



Guidelines for SWCD Road Signage Projects

Background

For many years, some districts have been interested in installing “Entering District” signs along highways. Although there were a few signs already in Virginia, generally, local VDOT offices told Districts that signs on the highway right-of-way were not allowed. In 2012, Wilkie Chaffin of the Piedmont District, wrote to the Commissioner of VDOT asking if signs were allowed, and if not, what law or regulation prohibited signs. The response was that a Code change would be required to install signs. During the 2013 General Assembly Session, the VASWCD tried to get a Code change to allow district signs, but VDOT opposed the change, and the VASWCD was not successful. However, VDOT offered to work with the VASWCD on regulations to develop a standard sign and installation practices. VDOT developed the sign size, colors, font and logo size and type and those cannot be modified. The Piedmont SWCD agreed to be the first district to go through the process and has provided information that may be helpful to other districts.

The following are considerations in planning, preparing a bid and other requirements that Piedmont SWCD experienced during this project. The timeframe from planning thru installation was longer than we anticipated and was due to several factors including delay with installation contractor because of workload. Working with three VDOT offices and county administrators also added to the delay. A copy of the bid package is available upon request. The cost for seven signs, including installation was a little over \$5,000.

I. Pre bid/Project Planning:

- Determine approximate number and locations of signs (Piedmont selected locations on main roads into district boundaries totaling 7 signs)
- Districts covering multiple counties might be required to work with multiple VDOT offices
- Before preparing bid package contact your local VDOT office(s) Resident Engineer to introduce yourself and give a project description
- Review current VDOT Road and Bridge Standard and VDOT Road and Bridge Specifications
 - Signs must be manufactured and installed per current VDOT regulations
 - WSP-1 for wood post installation, STP-1 for square tube sign post installation (indicate post type in bid packet)
 - Be sure to check local ordinances for requirements on signage
 - VDOT does not have an approved sign contractor/installer list
- Restricted access highways may not allow signs- VDOT has the final say
- Sign size, logo, font and colors must be per the VDOT LUP(Land Use Permit)-SWCD specification

- II. **Prepare Bid Package:** (refer to sample bid packet by using VA Procurement Template document)
- Include in scope of work
 - Manufacturing of signs
 - Installation of signs (Piedmont included installation of signs as part of the bid)
 - Graphic file with sign specifications per VDOT (LUP-SWCD)
 - Include a final deadline of completing the installation
 - Piedmont selected a contractor who had experience in manufacturing and installing VDOT signage
- III. **Permits Required:** (each local VDOT office requires permits)
- LUP-A - land use permit
 - LUP-SPG – special provisions permit
 - LUP-WZTCC – traffic control certification
 - Reference LUP-SWCD which includes sign specifications
 - All survey fees are waived for districts (LUP-SWCD)
 - Make sure VDOT approves permits before installation (request letter)
 - Suggestion- have contractor who is installing signs apply for permits. This takes any liabilities off the district during installation. Piedmont actually completed the permit application and signed as applicant, but contractor signed and submitted as agent. Ask for a copy of the approved permit.
- IV. **Contractor Selection:**
- Hold a “pre-construction” meeting with selected contractor(s)
 - Review contract, scope of work, permit applications and process (who is responsible for what).
 - Determine timeline for marking sign locations and approvals(VDOT and Miss Utility)
 - Reminder- permits require sign location (latitude/longitude coordinates) and Miss Utility may require certain color markers/stakes.
 - We strongly encourage districts to meet on site with the contractor who will be installing the signs and to mark the locations together. This might eliminate numerous trips to verify and re-mark signs.
 - Remember if marking signs during spring-fall or winter season, the marker may be destroyed by mowing or snow plowing.
- V. **Sign Location Tips:** (See VDOT road and bridge standards)
- Place in state maintained highway right- of- way as close to right away line as possible
 - Cannot install within 500’ of any bridge approach
 - Cannot interfere with driveways and intersections

- Cannot be closer than 6' from edge of pavement
- District signs can be placed on left hand side of road so that signs for entering different districts can be placed back to back on the same post(s)
- Get the latitude longitude coordinates for you desired location (VDOT requires so that they can go out and check whether or not the location is okay)
- Tip- use Google Earth for your map and insert latitude and longitude coordinates. This map will be helpful for you and VDOT
- Before installation, signs must be marked for Miss Utility. Work with installation contractor to determine who will mark.

VI. Sign Installation (follow traffic control requirements)

- Before installing signs, review locations with contractor. Contractor should contact and receive approval from Miss Utility
- Confirm VDOT permit approvals (request letter)
- Contractor installing signs must have a Traffic Control Certification-LUP-WZTCC (keep copy with them on job site)
- While signs are being installed, there will need to be two vehicles with flashing lights and a "Road Work Ahead" sign. The contractor will need to provide appropriate traffic control (per LUP-WZTCC)
- VDOT and district will inspect once installation is complete

Special Note about Signs in Cities and Towns: Although VDOT has authority over types of signs, placement of signs, permits, etc., along highways, cities and towns control signs within their city or town limits. Districts will need to work with their local town or city government concerning these signs.

VII. Maintenance

- Districts are responsible for maintenance of signage installed in VDOT right-of-ways, however an agreement could be formed so that VDOT would perform mowing etc.
- If "Welcome to County" signs exist, contact the county to see if the district can install signs within that area. The county might be willing to be responsible for maintenance

VIII. Obstacles

The timeline from preparing the bid package to final installation was delayed due to contractor project backlog and the numerous times staff had to go back to re-mark sites. If the marking of the sites could be accomplished with the contractor and VDOT at the same time, it might eliminate multiple trips. Working with 3 different VDOT offices was a little difficult as there are different layers of teams in each office and those responsible for signage varies from office to office. The manufacturing of the sign (bid package, select contractor) was the easiest component, but the installation (working with different contractor and marking sign locations) was more involved.