

AASHTO SCOTE Survey – Question on Covering Signs (Submitted by MassDOT – April 20, 2016)

Question:

Have you ever had to cover a large ground mount guide sign and if so, did you have a standard process (specification) for doing so?

Responses:

Alabama

I checked with our Construction personnel and our specs don't actually address this issue. Any need to cover signs like this would be considered a subsidiary obligation of the cost of the sign. So we have no good guidance in Alabama on the method or materials that would be used. However, attached is a recent photograph of a current project where it appears some type of fabric is being used to cover a guide sign until it is time to display to drivers.

Alaska

Our specification doesn't contemplate really big signs like you have.

The only creative thought I have is to manufacture sign plates to cover the distance/time message with a temporary message " 5 miles " blanking out the electronic readout and the MINS units. I am afraid this would cost as much or more than the full covering of the sign panels you described. (You'd probably still get calls, only they would be in outrage for a giant sign saying "Highway 2, 5 miles.")

Our Spec 643-3.04 Traffic Control Devices includes this:

During non-working hours and after completing a particular construction operation, remove all unnecessary traffic control devices. Store all unused traffic control devices in a designated storage area which does not present a nuisance or visual distraction to traffic. **If sign panels are post mounted and cannot be readily removed, cover them entirely with either metal or plywood sheeting.** Completely cover signal heads with durable material that that fully blocks the view of signal head and will not be damaged or removed by weather.

One thing I recall is that woven materials allow light to pass and the retro effects to work at night, making signs visible even when they appear to be fully obscured during the day. I think that is why we require metal or wood. Our construction guys say "... Details of when and where need to be described in the plans for sure" but it sounds too late for that.

Arizona

Section 701-3.11 of the ADOT Standard Specifications allows temporary covering of signs "...with an opaque porous cloth or fiber material, folded over the sign edges, and secured at the rear of the sign in

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such a manner that the sign shall not be damaged." It goes on to say that "Tape, hardware, ropes, cables, etc. used to secure the covering material shall not touch, place any pressure on, or damage the sign face." There are no criteria or restrictions on sign size in this specification.

For your specific situation, it might be best to temporarily affix aluminum overlay panels over the lower parts of each sign sub-panel the same width as the panel, each faced with the appropriate "XX MILES" legend (the same mileage that would be temporarily covered). I've attached a quick sketch created in SignCAD. These could be riveted or screwed to the extruded panels at the edges or over the side borders (which could be more-easily patched after removal), using washers to offset the overlay panel from the extrusion. There is a risk of panel discoloration (or more precisely reduced discoloration) due to differential sun exposure, but the full-width panel might reduce the noticeability of the change in color.



Arkansas

We've always used blue tarps to cover signs when needed. We don't have a standard specification, however. We've used bungee cords, ratcheting straps, and tape to secure them in the past. The crews use pretty much whatever they have on hand.

Delaware

No good info from us. Apparently covering signs is incidental to the contract and/or the Maintenance of Traffic Spec. There are some fairly sizable signs right near my house in a construction zone right now that are covered but I don't know the material or how it is held together.

Florida

What about placing a few portable VMS's with the following 2-phase message:

Phase 1:	Travel	Phase 2:	Under
	Time		Construction
	Signs		

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Indiana

INDOT does not have a standard spec although we've discussed it. So for right now it's up to the contractor. I'll forward your question to some of those contractors for any suggestions they might have.

Contractor's response: I would suggest one of the following:

1. Attaching a large sheet sign over the sign at an angle with a message like "NOT YET IN SERVICE" or "COMING SOON" in black lettering on orange background.
2. Attach a plywood, sheet metal, or flexible fabric cover over the electronic display portion of the signs.
3. Substantially cover the signs with a fabric cover.

The tarp should be substantially opaque but doesn't have to be completely opaque as the intent is to inform the public that the sign is not yet functional.

We use tarps in other states...likely black plastic tarps

Kentucky

Our temporary traffic control specification states:

Use only porous cloth or geotextile fabric for sign covers.

I think they went with something porous as there was concern about the moisture issue referenced in Tom Honich's response.

