not meet distance/attendance guidelines for logo.
86 MTA	Monmouth	Does not meet guide sign policy criteria for population threshold or location.
113 MTA	Maine Maritime Academy	Does not meet distance requirements from MTA (36 miles from Bangor exits) and would not meet enrollment requirements for a MaineDOT sign on I-95 (less than 1,000)
264 MTA	University of Maine at Fort Kent	Sign located at Mile 105. Already signed on I-95 (MaineDOT), exit 264.
132, I-95	Fairfield - Unity College	Enrollment under 1000, not a significant traffic generator for an entity of regional significance as it is located more than 5 miles from the interstate and as such shouldn't have guide signs.
150, I-95	Pittsfield - MCI	High schools/Prep schools do not qualify for signs.
183, I-95	Bangor Campus of UMA	Enrollment under 300, not a significant traffic generator and as such shouldn't have guide signs.
305, I-95	Houlton - Industrial Park	Industrial park is not a qualifying entity. Guide signs are directional in nature and while many trucks may use the facility, most truckers use GPS so signage for guidance isn't a necessity.
7, I-295	Maine College of Art	Enrollment under 300, not a significant traffic generator and as such shouldn't have guide signs.
10, I-295	Umaine Regional Learning Center	Enrollment under 300, not a significant traffic generator and as such shouldn't have guide signs.
31, I-295	Southern New Hampshire University/SMCC	Enrollment under 300, not a significant traffic generator and as such shouldn't have guide signs.
185, I-95	Bangor Theological Seminary	Remove, school has been closed.

* = Legislatively Mandated