

MEMORANDUM


STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office of the Commissioner



TO: Division Directors, Preconstruction Engineers, Regional M&O Team Leaders, Public Information Officers, Legislative Liaison

DATE: June 16, 2026

FROM: Ryan Anderson, P.E., Commissioner 

SUBJECT: Campaign and Election Signs in State Highway Rights-of-Way: Enforcement Guidance and Procedures

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance regarding campaign and other signs located within State highway right-of-way. This guidance is intended to ensure Department actions are conducted safely, consistently, professionally, and in a content-neutral manner.

State highway rights-of-way are reserved primarily for transportation purposes. Unauthorized encroachments, including campaign and election signs of any sort, may create safety hazards by distracting motorists, obstructing visibility, interfering with maintenance activities, or creating roadside obstacles. The Department has both the authority and obligation to manage highway rights-of-way to protect the traveling public, preserve the safe operation of Alaska's transportation system, and maintain compliance with state outdoor advertising laws and federal highway requirements.

DOT&PF does not regulate political speech, campaign messages, or other content. The Department's concern is solely the location of encroachments and their impact on transportation safety, operations, and compliance with applicable law. Enforcement actions shall be applied consistently and without regard to the content, viewpoint, political affiliation, or message displayed.

Professional Conduct and Customer Service

Campaign volunteers, property owners, and members of the public may not be familiar with right-of-way boundaries or restrictions. Employees are expected to interact with the public professionally and courteously, explain Department requirements when appropriate, and refer technical questions regarding right-of-way boundaries or permitting to Regional Right-of-Way staff.

Resource Stewardship and Enforcement Priorities

DOT&PF manages thousands of miles of highway right-of-way while balancing numerous transportation and public safety responsibilities. Enforcement activities will generally occur in conjunction with routine operations, identified safety concerns, planned enforcement efforts, or other operational needs. Nothing in this guidance requires dedicated sign enforcement activities at the expense of higher-priority transportation functions.

Safety First

Employee safety remains the Department's highest priority. No sign removal activity should place employees in unnecessary danger from traffic, terrain, weather, or other hazards. Appropriate traffic control procedures and work-zone safety practices shall be followed whenever sign removal activities occur within or adjacent to a traveled way.

Identification, Notification, and Removal

Under State law, campaign and other unpermitted signs located within a State highway right-of-way constitute unauthorized encroachments. Employees shall follow the procedures below when a sign is identified within the State highway right-of-way.

- Prior to removal, employees shall document all identified signs and resulting actions using the DOT&PF Sign Reporter.
- If the sign creates a safety hazard, obstructs visibility, interferes with transportation operations or maintenance activities, or otherwise presents an immediate safety, operational, or maintenance concern, employees may remove the sign without prior notice.
- If a sign does not present an immediate safety or operational concern, employees should make every reasonable effort to provide the affected campaigns at least 24 hours' courtesy notice prior to removal through Regional Public Information Officers using a distribution list for statewide campaigns with publicly available contact information. Employees shall document the notification in the DOT&PF Sign Reporter. This maximizes efficiency in resource allocation and affords the public an educational opportunity for improved compliance.
- When a campaign has received at least 24 hours' courtesy notice through the Regional Public Information Officer regarding a planned corridor-wide sign removal effort, DOT&PF staff may remove signs located within the identified corridor that are in violation of applicable regulations without providing additional notice for each sign.

- Employees should retain removed signs in accordance with regional procedures when practical and document the final disposition of the sign in the DOT&PF Sign Reporter.
- Employees should consult supervisory or Right-of-Way staff when uncertainty exists regarding right-of-way boundaries or the appropriate disposition of a sign.

Statewide campaign contact information is available on the Division of Elections website at this link:

<https://www.elections.alaska.gov/candidates/>

Signs located outside the State highway right-of-way should not be removed by field personnel unless otherwise authorized. Potential violations should be referred to Regional Right-of-Way staff for review and enforcement in accordance with applicable statutes and procedures.

The Department's objective is voluntary compliance whenever practical; removal should be viewed as a tool to achieve compliance and protect public safety.

Handling Removed Signs

Removed signs should be handled respectfully and not intentionally damaged based on their content. Regions should establish a reasonable process for storage and retrieval and, when practical, retain signs for at least 30 days following removal.

Media and Elected Official Inquiries

Employees who receive inquiries regarding campaign sign enforcement from elected officials, candidates, campaigns, or media organizations should refer the inquiry to the appropriate Regional Public Information Officer and Division Director. Significant inquiries or issues with potential statewide interest should also be elevated through supervisory channels to the Office of the Commissioner and the Department's Legislative Liaison.

Refer members of the public, media representatives, elected officials, candidates, and campaign representatives to the DOT&PF Campaign Signs website:

<https://dot.alaska.gov/stwddes/dcsrow/campaignsigns.shtml>

Consistent application of this guidance supports public safety, protects transportation infrastructure, and maintains compliance with state and federal requirements.

This guidance is effective immediately and remains in effect until superseded or rescinded. Questions regarding implementation of this guidance should be directed to the appropriate Regional Right-of-Way leadership.