From what I remember seeing in the field, this is not the "perfect" solution as some of the sheeting tends to be visible/reflective through the cloth.

Louisiana

Louisiana doesn't cover large signs. . Either the sign would be removed from the legs temporary or flipped and mounted to the backside of the legs (backside facing traffic).

Mississippi

Mississippi DOT uses 60" x 60" polypropylene bags to cover standard signs. If we need to cover a guide sign, we'll cut the bags to fit and secure them with tie wire

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Missouri

We have only covered portions of signs during phased in work. We try to keep an air gap between the cover and the permanent signs to avoid trapping moisture and creating dead spots in the sheeting (like the shadows you may have seen on Logo signs when logos are removed).

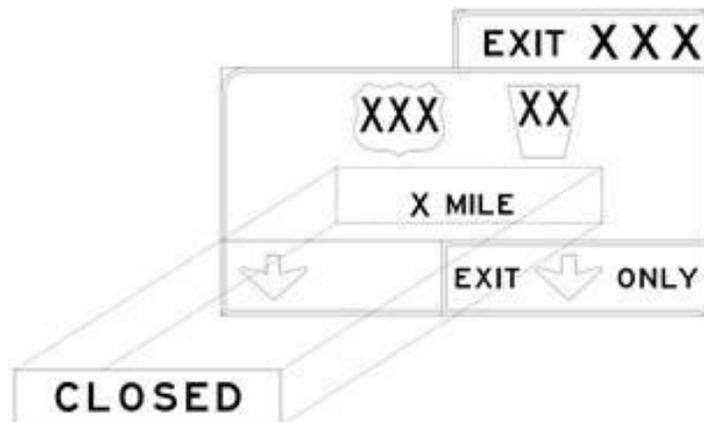
On our construction projects we display what we call a Point of Presence sign (POP sign) to tell the drivers when the project is expected to be completed. We list a season instead of a date to give some buffer room.



Has any thought been given to simply hanging a supplemental plaque below each sign displaying an activation date time frame instead of covering the signs?

Nebraska

Slightly different example, but the concept might work for your concern. On our large overhead guide signs we'll install a large orange and black "CLOSED" sign across the legend of the sign. Such as the example below. More often our Districts like to install the CLOSED panel diagonally across the legend.



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New Jersey

From my outreach to NJDOT's Sign Shop, the only method used here is a tarp secured with bungee cords. Operationally the need here is rare; we may have need to cover a memorial sign upon installation if there's a request for a dedication/unveiling ceremony. It's more prevalent during construction efforts, but the motoring public seems to understand that the covered signs may have conflicting messages with existing signs and that the new signs will be uncovered when the existing ones are removed.

Travel times in NJ are handled through the Mobility Systems Engineering/Traffic Operations staff. We don't install guide signs with dynamic messages; we use full DMS installations. With content changing due to incidents, public service messages and travel times, along with the number of DMS installations that remain dark since they haven't been set up for travel times, a blank DMS doesn't raise any concerns regarding operational status.

Even though your signs don't have full connectivity, can the signs be activated individually to display some sort of TEST message? That might stem some of the calls. If not, considering the costs of materials and labor to cover, I'd suggest some type of public info campaign and setting up an automated phone message

New York

We recently changed our pay item for covering signs because the old one didn't specify if or how the contractor would be paid to remove the covering that they placed earlier, whereas the new one specifies that the bid price includes both activities, as required by the contract. The most recent average bid price we have is for the old spec - \$33/sf in 5 projects in calendar year 2014, and the quantities were all below 50sf. In 2013 we had 4 projects that used this item, the largest one had a quantity of 100sf and an average bid price of \$22.

Ohio

We use similar signs and had similar problems. We took negative feedback from the public when a contractor installed DMS signs and they sat without power for months. In our plans, we now include notes that required power and communication to be energized prior to erecting the Extrusheet sign and LED panels. Once the contractor installs the sign and LED panels, they have 3 days to make it fully functional and operational. If the sign is not fully operational we have disincentives up to \$1000 a day if the signs are not working within the allotted timeframe once they are erected.

