

TECH NEWS

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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Traffic safety funds purchase replacement signs

Three programs funded by the Iowa DOT's Traffic Safety Improvement Program are increasing safety by upgrading signs.

Sign replacement program for small cities

Regulatory and warning signs are an important part of traffic safety. Signs in poor condition or in a non-standardized format may not be seen or heeded.

Cities with a population of 5,000 or fewer are eligible for up to \$5,000 for replacing these signs. Of the 882 eligible cities in Iowa, almost half have received new signs since the program began in 1992.

How it works

A consultant will inventory all city-maintained regulatory and warning signs in the city and note those that need replacement. The consultant will check for damage, wear, and night visibility and measure the height of signs and the distance from the street.

The DOT furnishes the signs, posts and fasteners (up to \$5,000 worth!) and the city installs them.

For more information

Contact the local systems engineer in your Iowa DOT district to begin the process. For more information about the program, contact Kurtis Younkin, traffic operations engineer, Office of Traffic and Safety, Iowa DOT, 515-239-1184, kurtis.younkin@dot.iowa.gov.



Bigger and brighter chevrons and rumble strips protect drivers from running off the curve on U.S. Highway 69 in Clarke County.



Old (background, left) and new street signs on Iowa Highway 330 in Marshall County.

Street signs for high-speed expressways

Have you ever almost missed your turn on a highway because you couldn't see the street sign until you were right on top of it? Reacting quickly to small street signs when you're driving at 65 miles per hour is almost impossible and can be dangerous.

A new TSIP program is looking to alleviate this problem along 65 mile-per-hour expressways by providing street name signs with large, 10-inch lettering.

Depending on funding availability, counties with 65 mile-per-hour expressways may be eligible for the large signs to be placed adjacent to its cross-streets.

Marshall County was the first to experiment with these signs.

For more information

Contact Tom Welch, safety engineer, Office of Traffic and Safety, Iowa DOT, 515-239-1267, tom.welch@dot.iowa.gov for more information about receiving these signs.

Horizontal curve signs

In Iowa, 39 percent of fatal crashes result from single vehicles running off roads, which often happens when drivers exceed speed limits or underestimate curves.

A recent CTRE study found that 11 percent of primary highway curve fatalities occurred at just 30 curves. As a result of that finding, safety funds were awarded to supply oversized, fluorescent yellow chevron signs to those locations.

On one curve west of Knoxville in Marion County, an old section of roadway was changed to four lanes, and the speed limit was raised to 65 miles per hour. Officially, the curve did not require any devices other than a curve sign, but the sheriff recorded 15 instances where vehicles ran off the road just after the speed limit was raised.

The Iowa DOT installed new oversized fluorescent yellow chevron signs on the curve nearly a year ago, and no vehicles have run off the road since.

If you have a high speed curve that has a documented history of multiple severe crashes, you may want to consider upgrading the chevron signing.

For more information

Contact Tom Welch, safety engineer, Office of Traffic and Safety, Iowa DOT, 515-239-1267, tom.welch@dot.iowa.gov, if you have horizontal curves that need new signs.
