



Traffic Generator and Information Signage Guidelines

February 2009

1 Introduction

This guide has been created to provide guidance for future major traffic generator and driver information requests for supplemental guide signs along the Illinois Tollway. By proposing general guidelines for supplemental signing and specific criteria for different types of traffic generators and informational signs, this guide provides the Tollway with a clear framework for evaluating traffic impacts and judging requests made for supplemental guide signs by various types of traffic generators and information signs.

2 Research

2.1 MUTCD and State Guidance

While supplemental signing for major traffic generators may be beneficial, it is important to put supplemental signs into context with all of the other signs along an expressway. FHWA's 2003 *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD), sets forth some general guiding principles regarding expressway signing in Section 2E.02:

The development of a signing system for freeways and expressways is approached on the premise that the signing is primarily for the benefit and direction of road users who are not familiar with the route or area. The signing furnishes road users with clear instructions for orderly progress to their destinations....The excessive signing found on many major highways usually is the result of using a multitude of signs that are too small and that are poorly designed and placed to accomplish the intended purpose.

While it may be beneficial to provide users with either destination signing to major traffic generators or signing to inform travelers of specific conditions, care should be taken to avoid signing that clutters the Tollway and distracts users from more essential signs. In Section 2E.27 the MUTCD states that supplemental signs "should be used sparingly" so as not to distract from the consistent destination information on the main advance guide signs approaching an interchange. Supplemental signing could also reduce the effectiveness of essential regulatory and warning signs that are important for the safety of Tollway users.

Section 2E.32 of the MUTCD, included below, provides further guidance on supplemental traffic generator guide signs while at the same time encouraging individual states and agencies to adopt their own guidelines:

Section 2E.32 Other Supplemental Guide Signs (Section 2E.31 in the 12/07 pending revisions to the MUTCD)

Support:

Supplemental Guide signs can be used to provide information regarding destinations accessible from an interchange, other than places displayed on the standard interchange signing. However, such Supplemental Guide signing can reduce the effectiveness of other more important guide signing because of the possibility of overloading the road user's capacity to receive visual messages and make appropriate decisions. "The AASHTO Guidelines for the Selection of Supplemental Guide Signs for Traffic Generators Adjacent to Freeways" is incorporated by reference in this section (see Page i for AASHTO's address).

Guidance:

No more than one Supplemental Guide sign should be used on each interchange approach.

A Supplemental Guide sign (see Figure 2E-17) should not list more than two destinations. Destination names should be followed by the interchange number (and suffix), or if interchanges are not numbered, by the legend NEXT RIGHT or SECOND RIGHT or both, as appropriate. The Supplemental Guide sign should be installed as an independent guide sign assembly.

Where two or more Advance Guide signs are used, the Supplemental Guide sign should be installed approximately midway between two of the Advance Guide signs. If only one Advance Guide sign is used, the Supplemental Guide sign should follow it by at least 245 m (800 feet). If the interchanges are numbered, the interchange number should be used for the action message.

States and other agencies should adopt an appropriate policy for installing supplemental signs using “The AASHTO Guidelines for the Selection of Supplemental Guide Signs for Traffic Generators Adjacent to Freeways.” In developing policies for such signing, such items as population, amount of traffic generated, distance from the route, and the significance of the destination should be taken into account.

Standard:

Guide signs directing drivers to park and ride facilities shall be considered as Supplemental Guide signs (see Figures 2E-18 and 2E-19).

Figure 2E-17. Supplemental Guide Signs for Multi-exit Interchanges



Figure 2E-18. Supplemental Guide Sign for a Park and Ride Facility (Route without Exit Numbering)



Figure 2E-19. Supplemental Guide Sign for a Park and Ride Facility (Route with Exit Numbering)



Figures 2E-17 through 2E-19 are from the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, 2003 Edition

To summarize, the MUTCD guidance is that only one supplemental sign should be used per interchange with a maximum of two destinations (pieces of information) on the sign, and that is only if the sign does not interfere with the ability of a user to understand roadway information and make correct decisions. Authority is conceded to the states and local agencies to further develop guidelines in consultation with the *AASHTO Guidelines for the Selection of Supplemental Guide Signs for Traffic Generators Adjacent to Freeways*.

