

## Unofficial and unauthorized traffic control devices

### Tom McDonald, Safety Circuit Rider

AT A RECENT WORKSHOP, a question regarding removing unauthorized signs on the public right of way indicated some general unfamiliarity with the MUTCD and Iowa Code regarding this topic.

#### Public right of way

Section 1A.08 of the MUTCD, Authority for Placement of Traffic Control Devices, contains clear language regarding the status of unauthorized signs and all other unauthorized traffic control devices on the right of way: They are not allowed, and agencies should remove them when they are encountered.

#### On private property

The Code of Iowa Section 321.259, Unauthorized Signs, Signals, or Markings, goes further, prohibiting placement of signs that mimic or resemble official devices on *private property* as well. The Code allows agencies to remove such noncomplying devices without notice.

#### Special event signs

Allowances for political and special event signs are described in Sections 306.22 and 306.23, respectively, of the Code of Iowa. These signs may be placed on private property, with permission of the owner, for a stipulated time period prior and subsequent to an election or event.

#### Commercial developments

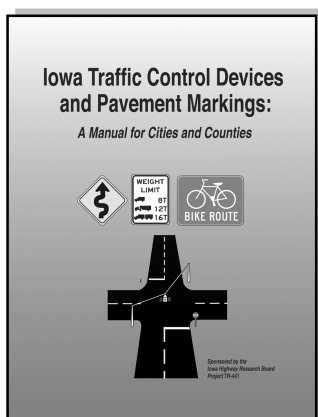
Iowa Code Sections 321.259, 321.321, and 321.345, as well as the Uniform Vehicle Code, Section 15-117, outline basic requirements for signs, signals, markings, and other devices in commercial developments. Generally, placement of STOP or other signs at development entrances is not considered the road agency's responsibility, but the Code of Iowa gives agencies such authority. It also stipulates that traffic control devices in such developments must conform to state specifications.

#### Iowa's manual: a helpful resource

The *Iowa Traffic Control Devices and Pavement Markings: A Manual for Cities and Counties*, Article C17.1, "Unofficial and Unauthorized Signs," addresses the placement of private signs and devices on or near the public right of way. Appendix L3.10 contains a sample political sign ordinance. Article C3.1, "Commercial Developments," discusses signage issues within developments.

While the MUTCD and Code of Iowa do describe some flexibility in placement and maintenance of certain signs and devices at specific times, one element is consistent and unwavering: Unofficial and unauthorized traffic control devices are *never* permissible on public rights of way, and agencies should remove them promptly. •

*Editor's note: This article is part of a series about Iowa Traffic Control Devices and Pavement Markings: A Manual for Cities and Counties. The manual was funded by the Iowa Highway Research Board (TR-441) and supplements the MUTCD. It is available online, [www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/itcd/index.htm](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/itcd/index.htm). Or contact Tom McDonald, 515-294-6384, [tmcdonal@iastate.edu](mailto:tmcdonal@iastate.edu).*



### Iowa Traffic Control and Safety Association (ITCSA)

ITCSA is a nonprofit, multidisciplinary professional organization that encourages excellence in the four E's: engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response.

### Iowa Association of Safety Education (IASE)

IASE is a nonprofit, professional organization of driver educators in Iowa. IASE helps its members learn the techniques, information, and technologies they need to prepare safe, responsible drivers.

## ITCSA and IASE sponsor joint annual conference

ITCSA/IASE Iowa Traffic Safety Conference  
October 31–November 1, 2002  
Johnston, Iowa

Embracing the philosophy that multidisciplinary approaches to traffic safety are the most effective (see page 4), ITCSA and IASE are combining their annual conferences into one dynamic, comprehensive event in fall 2002.

This will be a unique opportunity for professionals in all traffic safety disciplines to meet, exchange ideas and information, and discover opportunities for working together. Agenda highlights include the following:

- legislative updates

- weather and road condition reporting
- new vehicle technology
- graduated driver licensing
- older driver issues
- traffic engineering studies
- new classroom techniques
- Access-ALAS

In addition, vendors will showcase a variety of traffic safety related products and technologies.

Registration materials will soon be mailed and posted on the web: [www.ctre.iastate.edu/itcsa](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/itcsa) or [www.ctre.iastate.edu/iase](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/iase). •