

APPENDIX VII

Mn/DOT GUIDELINES AND PRIORITIES FOR LANDSCAPING STATE HIGHWAYS

LANDSCAPE PROGRAM VISION

“Environmental and Socioeconomic Improvement Through Cost-Effective and Sustainable Landscape Development and Management in Transportation.”

GOALS

Ten goals, reinforcing Mn/DOT’s landscape program vision and long history of commitment should be met and balanced to the greatest degree possible to sustain holistic, proactive, cost effective and successful highway landscaping and roadside management. They are as follows:

1. CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN

Apply a context sensitive approach in design to integrate and balance the objectives of safety, roadside functions, visual quality, environmental stewardship and community sensitivity.

2. SAFETY

Adhere to safety guidelines in providing visual simplicity to minimize driver distractions; visual variety to relieve driver monotony; and visual emphasis to influence driver behaviors.

3. ROADSIDE FUNCTIONS

Optimize roadside landscape functions and opportunities inclusive of public and stakeholder acceptance; visually pleasing roadsides; livable communities; economic development; safety delineation; headlight screening; crash buffers; traffic calming; maintenance efficiencies; erosion and sedimentation control; blowing and drifting snow control; noise control; visual screening; soil, water and air pollution abatement; ecological restoration; habitat linkage and creation; and energy conservation.

4. VISUAL QUALITY

Mitigate adverse visual impacts and enhance existing visual quality to reinforce a sense of natural harmony, cultural order and project coherence.

5. PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Involve the public and stakeholders early and continuously while using an interdisciplinary team tailored to project needs.

6. RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Conserve, manage and enhance existing vegetation and soil resources as valuable assets and essential functional elements of all roadsides.

7. NATIVE PLANT USE

Develop the roadside landscape, where functionally appropriate, to use and re-establish native Minnesota plant materials and their “derivations” to enhance biological diversity, sustainability and a Minnesota “sense of place”.

8. INTEGRATED VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Apply sound ecological and integrated management principles in vegetation selection, establishment and management to enhance species diversity and sustainable plant associations while reducing the frequency and need for mechanical and chemical maintenance interventions.

9. COMMITMENT BEYOND THE PROJECT

Develop a strategy, commitments and landscape management plan, in conjunction with all final landscape plans, to further the realization of design intent; preservation of the investments; and commitment beyond the project.

10. COOPERATIVE VENTURES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Seek opportunities for cooperative ventures, partnerships and coordination with other agencies, organizations and local governments to maximize opportunities for shared responsibilities, participation, and “ownership” in developing and managing roadside landscapes to maximize cost-effectiveness, value-added benefits and success.

PRIORITIES

A balanced approach to landscape project priorities is necessary. Lower priorities must not be forgone for the sake of higher priorities. Each level of landscape project priority should receive ongoing activity proportionate to its overall importance and consistent with programming needs, budgets and cost participation policies.

Generally, the focus is on highway on landscaping to achieve the greatest public benefit and cost effectiveness; mitigation of negative impacts caused by highway development; minimization of roadside hazards, degradation and intensive-maintenance inputs; and where cooperative partnerships can be developed to achieve more results with limited dollars, while expanding the network of roadside pride and responsibility.

Generally, the focus is not on landscaping rural areas of highways; roadsides with adequate existing vegetation; or roadsides where volunteer vegetation can be established readily with ecological management. Exceptions to this include providing wildlife habitat and providing mitigation for special land uses impacted by highway development. Emphasis in areas that do not require landscaping, as on all Mn/DOT roadsides, should be careful management of existing and volunteer vegetation.

Mn/DOT typically landscapes state highways as follows, in order of priority:

1. Highway projects involving environmental, community, socio-economic, or visual quality mitigation or enhancement, as documented or committed to during the highway project development process:
2. Special initiatives, cooperative agency ventures, and community roadside landscape partnerships.
3. Urban and Suburban/Transitional Freeways.
 - a. Areas approaching and within municipalities.
 - b. Interchanges and municipal bypasses.
 - c. State and municipal features.
 - d. Areas of Special land use, stakeholder and citizen concerns.
4. Rural Freeways
 - a. Areas approaching and within municipalities.
 - b. Interchanges and municipal bypasses.
 - c. State and municipal features.
 - d. Areas of Special land use, stakeholder and citizen concerns.
5. Trunk Highways.
 - a. Areas approaching and within municipalities.
 - b. Interchanges and municipal bypasses.
 - c. State and municipal features.
 - d. Areas of Special land use, stakeholder and citizen concerns