The IDOT signing policy generally defaults to meeting an annual attendance criterion, with some other minor criteria usually centered on distance from the facility.

The IDOT Signing Policy as defined in the Illinois Register of Adopted Rules (Title 92; Chapter 1; Subchapter f; Part 543) allows for advanced guide signs to a variety of facilities. The types of facilities and the general requirements are listed below:

IDOT Signing Policy per the Illinois Supplement to the National MUTCD

Allowed traffic generators:

- Airports – based on annual passengers
- Educational Institutions – based on number of full time students
- Military Facilities – based on employees/assigned personnel
- Government Facilities – based on employees
- Historic Facilities – based on annual attendance
- Cultural Facilities – based on annual attendance
- Recreational Facilities – based on annual attendance

Must be signed from freeway to facility on arterial or connecting route.

In order to develop more generator-specific guidelines and criteria, the AASHTO guidelines were compared to policies from five different states: Ohio, Missouri, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas. The prevailing industry focus is almost entirely on attendance. Although this generally may be sufficient, without specific verifiable criteria for the generator, it may be difficult to apply.

2.2 Other Supplemental Traffic Generator Guide Sign Programs

In addition to specific supplemental guide signs throughout the Tollway system, there exists a pilot Blue Board program begun in 2007 for the rural sections of I-90. Blue Boards are guide signs with a blue background where local businesses can pay for a logo and directions to their establishment within certain limits and rules. Each state has slightly different rules and limits to how and when these signs are used. With a focus on safety, the Tollway is currently only signing in the rural sections of I-90 for hotels and only at full interchanges where a motorist can reenter the Tollway. This program is compliant with the IDOT statewide Blue Board program. Additionally, some blue boards are allowed for Tollway oases.



2.3 Miscellaneous Information Signs

Other information signs exist on the Tollway system providing additional useful information to motorists. Many of these are addressed by the *Illinois Tollway Roadway Traffic Control and Communication Guidelines* or the *Illinois Tollway Signing Guidelines*. Additional signs not covered by these two documents shall be governed by this document.

3 Recommended Guidelines for Supplemental Guide Signs

There are several guidelines that are generic to all traffic generators. These are reviewed first in this section with the specific criteria for each type of generator in Section 4.

Supplemental guide signs fall under the authority of the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority to control all signs within the right of way of the ISTHA system. The design and erection of supplemental guide signs for eligible generators shall be in accordance with standards for sign type, height, lateral placement, font size, lettering, and location as specified in the national MUTCD and the *Illinois Supplement to the MUTCD*. As noted in MUTCD Section 2E.32 (31 in pending revisions), supplemental guide signs may

show several destinations not shown on the major guide signs on no more than one supplemental sign per interchange.

1. There shall be no more than one supplemental guide sign per interchange with up to three traffic generators or specific pieces of information per sign.

Generators that have the greatest traffic should be shown on supplemental guide signs. This does not mean that all facilities that meet specific criteria should automatically receive informational signing. Signing for traffic generators is considered supplemental to the overall signing system for tollways. Therefore, before a sign for a traffic generator is installed, sufficient space must exist to accommodate the placement of the sign without interfering or conflicting with primary guide signs or other required signs. No commitment shall be made to erect signs until an on-site inspection has been conducted at the proposed sign location in order to determine that sufficient space exists. Supplemental guide signs for traffic generators should be combined with other supplemental guide signs (e.g., cities) when appropriate.

2. Each installation request shall include a site visit to ensure sufficient space exists to install the new signs without significantly reducing the impact of existing signage.

Not all requests for signing can be accommodated. If new signs would result in too many signs (sign pollution) or too many destinations on a sign, the Tollway shall review the information and determine which generators will receive signing or what information is most important to the motorists. To minimize future conflicts and removals of existing generator signs, consideration should be given to future expectations and priorities of signing at interchanges before erecting signs.

