

Designation of Highways and Bridges Study

December 15, 2024

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December 15, 2024

The Honorable Frank Hornstein, Chair
House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
658 Cedar Street
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable John Petersburg, GOP Lead
House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
658 Cedar Street
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Scott Dibble, Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
3107 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable John Jasinski, Ranking Minority Member
Senate Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
2227 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: 2024 Designation of Highways and Bridges in Minnesota Study

Dear Legislators,

The study required under [Minnesota Laws 2024, Chapter 127, Article 3, Section 126](#) explored the feasibility and effectiveness of establishing a standing committee to evaluate and authorize designations of highways and bridges on the trunk highway system, which is currently managed in [Minn. Stat. 161.14](#).

This report explores:

- Operational history of Minnesota's designated highway and bridge process
- Other States' operation of similar programs
- Minnesota's feasibility and effectiveness with standing committees overseeing similar programs
- Proposed criteria for Minnesota's designated highway and bridge process
- Costs and Benefits of current vs proposed process

The report also makes recommendations about the highway and bridge memorial designation program.

Please contact me with any questions, or you may contact Jennifer Witt at jennifer.witt@state.mn.us or at (612) 322-1502.

Sincerely,



Nancy Daubenberger, P.E.
Commissioner

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Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minnesota Laws 2024, Chapter 127, Article 3, Section 126](#).

By December 15, 2024, the commissioner of transportation must conduct a study on the establishment of a standing committee to evaluate and authorize designations of highways and bridges on the trunk highway system. At a minimum, the study required must:

- (1) evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of establishing a standing committee with authority to review proposals for designation of memorial highways and bridges on the trunk highway system and approve a designation without enactment of a law that specifies the designation in the manner under Minnesota Statutes, section 161.14;
- (2) propose criteria for a standing committee to evaluate each designation proposal, with consideration of public interest, community support, and the locations of existing designations;
- (3) examine whether other states have adopted similar review committees and identify any best practices or other considerations;
- (4) evaluate the potential costs or benefits to authorizing establishment of designations as provided under clause (1);
- (5) assess the required resources, staffing, and administrative support needed to establish and maintain the standing committee; and
- (6) recommend draft legislation.

The commissioner must submit the results of the study to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance.

The cost to produce this report is \$5,000.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of establishing a standing committee to evaluate and authorize designations of highways and bridges on the trunk highway system, which is currently managed in [Minn. Stat. 161.14](#).

This report explores:

- Operational history of Minnesota’s designated highway and bridge process
- Other States’ operation of similar programs
- Minnesota’s feasibility and effectiveness with standing committees overseeing similar programs
- Proposed criteria for Minnesota’s designated highway and bridge process
- Costs and Benefits of current vs proposed process

Finally, the report offers recommendations to improve the designated highway and bridge program whether it includes the enactment of a standing committee or remains in legislation.

Minnesota Designations of Highways and Bridges

Background

[Minn. Stat. 161.14](#) Names and Designations of Certain Highways had its first designation, The Capitol Highway, established in 1959. Since then, there have been over 100 designations added to this Minnesota Statute.

There does not appear to be any national criteria on creating designated routes. There are requirements on how to place signs for designated routes on roadways, bridges, and other roadway components. These requirements are found in the [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#).

The first MUTCD was approved as a national standard by the American Standard Institute in 1935. The Highway Safety Act of 1966 granted authority to the Secretary of the newly formed U.S. Department of Transportation to establish national standards for traffic control devices. This meant that compliance with the MUTCD would become mandatory throughout the United States and is in law as [Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 655.603](#).

The MUTCD acknowledged that Federal and State legislative bodies can adopt an act or resolution memorializing a highway or bridge but did not allow them to be signed along the highway. Memorial plaques were allowed to be installed in rest areas, scenic overlooks or other places that were not in the vehicle operator's view.

In December 1985, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) revised the MUTCD and eliminated the prohibition on memorial signing on roadways and added standards for the design and placement of memorial signs. The reason for this change was the widespread use of memorial signs on highways across the country through the state legislative process.

