



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

FEB 13 2015

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

In Reply Refer to:
HOTO-1

Janelle Anderson, P.E.
Tort Claims and Traffic Standards Engineer
Office of Traffic, Safety, and Technology
1500 West County Road B-2
Roseville, MN 55113

Dear Ms. Anderson:

Thank you for your January 5 request for experimentation with highway signing for “amenities” within safety rest areas. Your concept involves a combination of existing and new symbol designs that have been developed for the purpose of attracting more travelers to the rest areas. We regret to inform you that the Federal Highway Administration declines to approve this request; an explanation of our position is provided herein.

1. The 2009 survey referenced in your request found that a small fraction of travelers responded as “non-visitors” of safety rest areas. The remainder responded as “occasional” or “frequent” visitors. Additionally, the survey states that the self-designated non-visitors typically rated amenities lower than average as being incentives for them to change their behavior and become visitors of safety rest areas. In consideration of the fact that some 91 percent of road users are already rest area visitors, there seems to be little, if any, justification for additional signing along the highway to promote esoteric features for which the classification as a service is dubious.
2. There does not appear to have been any investigation into what amenities the typical visitor might already expect to find within a rest area. Many of the services or amenities that were listed, such as picnic and pet areas, are often available in the typical highway rest area and have come to be expected by the road user, minimizing—and potentially eliminating—the need for additional signing along the highway mainline.
3. There does not appear to have been any controlled human factors evaluation of the experimental symbols for adequate levels of comprehension and recognition. While an explanation for the selection of each symbol is provided, a consensus process is not a substitute for scientifically evaluating alternative concepts to determine the most appropriate design for a new symbol. Even if an experiment were to be approved, the human factors evaluation would have to be completed prior to deploying the experimental devices in a field application.

4. The entire evaluation plan is based solely on a customer feedback system located within the rest areas. Since the goal of this experiment is to attract non-visitors, this method would not capture the target demographic if the signs failed to change their behavior. Rest area attendance before, during, and after the experimentation is not considered in the evaluation in any form.
5. The National *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD) provides for the use of the alternate legends of TOURIST INFORMATION or WELCOME CENTER in place of REST AREA on the guide signs leading to such a facility. Both legends typically indicate the availability numerous services, including tourist information, maps, rest rooms, and items related to tourism. Additionally, the MUTCD provides the following symbols for services that might be essential in rest areas:
 - Information
 - Truck Parking
 - Electric Vehicle Charging
 - Wireless Internet
 - Accessibility

Many of the secondary services and other conveniences are more appropriately signed within the rest area itself rather than along the main roadway. Notice(s) of video surveillance, police patrol, or other measures related personal safety can also be accommodated within the rest area itself.

In conclusion, the premise of signing the rest area as though it were a destination or an attraction, with such features as art, trails, or exercise courses, is inconsistent with the basic principles of highway signing. If there has been a demonstrated lack of use of rest areas that is believed to be linked to highway safety, then we suggest that active safety campaigns be engaged to promote the use of the rest areas. The safety campaign could include such outreach as television and radio advertisements to promote the features typically available within rest areas—particularly those related to personal security and other items that rated highest in the survey—in order to educate the driver. The safety campaigns should be monitored to determine their effectiveness.

For recordkeeping purposes, we have assigned your request the following official ruling number and title: “2(09)-108 (E) – Rest Area Amenities Symbol Signs—MnDOT (DENIED).” Please refer to this number and title in any future correspondence.

We appreciate your interest in exploring innovative solutions to improve traffic safety and regret that we could not approve your request.

Sincerely yours,



for Mark R. Kehrli
Director, Office of Transportation
Operations