



MEMORANDUM

TO: Carbon County Planning Board
FROM: Monica Plecker
DATE: September 10, 2015
RE: MDT Sign Regulations

The Montana Department of Transportation has Outdoor Advertising Control regulations that govern signs. MDT is only tasked with regulating signs which are located adjacent to or signs which are visible and can be read from the interstate highways, primary roads, roads classified as NHS and Map 21 routes. All other roads are not subject to the Outdoor Advertising Control regulations.

Generally speaking, on premise signs are exempt from MDT review. MDT has identified criteria for on premise signs. An on premise sign is one that advertises products or activities that occur on the same property at which the sign is located. MDT more heavily regulates off-premise signs. Off-premise signs are those signs which advertise activities or products that are not located on the same property where the sign is located.

MDT has some requirements related to the placement and size of off-premise signs:

SETBACKS

- Signs adjacent to an interstate highway or limited-access primary highway must be a minimum of **500 feet apart** on the same side of the roadway;
- Signs adjacent to primary highways must be a minimum of **300 feet apart** on the same side of the roadway;
- Signs, whether or not visible to the main traveled way of the interstate system or other controlled route, must not be located within the limits of a grade separated interchange, including its entrance or exit roadways. The limits of an interchange shall include 500 feet beyond the beginning or ending of the gore, or pavement widening, for each entrance or exit roadway, along the controlled route and all interconnecting roadways;
 - Signs, whether or not visible to the main traveled way of a controlled route, must not be located within **500 feet of an intersection** in rural areas, or within **140 feet of an intersection in cities or towns**;
 - Signs must not be located within **500 feet** of any of the following that are adjacent to the controlled route unless the signs are in an incorporated area:
 - public parks;
 - public forests;
 - public playgrounds; or
 - scenic areas designated as such by the department or other state agency having and exercising this authority;

MEMORANDUM (cont.)

SIZE

- Signs, including the total number of sign faces facing the same direction, must not exceed 672 square feet in area, including border and trim, but excluding base or apron, supports, or other structural members;
 - Signs must not exceed **48 feet in length**;
 - Signs must not exceed **30 feet in height**, as measured from a right angle from the surface of the roadway at the centerline of the controlled route, or from a point on the sign structure which is at the same elevation as the crown of the roadway to the top of the highest sign face.
 - Signs within 500 feet of any intersection, intersecting roadway, junction, property driveways, approaching or merging traffic must be erected with the height above ground level (HAGL) of not less than 8 feet.

PROHIBITED SIGNS

- Commercial variable message signs
- Electronic billboards

I have reviewed Yellowstone County’s Unified Zoning Code and a number of zoning districts in Gallatin County. Both Counties have stricter regulations than the ones MDT enforces. Both counties define signs by type of sign as opposed to the two classifications MDT uses to govern signs. A table has been included below to illustrate the comparisons between MDT, Yellowstone and Gallatin Counties for billboard and similar type signs.

	MDT	Yellowstone County	Gallatin County
Intent		<p>Recognizes the need to protect the safety and welfare of the public, the need for well-maintained, and attractive and aesthetically pleasing appearance in a community.</p> <p>(1) Compatible with their surroundings, pursuant to the objectives to proper design and zoning amenities;</p> <p>(2) Allowing and promoting optimum conditions for meeting the sign user's needs while at the same time promoting the amenable environment and aesthetically pleasing appearance desired by the general public;</p> <p>(3) Designed, constructed, installed and maintained in such a manner that they do not endanger public safety or traffic safety;</p> <p>(4) Legible, readable and visible in the circumstances in which they are used;</p> <p>(5) Respectful of the reasonable rights of other advertisers whose messages are displayed.</p>	<p>Intent is to preserve the area's natural scenic beauty, to contribute to inviting entrances into Gallatin County by eliminating clutter, in part, with the unrestricted proliferation of Signs, lights, and stringed devices, to encourage beautification through create, interrelated design of signage, landscaping, buildings, access and parking that enhance the community's built environment.</p>
On Premise	Not regulated by MDT Outdoor Advertising Control regulations.	20' from property line, 1,000 feet from any other billboard, prohibited within 150' of residential areas.	
Off Premise	Regulated by MDT if located along certain routes (interstate, NHS, Map 21, Primary)	Require permit from MDT to be submitted with sign application - Have stricter regulations than MDT off-premise	Regulate in addition to MDT - Off Premise has different requirements for lot frontage, sign area, and maximum height

MEMORANDUM (cont.)

Setbacks	Cannot encroach on right of way	20' for Billboards	Can't interfere with line of sight.
Size/Sign Area	672 sq. ft. in area and 48 ft. in length.	480 sq. ft. along Interstates	96 sq. ft. -On & Off premise 240 sq. ft. - On premise
Height	30'	35' (maximum 15' from ground to bottom of sign)	25'
# of Faces	No more than 2 visible from the same direction.	No more than 2 on any structure	
Lighting	Signs may be illuminated, must shield beams or rays of light from being directed at traveled ways of interstate or federal-aid primary highways so glare will not be caused or interference with drivers ability to safely operate. Cannot obscure official traffic signal	Can't be unsafe, cause glare, reflect or spill onto adjacent businesses or residential areas.	
Spacing	500' apart adjacent to an interstate, can't be located within 500' of public park, public forests, public playgrounds, scenic areas, cemeteries	1000' from any other billboard	
Prohibited Signs	Off premise digital signs unlawful in Montana	Animated - Electronic Message Display Abandoned Signs Advertising Vehicles Unclassified Signs	Flashing, blinking, moving Spotlights