Most states, including Minnesota, kept the process of having the legislature approve all memorial designated routes.

State's Designated Routes Process

Minnesota's Process

In 1959, Minnesota established its first designated route, The Capitol Highway, in [Minn. Stat. 161.14](#), Names and Designations of Certain Highways. Since then, over 100 designations have been added to this statute. The following is the language from the first designation in Minnesota Statute.

161.14 NAMES AND DESIGNATIONS OF CERTAIN HIGHWAYS.

§ Subdivision 1. Capitol Highway.

The following route between the city of St. Paul and the south boundary of the state of Minnesota is hereby named and designated "The Capitol Highway":

Beginning at the intersection of University Avenue and Highway No. 62 in Anoka County, thence southerly along University Avenue through Minneapolis, and thence southerly along University Avenue and Robert Street through St. Paul, thence southerly along South Robert Street through West St. Paul, to a point at or near the northeast quarter-corner of section 19, township 27, range 22, thence southeasterly and southerly to a point at or near the southeast corner of section 35, township 113, range 19, thence southerly traversing in part the line between Rice and Goodhue Counties, to Trunk Highway No. 21, thence southeasterly on such highway to Trunk Highway No. 56, thence southerly on Trunk Highway No. 56 through Dodge Center to Constitutional Route No. 9, now marked Trunk Highway 16, thence east on Constitutional Route No. 9, now marked Trunk Highway 16, to the northeast corner of section 2, township 102, range 17, thence in a southerly direction along County State-Aid Highway 19 to the junction of Statutory Route No. 81, now marked Trunk Highway 56, thence southeasterly along Statutory Route No. 81, now marked Trunk Highway 56, to the junction of County State-Aid Highway 12, thence southerly along County State-Aid Highway 12 to a point on the Iowa state line near the south quarter line of section 34, township 101, range 14.

In 1996, [Minn. Stat. 161.139](#) Highway Designation Costs was enacted. This statute ensured state funds were not used to pay for the costs of the signs. It also provides guidance on removing a sign from the highway or bridge. The following is the language from Minn. Stat. 161.139:

161.139 HIGHWAYS DESIGNATION COSTS.

The commissioner shall not adopt a design or erect a sign to mark or memorialize a highway or bridge, pursuant to designation by the legislature, unless the commissioner is assured of the availability of funds from nonstate sources sufficient to pay all costs related to designing, erecting, and maintaining the signs. The commissioner may remove a sign that marks or memorializes a highway or bridge as designated by the legislature if:

- (1) the sign requires maintenance, repair, or replacement;*
- (2) the commissioner has made a reasonable effort to obtain funds for maintenance, repair, or replacement from nonstate sources; and*
- (3) the funds obtained under clause (2) are insufficient to pay all related costs.*

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) requires all designated memorial route and bridge requests to receive approval from the Minnesota State Legislature. The process starts with the requester contacting their state legislator. If the legislator agrees to sponsor the request, it moves into the legislative process.

MnDOT evaluates all proposed designated memorial route and bridge requests during the legislative process. MnDOT reviews the proposed location and determines if there are any other designated memorial routes that would conflict with the request. There are several types of designated routes including scenic byways, historical routes, memorial routes, and other types of designated routes. These routes may overlap due to historical or geographic areas.