3. Even if a facility meets specific criteria, the Tollway may deny the request to avoid excessive signing, as determined by the Tollway.

Signs for traffic generators, when used, should be located in advance of the interchanging road that provides the most direct route to the generator. Signing for a traffic generator should not be displayed on a supplemental guide sign until signing has been installed at the ramp terminals to direct the motorist from the tollway to the traffic generator. It is important to note that there may not be space available at the exit with the most direct route.

4. Traffic generator guide signing should be located at the interchange with the most direct route to the facility. Under exceptional circumstances, additional signs may be necessary at interchanges on more than one tollway route to adequately sign for an eligible generator (e.g., O'Hare Airport). Additional signs may be approved by the Tollway based on an engineering study that documents the need.
5. In specific circumstances, trailblazing through one or more interchanges may be allowed. This should be considered for major traffic generators and diversion routes.
6. There must be existing signage on the arterials or connecting routes directing the motorist to a facility.
7. Care should be taken recognizing the limitations on placing traffic generator guide signing at exit-only interchanges where motorists can not easily reenter the Tollway to continue traveling in the same direction they left.
8. Signing for a qualifying traffic generator will not be signed for at an interchange if a more direct interstate route and interchange is available.

The Tollway reserves the right to cover, relocate, or remove any signs for maintenance or construction operations, or when deemed to be in the best interest of the Tollway or the traveling public, without

advance notice. The Tollway reserves the right to remove signs when roadway improvements or changes in the roadway cross section or configuration will no longer accommodate the existing signs. If existing signs no longer meet the Tollway's size and design requirements for an upgraded roadway and existing signs are removed, the generator may request to upgrade their signs, provided that the upgraded roadway can safely accommodate the sign. The Tollway does not guarantee that such a request will be honored.

9. The Tollway may remove, relocate, or cover guide signs as necessary for maintenance, construction, and roadway design changes.
10. Any roadway design work should prompt re-examination of the basis for the supplemental guide sign.

There may be circumstances where several traffic generators meet the criteria at a single interchange. Unless there is a clear and significant difference in the amount of traffic generated by one or more facilities compared to the others, signage will be granted on a first come/first served basis.

These guidelines are intended for permanent facilities that operate all year. Seasonal and short term temporary signing may be deployed as needed by the Tollway and may not be required to meet all of the criteria of a permanent facility. The Tollway shall have full discretion to decide on placement of temporary traffic generator signs.

This policy is not intended for proactive use in wholesale removal of existing signs; nor does it guarantee that current signs may remain on the system under a grandfather clause. The Tollway plans to review all existing signs in relation to this policy when a new project is undertaken for a tollway segment, or when existing signs are in need of replacement, repair, or maintenance. The Tollway will at that time review the basis and design of these supplemental signs.

4 Recommended Traffic Generator Criteria

The following criteria have been developed to determine whether a guide sign is warranted for a traffic generator. In all cases, the guidelines established in Section 3 must be met first and take precedence over the following criteria. Criteria from IDOT and the other states mentioned above were examined to develop recommended criteria for the Illinois Tollway. Appendix B contains a summary of the four general signing categories and a simple decision tree to determine in which category a sign belongs.

4.1 Urban Versus Rural

The use of supplemental guide signs has generally been focused on rural areas. That is, in urban areas it is expected that many services and attractions are readily available. In Section 2E.32 of the MUTCD, it is stated that supplemental guide signs can reduce effectiveness of more important signing because of the "possibility of overloading the road user's capacity to receive visual messages and make appropriate decisions." This would generally be more of a problem in urban areas. Additionally, the following illustrates the desire to limit these signs to rural areas:

Section 2F.01 (Section 2G.01 in the pending MUTCD revisions)

...The use of Specific Service signs should be limited to areas primarily rural in character or to areas where adequate sign spacing can be maintained.

