

# TOURIST ORIENTED DIRECTIONAL SIGNS



## **Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs (TODS)**

TODS signs are blue directional signs erected by the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) within the rights-of-way of primary routes for the purpose of identifying and directing traffic to a particular destination. Destinations can be almost any business or site that is open to the general public. In this brochure, we will refer to destinations as “businesses”.

This pamphlet is intended only to provide helpful and concise information about this program and does not supersede nor abrogate any regulation found in Iowa Administrative Code 761 IAC 119 or the Federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD, chapter 2K).

### **General Location Requirements**

- Signs are limited to the rural areas, or towns with population of 5000 or less.
- Signs cannot be placed within designated urban areas (near cities with over 5000 population).
- Signs can only be placed in advance of intersections, not interchanges.

- Signs can only be placed when adequate space is available near the shoulder and from other existing official signs in the area.
- If additional turns are necessary, consultation with the local road authority may be necessary before DOT approval can be issued.

## **Business Requirements**

- The business must be open at least 20 hours per week, four days per week. This only includes hours which are posted on the premises for walk-in customers and does not include appointments, reservations, and exclusive membership hours.
- The business must be open to the general public.
- The business needs to derive a major portion of income or visitors from road users not residing in the area. Applicants will self-certify this on the application form.
- The business must be located within ten miles of the intersection where the signs will be placed.
- The business must not be located in a manner in which it is visible to

traffic approaching the intersection. In other words, this program is for the businesses that need the directional signs at the intersection.

- The business must comply with all applicable laws including proper licensing.
- Entrance may not be based on a minimum age.
- Manufacturing sites, warehouses, distribution centers, trucking terminals, and power-generating facilities where the general traveler is not expected to patronize do not qualify for this program. However, if the facility is set up for tours, has a gift shop or demonstration area, or is otherwise prepared to greet visitors, an exception can be made to approve them for the program.
- Seasonal businesses may qualify, provided they are in operation at least four consecutive weeks each year operating 20 hours per week and 4 days per week. The use of removable “CLOSED” panels will be a necessary condition of approval.
- Businesses housed within residential quarters will be reviewed to see if patrons have

access to the business area through a separate, convenient, and well-marked entrance.

- Businesses shall maintain the buildings and grounds in a manner consistent with standards generally accepted for that type of business.

## Program Fees

The initial fee for a set of two TODS signs is \$700. This covers the administration, design, fabrication, and installation of the signs by the DOT. This fee is not requested until the applicant is approved.

The fee for a small trailblazer TODS sign (used when additional turns are needed along a local road system) is \$26. There may be a separate fee charged by the local road authority.

Annual renewal fees are set at \$50 per sign. There is no annual renewal fee for a trailblazer sign on a local road system.

If “CLOSED” panels are necessary, an additional fee of \$20 per sign is charged for the removal and reinstallation by the DOT, unless the applicant wants to perform the work.

## Design of the Sign

The general standard is that the message will reflect the name of the business. Adjectives, slogans, or amenities within the message are generally not allowed. However, if the name of the business is not reflective of the nature of the business, additional words can be approved by the DOT. The DOT will forward proposed messages to the applicant for approval before fabricating the signs.

## Size and Examples of the Signs

Mainline TODS panels are 18" x 72" with 4 or 5-inch lettering height. They include mileage if over a half a mile from the intersection, in whole mile increments and "CLOSED" panels if seasonal.



Trailblazing signs are 12” x 48” with 3-inch lettering height. Mileage indicators and “CLOSED” panels are not used on these signs.



### **Timeframe**

Please allow at least 60 days from the date of the application to the desired date of installation.

## WHERE TO OBTAIN APPLICATION FORMS AND INFORMATION

Advertising Management  
Office of Traffic and Safety  
Iowa Department of Transportation

800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, IA 50010

Phone: 515-239-1746

**Email:** [stephanie.anderson@iowadot.us](mailto:stephanie.anderson@iowadot.us)

**Website:** [www.iowadot.gov/iowaroadsigns](http://www.iowadot.gov/iowaroadsigns)



---

Iowa DOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other nondiscrimination statutes. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Iowa DOT Civil Rights at 515-239-1111 or by email at [civil.rights@iowadot.us](mailto:civil.rights@iowadot.us).