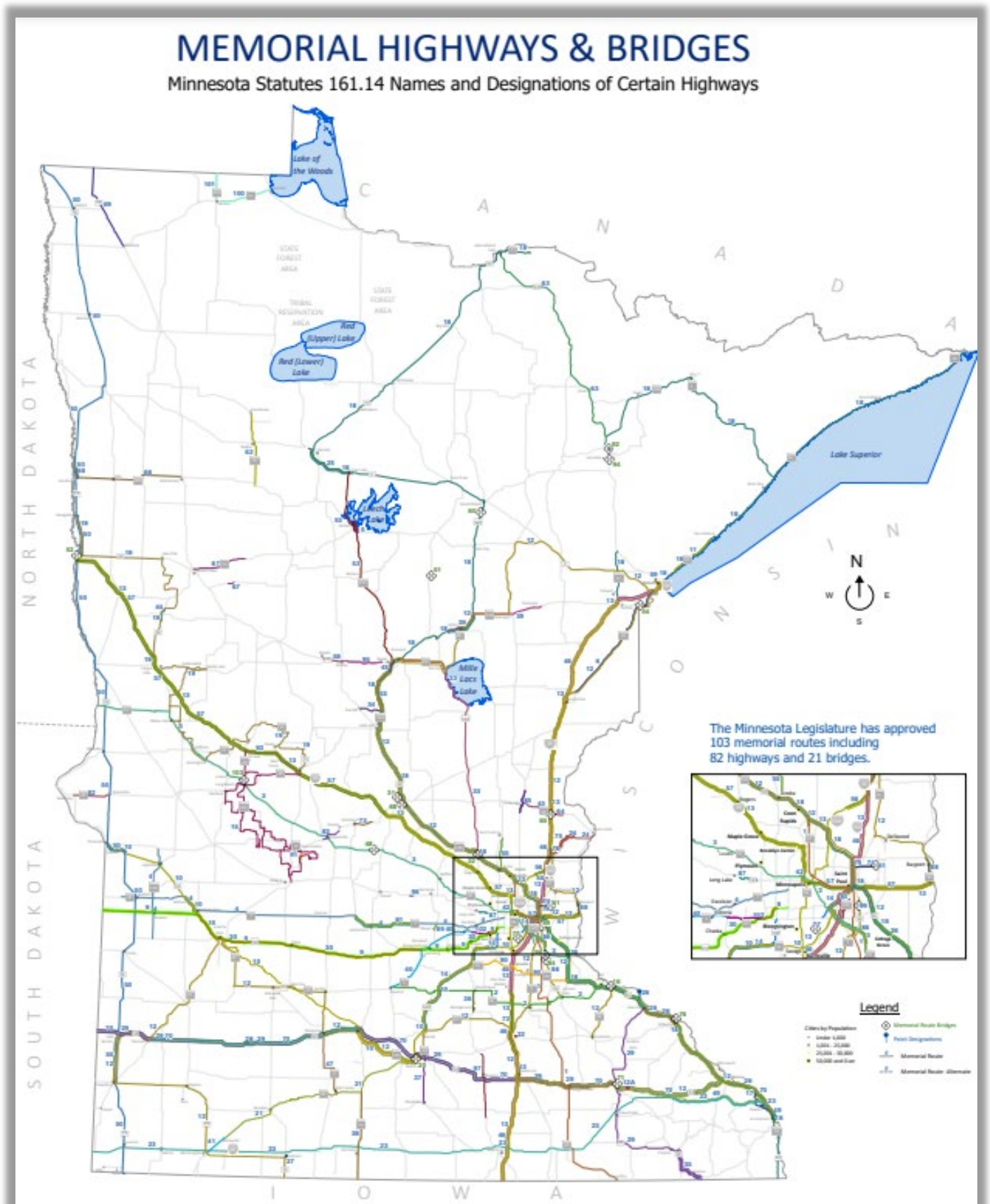
MnDOT identifies any designated route conflicts. Most designated routes in [Minn. Stat. 161.14](#) are memorial routes. MnDOT will ask for a modification of the requested designated memorial route if the proposed memorial route conflicts with another established designated memorial route.

If the proposed designated memorial route or bridge request becomes law, the requester collaborates with MnDOT to finalize the sign design, exact sign location, and provides payment for the signs. Once the collaboration is complete and the law is in effect, the signs can be installed. This typically occurs after August 1st.

Designation signs reach the end of their service life at 15-20 years. MnDOT attempts to find the requester that initiated the request to ask if they want to fund the replacement of the roadway signs. If payment is received, MnDOT furnishes and installs new signs. If no one can be found or no one is willing to fund replacement signs, the signs are removed and not replaced per [Minn. Stat. 161.139](#).

All current designations in statute are for perpetuity. As more designations occur, fewer routes are available for new designations. The [map](#) below shows all the designated routes in Minn. Stat. 161.14.