The transportation industry uses many different definitions for urban and rural areas. For the purpose of guide signing, the critical aspects are sign clutter, and motorist expectations. Concerning sign clutter, many urban areas experience a considerable amount of signing across a large number of lanes. Supplemental guide signs on the side of the road are less visible among the larger regulatory and primary

guide signs. Additionally, with the larger volumes of traffic, motorists spend less time looking at the guide signs and more time focused on the traffic in adjacent lanes. These signs have less value and may distract from the motorist's need to pay attention to traffic. Additionally, it is generally assumed that key services are available near most interchanges, and smaller traffic generators exist at every interchange.

Rural areas by contrast have much less traffic, and with greater interchange spacing, many fewer signs per mile than urban areas. Motorists have less traffic to monitor and more time and distance to view signs. Additionally, they are typically unsure of what services or facilities exist in proximity to each interchange. Although in an urban area a motorist may have dozens of attractions close to the interchange, in rural areas it is expected that there are few generators near an interchange.

Therefore, an additional criterion is added that in the urban areas, only a single major traffic generator will be signed for, unless there is not a single major traffic generator at that interchange in which case multiple traffic generators that collectively are equivalent to a single major traffic generator may be signed for. Additionally, signage in urban areas should only be warranted for venues that generate significant non-commuter traffic. In rural areas, multiple traffic generators may be signed at an interchange if they meet the requirements. Solely for the purpose of traffic generation signing, all sections of the Illinois Tollway shall be considered urban in character, except for those sections near interchanges that meet the following criteria:

1. No more than 3 interchanges within 8 miles (4 mile spacing per AASHTO definition of urban), or
2. Mainline total ADTs either side of the interchange less than 70000

Per these criteria, the following interchanges as of the creation of this policy shall be considered rural:

- I-90 (Jane Adams)
 - i. Rockton Road
 - ii. IL 173
 - iii. East Riverside Blvd.
 - iv. Genoa Road
 - v. U.S. 20 Marengo
 - vi. IL 47
- I-294/94/80 (Tri-State)
 - i. Rosecrans Road (IL 173)
- I-88 (Ronald Reagan)
 - i. U.S. 30
 - ii. IL 26
 - iii. IL 251
 - iv. Annie Glidden Road
 - v. Peace Road
 - vi. IL 47
 - vii. IL 56
 - viii. Orchard Road
- I-355 (Veterans Memorial)
 - i. US 6
 - ii. US 7
 - iii. Archer Avenue/143rd Street
 - iv. 127th Street

4.2 Recreational and Cultural Interest Traffic Generators

Recreational and cultural interest traffic generators include amusement parks, historical sites, museums, stadiums, arenas, auditoriums, convention halls, zoos, fairgrounds, recreation areas, racetracks, state and national parks, and state recreational areas.



1. For permanent supplemental guide signs, the generator must meet the requirements for number of annual attendees: 300,000 annual attendees for urban areas, and 200,000 annual attendees for rural areas.
2. The generator must be within 5 miles of the Tollway.
3. The generator must be regional and the majority of the attendees should come from outside of the immediate area. At least 50% of the stated minimum annual attendance must originate more than 10 miles from the attraction.
4. The generator must be a specific building or geographically separate entity that is well defined and easily identified by the motorist. It cannot be part of a larger geographic entity (e.g., a historic district within a larger central business district might not qualify.)
5. Traffic generators that are not generally event-oriented facilities (such as museums, zoos, historic sites, etc.) shall be operational and staffed with one or more attendants a minimum of five (5) days a week, eight hours a day for a total of 40 hours per week throughout the year to qualify for signs. Traffic generators that are generally event-oriented facilities (such as stadiums and arenas) are not required to meet this staffing requirement.
6. Historic facilities must be on the National Register of Historic Places.
7. The generator shall provide on-site public restroom facilities and drinking water suitable for public consumption.
8. The generator shall have adequate on-site parking during hours of operation for guests, tourists, and customers.
9. If the name of the generator is substantially similar to existing signage for the same ramp at the same interchange, only one sign will be permitted.
10. For short-term (less than 2 weeks) special events, temporary supplemental guide signs may be used. For these events, the generator should meet the following criteria:
 - a. Daily attendance of 2,000 served by on-site parking
 - b. Less than 5 miles from the interchange.

