



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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GOVERNOR

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David McCoy
ACTING SECRETARY

July 15, 1999

MEMORANDUM TO: Division Engineers

FROM: J. D. Goins, PE
Chief Engineer - Operations

SUBJECT: Amended North Carolina Department of Transportation
Policy for the Use of Changeable Message Signs

Attached, please find the amended Policy for the Use of Changeable Message Signs. This policy was established in July 1995 to provide guidelines for use of portable and stationary changeable message signs that resulted in the signs having a high level of credibility with the public. The Department desires to display pertinent and accurate messages concerning traffic and travel conditions on North Carolina Transportation Systems, which assists motorists in their driving decisions.

The Department receives requests from various public groups for access or to display messages on Department owned stationary changeable message signs. The current list outlined in section IV. Display of Messages on Stationary Signs covers most requests. However, some requests made in the three major regions Charlotte - Gastonia, Winston-Salem - High Point - Greensboro, and the Raleigh - Durham metropolitan areas are not covered especially those pertaining to air quality red alerts. In areas where other modes of transportation are available to reduce congestion on our highways, the public must be provided with traffic and travel conditions that may alter their decision to drive and allow them to choose another mode of transportation such as carpooling or the use of transit. The policy was amended to include a priority five (5) under section IV. Display of Messages on Stationary Changeable Message Signs. The intent of this amendment is to provide other public information, which assists the Department in improving safety and reducing congestion.

The Traffic Engineering and Safety System Branch is currently revising the operational guidelines for the Use of Changeable Messages Signs that was developed as a companion to the policy. A library of standard messages to be included in all future specifications to be pre-programmed in stationary changeable message signs is also under development. You will be given an opportunity to assist in the compilation and review the revised guidelines and library of

standard messages before they are finalized. If additional information is needed, please contact Ann Lorscheider or Cheryl Evans of the Traffic Engineering and Safety System Branch at (919)-250-4151.

JDG/cle
cc-

Mr. L. A. Sanderson, PE, w/atta.
Mr. D. A. Allsbrook, Jr., PE (attn: Mr. Roberto Canales, PE, w/atta.)
Mr. J. M. Lynch, PE (attn: Ms. Terry Hopkins, PE, w/atta.)
Mr. Max Tate, PE, (attn: Mr. Brad Hibbs, PE, w/atta.)
Ms. Janet D'Ignazio w/atta.
Mr. Sanford Cross, w/atta.
Mr. Patrick Simmons, w/atta.
Division Operation Engineers, w/atta.

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION POLICY FOR THE USE OF CHANGEABLE MESSAGE SIGNS

I. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy provides specific guidelines for the use of stationary and portable changeable message signs (CMS) used on the North Carolina highway system. Messages displayed shall convey pertinent information to motorists, which assists in their driving decisions. Messages shall be conveyed in a standard, nonconfusing manner that allows drivers to both perceive and react to the information given in a timely fashion.

II. PURPOSE

CMS can be used to effectively reduce congestion caused by planned or unplanned incidents such as excessive daily traffic, accidents, detours, construction delays, special events, etc. Once a driver population has gained confidence that messages are reliable and relay pertinent information that assists in reducing delays, CMS can be used to convey information to alter traffic patterns or modes of transportation.

III. AUTHORIZATION

The Division Engineer will authorize the use of all CMS both state owned and Contractor furnished. Each CMS shall have a person designated by the Division Engineer to be responsible for the authorization of messages to be displayed and for the care, maintenance, and security of the CMS. This person may delegate certain responsibilities in regard to the CMS but should ensure that any personnel given access to the CMS understands and adheres to this policy. Access to the CMS shall only be given to responsible individuals. The Division Engineer will ensure that efforts are coordinated such that motorists are informed of the most critical information based on the priority of messages listed below.

IV. DISPLAY OF MESSAGES ON STATIONARY CMS

Messages shall be displayed on stationary CMS in accordance with the below listed priorities. When a stationary CMS is not being used to display one of the below listed message types, it shall remain blank.

Types of messages conveyed on stationary CMS have the following priority:

1. Emergencies such as evacuations or closures required by the NCDOT, the Department of Emergency Management, local law enforcement or the military.
2. Hazardous and/or uncommon road conditions which require motorists to alter their driving such as severe weather conditions, accidents, or work zone activities.
3. Traveler information and suggested alternate routes for delays and/or congestion caused by planned or unplanned incidents.
4. Advance notice for scheduled incidents such as lane closures, road closures, or special events.

5. Other public information which assists the Department in improving highway safety and reducing congestion may be displayed after careful consideration. However, the message must require motorists to alter their driving and direct approval by the Division Engineer must be received prior to displaying the message.

CMS shall not display messages that in any way advertise commercial events or entities. CMS shall only display messages, which pertain to highway safety or congestion reduction. CMS shall not be used to convey the same message for an extended period of time. CMS shall not repeat guide sign or warning sign messages.

V. DISPLAY OF MESSAGES ON PORTABLE CMS

Messages shall be displayed on portable CMS in accordance with the below listed priorities. When the portable CMS is not being used to display one of the below listed message types, it shall remain blank.

Types of messages conveyed on portable CMS have the following priority:

1. Emergencies such as evacuations or closures required by the NCDOT, the Department of Emergency Management, local law enforcement, or the military.
2. Hazardous and/or uncommon road conditions which require motorists to alter their driving such as severe weather conditions, accidents, or work zone activities.
3. Short term detours (mandatory) for a partial audience for which no other signing is in place.
4. Traveler information and suggested alternate routes for delays and/or congestion caused by planned or unplanned incidents.
5. Advance notice for scheduled incidents such as lane closures, road closures, or special events.
6. Other public information which assists the Department in improving highway safety and reducing congestion may be displayed after careful consideration. However, the message must require motorists to alter their driving and direct approval by the Division Engineer must be received prior to displaying the message.

CMS shall not display messages that in any way advertise commercial events or entities. CMS shall only display messages, which pertain to highway safety or congestion reduction. CMS should not be used to convey a message for an extended period of time that could be conveyed with a conventional warning sign.

Approved: _____ Date: _____
(Signature) 7/15/99

Chief Engineer - Operations