Figure 1: Map of Memorialized Highways and Bridges



Other States' Experience

The MUTCD says that Legislative bodies will memorialize a highway or bridge, but it doesn't say that is the only path to memorialize a roadway or bridge. Most states direct memorial designation requests to the legislature, however there are a few states that have another path.

- **Montana** has a Department of Transportation (DOT) Sign Committee in addition to legislative designations. However, few designated memorial sign requests pass through this committee. Most people make a request directly to the legislature, which overrides the authority of the DOT Sign Committee. Montana DOT advises that if a committee is formed, the committee must have the ability to say 'yes', 'no', or modify without a higher authority overruling them. Some answers will be unpopular, so the committee having the proper level of authority is the key to success.
- **Missouri** also has two processes: legislative, and through an application. The legislative process was created for military, law enforcement, and state employees killed in the line of duty (as well as all medal of honor recipients, both living and deceased). The application process was created for all other designations. The application process has a sunset date of 20 years while the legislative process is in perpetuity. Most requests go through the legislature and the application process is not used often.
- **South Dakota** has all requests start with the Department of Transportation (DOT). The requester is required to complete an application, provide information on the significance of the proposal, a map of the proposed route and sign locations, and submit an application fee. The DOT Traffic Engineer evaluates the request and if it meets the criteria, makes a recommendation to the Transportation Commission through the Secretary of Transportation.
- **South Dakota** also has a Fallen Heroes Bridge Naming Program. This program has a Memorandum of Understanding executed among the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT), South Dakota Department of the Military Affairs, and South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. This program honors and remembers South Dakota's Fallen Heroes by naming bridges on the state highway system for those who were either killed in action (KIA), or are still missing in action (MIA), while defending our country in any armed conflict. The South Dakota Department of Military and Veteran Affairs coordinates with all requestors and SDDOT on eligible persons and eligible sign locations. Once there is an agreement, SDDOT brings the recommendation for designations to a Transportation Commission for sole and final approval authority for naming any state highway bridges.
- **Kentucky** changed their process in 2022. Historically, the Secretary of Transportation could name a bridge or roadway outside of the legislative process via an "Official Order". However, in 2022 that changed to an entirely legislative process to designate memorial roadways and bridges.
- **North Carolina** has over 1,200 miles designated as the Blue Star Memorial Highway. This extensive network honors all veterans and military groups. There have been requests for specific veteran or military groups, but these are denied since they are considered duplicative requests. There are certain segments of these roadways that may be dedicated to individuals.
- **North Carolina** also has an Employee Memorial program for employees who passed away while performing their job duties in service to the Department and citizens of North Carolina. Their name is added to a specially designed memorial sign displayed in rest areas and a sign may be placed at or near the location where the incident occurred.

Designated Highways Process Impacts

A route or bridge designated for an individual or organization is a high honor and should not be taken lightly. It shows the individual or organization has great significance within Minnesota. The current process of having the legislature approve all requests has allowed this honor to continue. Minnesota is one of the states with the lowest number of memorial designated routes for individuals. This ensures the importance of each memorial route stays intact.

Each state has a different process and number of designated roadways. In some states it is rare to designate a memorial route or bridge annually or they have less than five designations per year. These states show a relative low number of

designated roadways from a few dozen to around 100 – 200. There are some states that designate 20-50 roadways each year resulting in over 1,000 designated roadways in their state.

Currently all designated roadways in Minnesota statute are permanent. However, some of the designations are no longer active. A substantial amount of time may have passed, and the designation is no longer physically signed on the roadway, which may be due to any number of reasons, such as lack of funds for new signs or a community may have different priorities and there is a loss of support for a designation.

As a general principle, there is only one memorial designation per section of roadway. New proposals are evaluated for potential overlaps with current designated routes to ensure the memorial designated route is honored for the individual or organization that completed the legislative process first. If there is no interest to continue with having a sign on the roadway for the designated route, consideration should be given for the removal of the designation from state statute, allowing the section to be available for future requests.