4.3 Educational Institutions

Educational institutions include colleges and universities. The intent is to sign for schools that generate a large amount of non-commuter traffic through conferences, sporting events, etc.



1. The institution must meet the following requirements for total annual enrollment:
 - a. For major universities, an annual on campus enrollment of at least 20,000 full time students
 - i. Signing shall be for the primary campus, or
 - ii. extension facilities that can demonstrate non-student annual attendance of at least 10,000
 - b. For regional four year colleges, an annual enrollment of at least 2,000 full time students
 - c. For community colleges, an annual enrollment of at least 15,000
2. The institution must be within 5 miles of the Tollway for urban areas and within 10 miles of the Tollway for rural areas.
3. The institution must be an accredited institution of higher learning.
4. Multiple facilities may be listed on a single sign.

4.4 Airports

1. The airport must be regional (as defined by the Tollway) and the majority of the users should come from outside of the immediate area.
2. The airport must be within 5 miles of the Tollway for urban areas and within 10 miles of the Tollway for rural areas.
3. The airport symbol combined with the supplemental guide sign should only be used for commercial airports, not general aviation airports.



4.5 Transit facilities

Transit facilities include rail terminals and stations, bus stations, and park-and-ride lots.

1. Rail and bus facilities must be within 3 miles of the Tollway.
2. Park-and-ride facilities must be located adjacent to the Tollway and be governmentally owned and operated as part of a car pool, van pool, or other public transportation program.
3. The facility shall have at least 1,000 general use parking spaces (not permit only) for daily patron use.



4.6 Law Enforcement Agencies and Courthouses

1. The facility must be located within 3 miles of the interchange for urban areas or within 5 miles for rural areas.
2. The facility must be for County, State, or Federal institutions.
3. The facility must be for public use –training facilities or labs related to law enforcement are not included.



4.7 Points of Interest

The Tollway has tested Points of Interest signs in the past. These signs are on a brown background, and provide guidance to 2 or 3 facilities that may not individually meet a previous criterion, but collectively do so. The intent is to provide guidance to some more marginal regional traffic generators. The intent is NOT to sign for all traffic generators at an interchange. The facilities may provide logos for installation on the signs. The signs will be installed and maintained by the Tollway. The facilities must collectively meet the following requirements:



1. For permanent supplemental guide signs, the generators must collectively meet the requirements for number of annual attendees: 200,000 annual attendees for urban areas, and 150,000 annual attendees for rural areas.
2. Each generator must be public or not for profit.
3. The generators must be within 5 miles of the Tollway.
4. The generators must be regional and the majority of the attendees should come from outside of the immediate area. At least 50% of the stated minimum annual attendance must originate more than 10 miles from each attraction.

5. Each generator must be a specific building or geographically separate entity that is well defined and easily identified by the motorist. It cannot be part of a larger geographic entity (e.g., a historic district within a larger central business district might not qualify.)
6. Traffic generators that are not generally event-oriented facilities (such as museums, zoos, historic sites, etc.) shall be operational and staffed with one or more attendants a minimum of five (5) days a week, eight hours a day for a total of 40 hours per week throughout the year to qualify for signs.
7. The generator shall provide on-site public restroom facilities and drinking water suitable for public consumption.
8. The generators shall have adequate on-site parking during hours of operation for guests, tourists, and customers.

4.8 Commercial Traffic Generators – (Under Development: Possible Implementation in 2010, Pending Budget Availability)

1. In the interests of serving the patrons of the Tollway with information on potential commercial traffic generators, the following category is proposed for testing. Commercial traffic generators are for profit businesses that attract significant numbers of annual attendees. A separate full policy statement should be drafted that includes potential payment to the Tollway along the same lines as the pilot Blue Board program discussed in Section 2.2 or the Attractions Program developed by the Illinois Department of Transportation and implemented in 2007. These generators will be on blue background signs and will be restricted to rural areas. In all cases, the safety of the Tollway patrons will take precedence and no signage will be installed until after an engineering analysis has determined that it is safe to install.

