

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #18

How do you decide where to place signs?

People sometimes wonder why street signs are placed at certain locations and not at others. Once a sign is determined to be necessary, many factors go into the decision of where the sign will be located. Here are some of the principles that determine the most effective location for a sign:

The type of sign determines where it will be placed

Officials in your area determine the most effective location for the placement of each *regulatory sign* (such as a “Speed Limit” sign or a “Stop” sign) based on the characteristics of the roadway and the type of information the sign conveys. *Warning signs* (such as “Narrow Roadway” or “Railroad Crossing Ahead” signs) are posted far enough in advance of a hazard that drivers can see the sign and then respond before reaching the hazard. *Guide signs* (such as milepost signs and signs that direct motorists to area services) are used where appropriate.

Drivers expect to see signs on the right side of the road

Most signs are located on the right side of the road. This is where drivers are used to seeing most signs and where they will be looking for signs. Overhead signs may be necessary on expressways or roadways where space is not available or where additional guidance is needed.

Sign spacing is based on how much time drivers need to read the signs

The spacing between signs is determined by the vehicle speed necessary for drivers to have enough time to read, understand, and make appropriate driving decisions. Too much information too quickly can confuse drivers and result in unsafe decisions and/or actions.

General principles of sign placement

Street signs are placed only in the public right-of-way of a roadway. Signs should be located where drivers will expect to see signs.

For more information

For more information, please contact _____.