In regards to covering the signs, we have used tarps and bungees. We have no real standards for covering. See attached picture.

Some Info on our travel times as an FYI.

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<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Operations/Traffic/FAQs/Pages/DDMS.aspx>

Oklahoma

I don't know if it would be any more cost effective but the billboards in our area are actually have a tarp like material w/ the business printed on the "tarp" and it is held on the wood structures by ratchet straps. I'm thinking that if they can hold up in our winds they could hold anywhere. There are several of these along I-40.

Whenever construction covers them with a temporary sign they damage them.

I would look at putting a sign on it somewhere that says "Out of Service" or something. But it wouldn't cover it.

When public calls, just explain the situation until they get used to it.

Oregon

ODOT has a section in our specs for sign covers. It is covered in section 941 (link below). You'll see we don't provide additional payment for sign covers. We've also had a change in our standard specs which is covered in our boilerplate special provisions (attached word document). It just has a space for the signs that will be covered to be listed to make it easier on the contractor. Please let me know if you have any other questions.

http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/SPECS/docs/15book/15_00900.pdf

SP00941 (2015 Specifications: 11-13-14)

SECTION 00941 - SIGN COVERS

(Follow all instructions. If there are no instructions above a subsection, paragraph, sentence, or bullet, then include them in the project. The specifications may be modified to include project specific specifications, but all additions, deletions, or modifications must be sent to the ODOT Technical Resource and Senior Specifications Engineer for review and approval.)

Comply with Section 00941 of the Standard Specifications modified as follows:

00941.41 Installation - Add the following to the end of this subsection:

(List signs to be covered. Obtain information from the Sign Designer.)

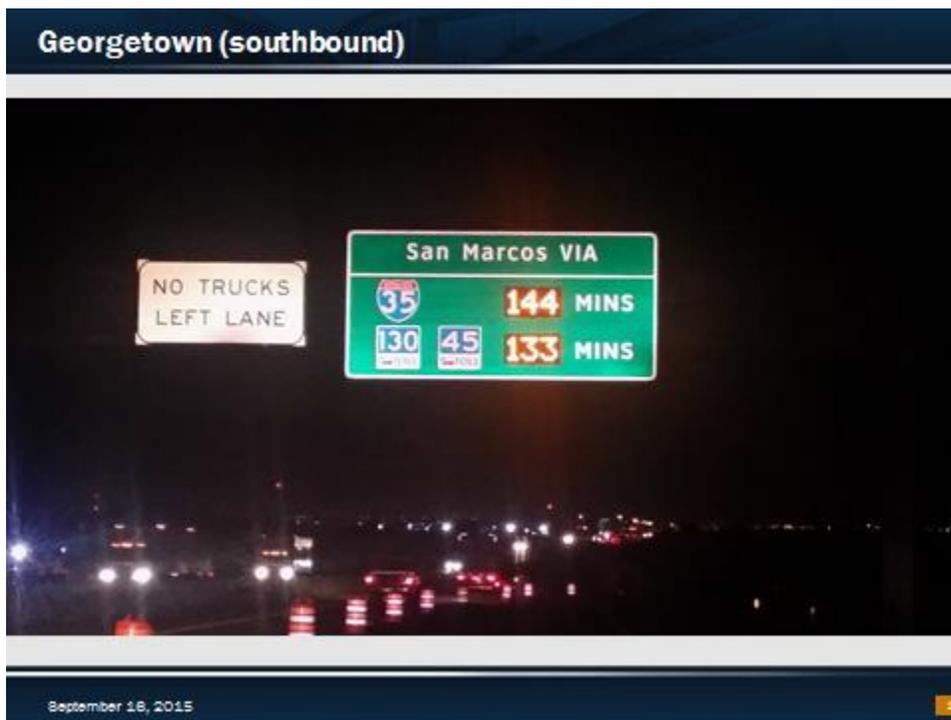
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South Dakota

To my knowledge, we have not had to cover signs this large; we have only used tabs to cover portions of the signs that are not applicable or to put CLOSED on Interstate Guide signs.

Texas

In Texas, we recently installed 3 new signs and we did not cover the signs. We had them in dark mode and at times we were testing them with very high wait times.



