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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Mr. Richard Savoie, P.E.  
Chief Engineer

FROM: Mr. Peter Allain, P.E., P.T.O.E.  
Traffic Engineering Division Administrator

DATE: September 14, 2012

SUBJECT: Clarification of 2009 MUTCD for font sizes for Guide Signs

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the font sizes for guide signs as defined in the 2009 MUTCD.

The 2009 MUTCD changed the legibility distance for sign letter height by 25% from 40 feet per inch to 30 feet per inch. This change corresponded to an increase in the minimum letter height for guide by 50% from 4 inches to 6 inches. The larger letters result in significantly larger signs, which are causing numerous difficulties in the fabrication and installation of the signs including:

- A lack of suitable locations due to narrow right-of-ways, ditches, vegetation, utilities, and sidewalks;
- Single post signs now requiring two or even three supports;
- Fabrication with more expensive extrusion instead of flat sheet;
- Requires more sign sheeting material;
- Increase the potential of signs to be hit by vehicles, mowers, and vandalism thus increasing overall maintenance costs; and
- Larger signs consume more of the Departments limited budget need for safety critical regulatory and warning signs.

It is believed that the FHWA documentation on letter size is contradictory and permissive of the use of 4-inch letter heights. Listed below are these sources concerning letter height.

1. Section 2D.06 states that the letter size on guide signs shall be at least 6 inches. On roads with speeds of 25 mph or less the letter size shall be at least 4 inches. This section also

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states that the sign shall be designed in accordance with the Standard Highway Signs and Markings (SHS) Manual.

2. The 2004 SHS (page 8-1) states that on major routes the minimum letter height is 6 inches. On low volume roads and 25 mph urban streets the minimum letter height is 4 inches. This section was not updated with the 2012 SHS supplement.
3. Section 2D.04 of the 2009 MUTCD, allows reduced letter height if sign must be limited by factors such as lane width or vertical or lateral clearance.
4. FHWA Interim Approval Letter, dated 9/2/04, states that the use of prismatic sheeting increases sign legibility by 12% over beaded sheeting, and the use of Clearview font increases legibility by 16% over standard lettering. DOTD has adopted both prismatic sheeting and Clearview font therefore these increases in legibility are realized.

Based on the above, the minimum letter height for ground mounted guide signs shall be:

<b>Roadway Type</b>	<b>Speed Limit</b>	<b>Minimum Letter Height</b>
Two lane roadways, low volume	All speeds	4 inch
Multi-lane, high volume	≤ 45 mph	4 inch
Multi-lane, high volume	≥ 50 mph	6 inch
Control of Access, high and low volume	All speeds	As per MUTCD