Feasibility and Effectiveness of a Standing Committee

The Minnesota Department of Transportation coordinates with other agencies and committees on multiple topics to create standards, procedures, and approvals of unique exceptions to standards. There is precedent for creating a standing committee with groups of diverse backgrounds, with the intent of meeting a common goal. Some examples include:

- **Minnesota Scenic Byways Commission** was established in 1992 with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Minnesota Office of Tourism, now known as Explore Minnesota Tourism, to oversee Minnesota's Scenic Byway Program. The Scenic Byways Commission has sustained the Scenic Byway Program for 32 years as it designated 22 state scenic byways, established program policy, supported byway organizations with annual technical workshops, and advocated for byways within their member agencies. More information can be found on the [Minnesota Scenic Byway website](#).
- **External Sign Variance Committee** is composed of persons outside of MnDOT (Explore Minnesota, business owners, etc.) who meet periodically to consider various requests for signing. The group serves as a variance committee making recommendations to the MnDOT's Commissioner's Office on signing requests that have been denied by a MnDOT District Office. The committee reviews denial requests to see if the denials can be substantiated to have negative effects on the requester and/or motorists. The External Signing Variance Committee also reviews and recommends changes to the standards and criteria on informational signing programs.
- **Route Number and Control Section Committee** is an internal MnDOT Committee that is responsible for recommending changes to a statutory or signed route number, relocating a statutory or signed route to a different highway, creating a new statutory or signed route, proposing a new highway right of way corridor, creating control sections for MnDOT state projects and changing the number or location of routes carrying special designations such as Business Routes. The committee ensures compliance with AASHTO and FHWA requirements as well as Minnesota Statutes. Members of this committee include the Office of Land Management, Office of Traffic Engineering, Office of Transportation System Management, Office of State Aid, Office of Government Affairs, Office of Tribal Affairs and District staff. More information can be found on the [Minnesota Department of Transportation website](#).
- **MN MUTCD Committee** serves the MnDOT Commissioner and the community of traffic engineering professionals by providing guidance on current Minnesota Statutes, standards, policies, and practices as they pertain to all public streets and highways in Minnesota. The committee members consist of MnDOT Engineers, Rural and Urban County Engineers, City Engineers, Consultant Engineers and an FHWA representative.

The precedent set by these committees and their successes in managing statewide programs show that a committee for designated memorial highways and bridges may be feasible.