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Round Rock (southbound)



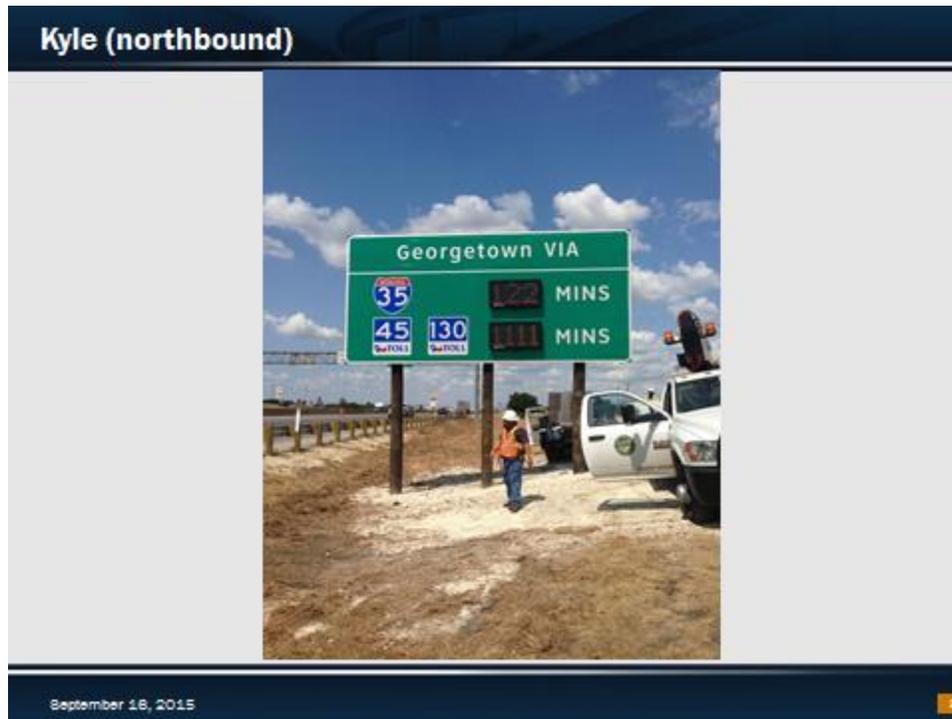
September 18, 2015

Round Rock (southbound)



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Vermont

We usually end up with the contractor taping a black plastic bag over the center of the sign.

How about just adding a black on orange supplemental sign on one post that says “system under construction” or something like that?

Virginia

For temporary covering of signs, VDOT allows a porous cloth cover that renders the sign message nonvisible. Folding over the sign edges and securing to the back of the sign panel is required. For signs in the 200-plus square foot range this could in fact be challenging and might require grommets in the material with multiple pieces of tight cross-strapping on the back of the signs.

For typical work zone signing, silt fence material has been used by contractors and in some cases, they use spacers to protect the sheeting and cover signs with thick plywood.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin DOT has a specification for sign covers. The sign covers can be flat sheet aluminum, HDO (sign grade) plywood or corrugated plastic. The minimum thickness for flat sheet aluminum covers is 0.04 inches. Covers need to be either black or match the color of the sign they are covering. The underlying sign messages must be completely covered. For covering of aluminum signs, 3/16 inch

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diameter aluminum rivets or aluminum self-tapping screws must be used. Covers shall be attached at a minimum of four points per cover panel and must have 0.08 inch thick nylon spacers between the cover and the underlying sign.

Tape or other adhesives cannot be used to attach covers.

We developed this specification a few years ago and have had very good success with it. The covers are secure and do not damage the sign face. Previously, we were getting covers of all different types of materials, including trash bags taped onto signs, which would blow off and the tape would damage the sign surface.

Wyoming

We have use temporary CLOSED overlays on remote rest areas when you know what doesn't flow downhill. The overlay is black on orange installed diagonally across the face. In your case may be NOT OPERATIONAL. The overlay is only 10 inches high and screwed to the sign face. I'm sure it doesn't meet the MUTCD but it wouldn't be our only transgression.