

Signs along state highways can be divided into three basic types: (1) **regulatory signs** that direct traffic and highlight traffic laws, (2) **warning signs** that provide advisory traffic direction, and (3) **guide signs** that help inform and direct motorists. Guide signs are further distinguished between primary signing that identifies highway routes and exits, and supplemental signage that identifies various locations and landmarks. Supplemental guide signs include signage for municipality limits, named routes, hospitals, airports, state and national parks, educational institutions, and other traffic generators.

To identify traveler services, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) administers multiple programs for supplemental guide signs along trunk highways. Two are laid out in state statutes. The “specific service sign” program provides basic directions to various businesses along highways that have at-grade intersections (and some interchanges on bypasses) in rural areas. The second program for “logo signs” allows placement of standardized business logos along interstate and other controlled access highways. The table below outlines basic aspects of each sign program.

	Specific Service Signs	Logo Signs
Summary	<p>These are informational signs for directions to eligible businesses and services provided to the traveling public. The signs are on nonfreeway trunk highways in rural areas.</p> <p>The basic format is rectangular with white lettering on a blue background, containing a business name or a logo.</p>	<p>These are informational signs for specifically named businesses providing a qualifying service to the traveling public. The signs are at interchanges of controlled access trunk highways, including interstates.</p> <p>Each sign is specific to one type of service and contains up to six panels that can each contain a business logo.</p>
Examples		
Terminology	<p>The program is also referred to as “tourist-oriented directional signs” (in the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the equivalent federal manual).</p>	<p>The program is also known as the “sign franchise program” (in state statutes) and “specific service (logo) signs” (in the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices).</p>
Eligible services	<p>Eligible types of services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural agricultural business ▪ Tourist-oriented business ▪ Place of worship 	<p>Eligible types of services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gas ▪ Food ▪ Lodging

	Specific Service Signs	Logo Signs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Motel ▪ Restaurant ▪ Resort ▪ Recreational camping area ▪ Gasoline service station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Camping ▪ Attractions ▪ 24-hour pharmacy
Allowable locations	<p>Signs are allowed on nonfreeway trunk highways in rural areas.</p> <p>“Nonfreeway trunk highway” means (1) roadways that are not divided highways with full control of access (in other words, roadways where there are at-grade intersections); and (2) bypasses of Greater Minnesota municipalities that have interchanges. Minn. Stat. §§ 160.292, subd. 16; 160.293, subd. 1.</p> <p>In identifying a “rural area,” MnDOT will not place a sign if four or more features from a list apply to the intersection approach. The features, identified in the Traffic Engineering Manual, consist of: location within corporate limits, curb and gutter, sidewalk, street lighting, 45 mph or lower speed limit, zoning, platted development, local road system, and frontage road.</p>	<p>Signs are allowed at interchanges on controlled access trunk highways, including interstates.</p>
Business restrictions	<p>Signs are not allowed if the business is readily visible, or if an advertising sign can be posted near the intersection or interchange of the proposed signage site. Minn. Stat. § 160.293, subd. 2.</p> <p>There are some conditions specific to each type of business or service, established in state statute, the Traffic Engineering Manual, and agency policy.¹ Minn. Stat. § 160.295.</p> <p>The service must be located within 15 miles of the site of the sign. Minn. Stat. § 160.295, subd. 2.</p>	<p>In addition to general conditions (such as having a sign on-site), there are various requirements specific to each type of business or service. These are established primarily in state statute and cover topics such as hours of operation, services provided, and available facilities. Minn. Stat. § 160.80, subd. 1a.</p> <p>In urban areas, the maximum allowed distance of a business from an interchange having the sign is 3 miles, except that camping facilities must be located within 10 miles.</p>

¹ Examples include licensing by the Department of Health for motels, restaurants and resorts, and minimum operating hours of eight hours per day and six days a week for rural agricultural or tourist-oriented businesses (with seasonal businesses able to be open part-year).

	Specific Service Signs	Logo Signs
	The program allows for seasonal businesses.	In rural areas, the maximum distance from an interchange is 15 miles, except that pharmacies must be located within 3 miles. The program allows for seasonal businesses. If there are available spots on a panel for additional business logos and no eligible business applies, a business that is “substantially eligible” can be added. Minn. Stat. § 160.80, subd. 1a.
Program administration	MnDOT administers the program.	MnDOT can contract with a private company for managing the program. Minn. Stat. § 160.80, subd. 2. The current franchise is with Minnesota Logos, Inc., which handles marketing, installation, and maintenance (with agency oversight).
Sign costs	Signs are paid for by participating entities. Costs for a sign vary based on the type of work, following a rate schedule set by MnDOT. The onetime fees are set to match the labor and material costs of installation, with pricing updated annually. Sign panels are replaced on a 12 to 15 year cycle, at which point there is a fee for replacing the panel (and possibly the supporting structure).	Logo signs are paid for by participating entities. Costs are set at an annual rate, with separate charges for (1) signs on the highway, (2) signs on exit ramps, and (3) additional directional signs on intersecting roads. Signs are typically purchased for both directions of travel, and generally purchased for both the mainline highway and exit ramps.
Sources	Minn. Stat. §§ 160.02 , 160.292 to 160.297 Traffic Engineering Manual , ch. 6, sec. 6-7.09 (2018) Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices , part 2, ch. 2K (2018)	Minn. Stat. § 160.80 Traffic Engineering Manual , ch. 6, sec. 6-7.09 (2018) Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices , part 2, ch. 2J (2018)



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