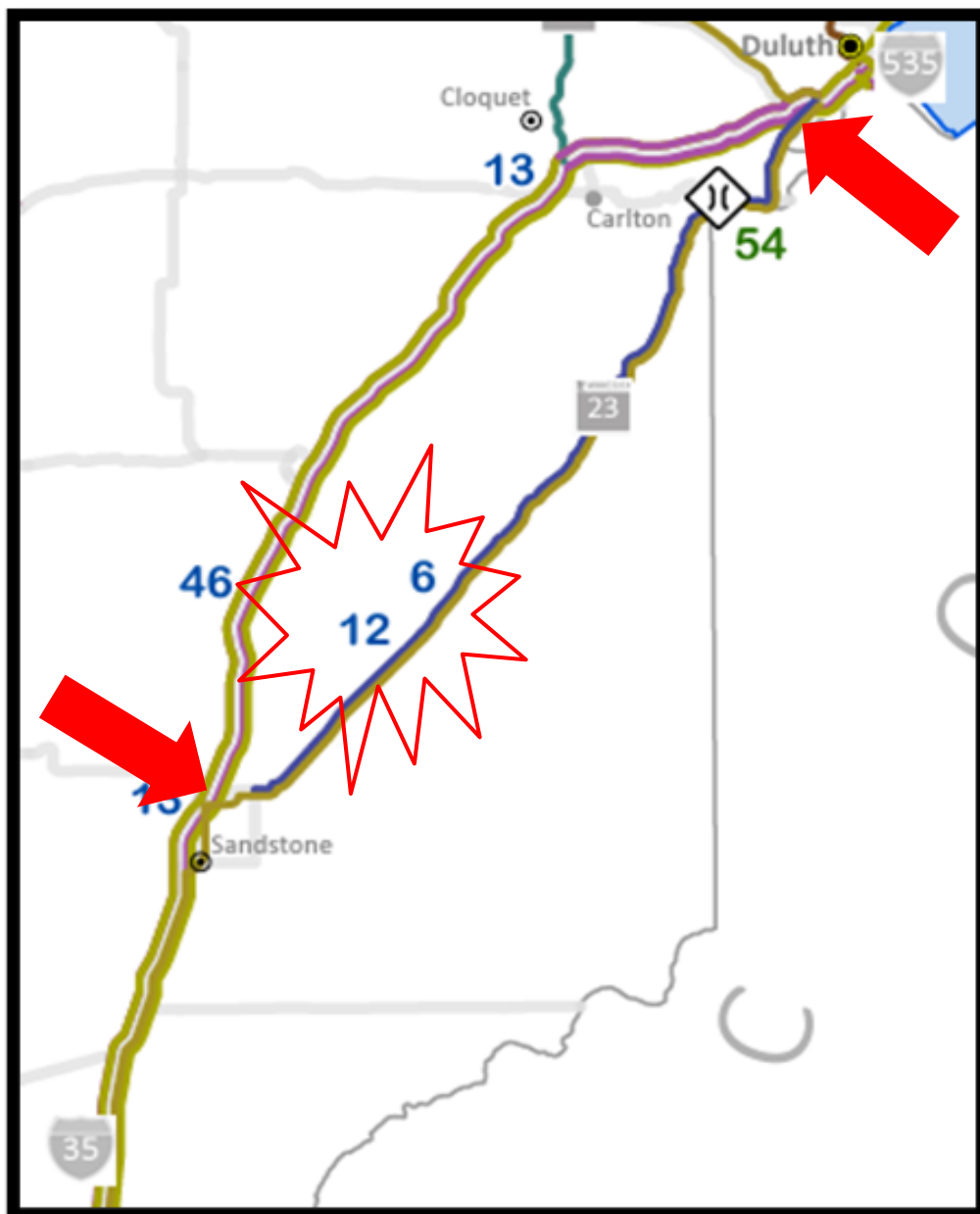
The effectiveness of a committee to review potential designation requests will depend on the authority given to committee. States that have successful committees are those that follow a process for reviewing all potential designated routes. Those routes that meet established criteria are then sent to the legislature for approval. States that are not successful are those in which the requesters ignore the committee's process and go straight to the legislature for approval.

The authority of a review committee for highway designations could take several forms. A committee could follow a process like other states where the committee would receive all proposed route and bridge designation requests. The group would then evaluate all the requests to determine which ones meet the established criteria and which ones do not. All requests that meet the criteria would then be submitted to the legislature to continue the process. The legislative process ensures that public interest and community support are considered. The legislature would retain final authority to designate memorial routes.

All other designated routes (e.g.: scenic byways, historical routes, etc.) can continue to be routed to MnDOT for resolution. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) currently has signing programs established for these routes and there are committees and/or processes established for these types of routes.

The figure below shows an example of two designated routes in statute that should be removed. The Hiawatha Pioneer Trail (Minn. Stat. 161.14, subd. 12, noted on the map below as 12) was an initiative endorsed by four states to promote tourism. This initiative started in 1964 and was retired in 2008. Since this has been retired, removal of the signs is prudent. Another example is The Veterans Evergreen Memorial Drive (Minn. Stat. 161.14, subd. 6, noted on the map below as 6), which is a [Minnesota Scenic Byway](#). This program is managed by the Minnesota Scenic Byways Commission and does not require inclusion in state statute. Currently 5 of the 22 Minnesota Scenic Byways are in statute. If all the scenic byways listed in statute are removed, then the maps could be updated to show these as available routes for new memorial designations. Again, removing scenic byways from statute does not affect their status as scenic byways.

Figure 2: Overlapping Designations on MN 23 between Sandstone and Duluth of The Hiawatha Pioneer Trail (12) and Veterans' Evergreen Memorial Drive (6)



Proposed Criteria for Designated Memorial Roadways and Bridges

States that have a committee involved in the designated memorial process have different categories and criteria. A few of the most common categories include: memorializing fallen heroes, soldiers, police officers, firefighters, emergency responders, DOT workers, and those with positive, significant, impact to the state.