4.9 Municipal Signing

Within the existing Illinois Tollway Act, there is specific language relative to municipal signing.

(605 ILCS 10/12) (from Ch. 121, par. 100-12)
 Sec. 12. The Authority shall erect and maintain at connecting roads on each toll highway suitable signs showing the name of the chief accessible traffic generator in either direction along each such connecting road. The size and designations on such signs and the distance from intersections where they shall be erected shall conform with the Illinois Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways.



For this section, traffic generator is specific to municipalities, not individual facilities. In order to meet the requirements of this language, signing shall be provided at all non-system ramps for the local municipalities. The following are the initial guidelines:

1. Municipalities must be within 2 miles of the Tollway
2. The sign shall point to either the geographic center of the municipality or where City Hall is located.
3. If more than one municipality is within 2 miles, each may be signed for.

4.9 Facilities Not Generally Eligible

The Table 1 lists facilities that generally will not be considered for traffic generator supplemental signing.

5 Other Supplemental Signing

Section 4 addressed signing and criteria specific to traffic generators. Section 5 addresses other conditions that may warrant signing.

5.1 Political Signs

No political or campaign signs are allowed anywhere on the Tollway ROW under any circumstance.

5.2 No Re-Entry

No re-entry signs should be placed at all exits at partial interchanges. The signs will direct motorists to the nearest reentry point and give a distance to that interchange.



5.3 Political Boundaries

The entire Illinois Tollway system is within the state of Illinois and does not extend closer than 1 mile to any state border. Therefore, no state line signs are required. County boundaries shall be signed for at the county line. Municipal boundaries and those of other political jurisdictions (e.g., townships, forest preserves, etc.) shall not be signed for.



5.4 Bodies of Water

Waterways throughout Illinois are used for both commercial and recreational purposes. They also present obstacles for many local roads in proximity to the Tollway system. All navigable rivers and lakes that are crossed by the Illinois Tollway should be signed for at the beginning of each crossing.



Table 1
Traffic Generators that Do Not Normally Warrant Supplemental Guide Signing

Businesses

Auto/Truck/Equipment Dealerships
 Bars/Lounges
 Chamber of Commerce
 Corporations and Corporate Headquarters
 Day Care Centers
 Flea Markets
 Furniture Stores or Facilities
 Health or Fitness Facilities
 Humane Facilities
 Industrial Plants/Facilities
 Industrial Technology Centers
 Manufacturing Facilities
 Radio/TV Stations
 Retail Stores or Establishments
 Roadside Stands

Cemeteries

Local or State
 Private/Public
 Military

Communities

Churches (and other places of worship)
 Civic Centers
 Subdivisions
 Town Halls or City Halls
 Trailer Parks

Governmental

City Facilities
 Driver's License Centers
 Employment Services Facilities
 Jails/Prisons
 Post Offices
 Research/Experimental Facilities

Medical

County, Fraternal, or Nursing Homes
 Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centers
 Drug Stores
 Local Infirmaries/Treatment Centers
 Local Medical Treatment Facilities
 Mental Health Facilities (private)
 Retirement Facilities
 Sanitariums

Military

Armories
 Arsenals
 Civil Defense Facilities
 Military Detachments
 Recruiting Stations/Facilities

Recreational/Conservational

Campgrounds (Privately-owned)
 Country Club
 Driving Ranges
 Fish Hatcheries
 Game Farms
 Game Preserves
 Game Refuges
 Golf Courses
 Retreats (private, civic, religious, etc.)
 Tree Nurseries

Schools

Grade/High Schools
 Head Start Centers
 Seminaries

Other

Disaster Assistance Facilities
 Fraternal/Sorority houses
 Guilds: Civic or Fraternal Organizations
 Power Plants and Utility Plants
 Taxi Locations