Common criteria of states for approval of memorial routes:

1. Only one designation is allowed per route. Some states have exceptions for memorializing a bridge on the route.
2. Only one named highway segment or bridge per person, organization, or entity.
3. Person to be memorialized is deceased, with some states specifying that the memorialized person be deceased for at least 1 to 5 years, depending on the state.
4. Soldiers, police officers, firefighters, emergency responders, and DOT employees must have died in the line of duty or while working on the job.
5. Person must either be born in the state, lived a significant part of their life in the state, or have had contributions to society which were affected by their residence in the state.
6. Some states require a resolution of support from the elected board and/or council for the jurisdiction through which the proposed highway or bridge designation would exist, along with a letter of support from the family.

There are many that have given their lives in service to their country or community. It is not feasible to honor all these fallen heroes with a highway or bridge designation. Some examples of ways states have managed the number of designation routes are listed below.

Common criteria of states for managing veteran memorial routes:

1. Defining a maximum duration of designation. Some states specify a duration of 10-15 years, which corresponds to the typical lifecycle of a sign based on the materials used.
2. Establishing a maximum number of designation recommendations per year. States mention a varying range from 1 to 5 designations per year or per biennium.
3. Identifying the maximum number of miles allowed for any roadway designation.
4. Reserving bridge memorial designations for fallen heroes. Some states allow memorial designations for fallen police officers to be located where the fatal injury occurred.
5. Interstate routes have been designated by Congress as the “Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways”. Some states prohibit other designations on the interstate system.

Having all requests go through the legislature is one way that public interest and community support are considered in the approval process. This process may limit the number of new requests for designated roadways and helps ensure that approved requests remain significant and demonstrates Minnesota’s values.

Possible criteria for designating memorial routes and bridges:

1. Limit of one named highway segment or bridge per person, organization, or other entity.
2. Each route or section of roadway should only be allowed one memorial designation, no overlaps. No roadway segment should be allowed to have more than one memorial designation.
 - a. The naming of bridge may be allowed to overlap a memorial highway.

Each memorial designated route should be unique to that individual or organization. This ensures the importance of each memorialized route is maintained. There should not be any overlapping designated memorial routes. An exception is that a bridge may be memorialized within another memorialized route. An example is a person might want to have a memorial bridge designated to an individual on an organization’s route like Veteran’s Memorial Highway.

3. Include a sunset date for all memorial designations of 20 years.

New requests for memorial designated routes are brought forward and approved each year. This results in more highway designations and less routes available for new requests. Including a sunset date for designated memorial routes will give new requesters a chance to have a roadway designated in their preferred location. The 20-year threshold is the longest service life of a sign.

There are multiple designated routes that do not have signs on the roadway. This may be due to lack of interest from groups, a lack of sufficient funds to replace signs, or too much time may have passed, and the initiative is no longer active. Having a sunset date for roadway designations can help manage the designated routes and ensure only active designated routes are identified in statute, are mapped and signed on the roadway, and meet the current criteria.

4. Maintain the current legislative process for approval of designated memorial sign requests to ensure public interest and community support are considered.

Public interest and community support can vary as much as each request varies. The current process of having the legislature involved ensures the public interest and community support are considered. MnDOT responds to each memorial designation request or bill, reviewing the location proposed, and advising legislators and interested parties. The recommendation is to keep this process in place since it is working well today. This is consistent with other states having their transportation commission, department or agency commission approve all requests.

Costs and Benefits

Process	Description	Benefit	Costs	Drawbacks
Standing Committee	A formal standing review committee determines if request meets criteria and makes final decision to approve or deny the applications outside of legislature process.	Legislature is not involved in the process. The timing of approving requests can occur in the spring which can result in signs being installed throughout the summer.	Additional staff taking a substantial, active role in the committee.	Committee adds more staff time to review and evaluate requests. This will be a more formal, rigid process that will naturally take longer for staff to plan, review, and approve. If requester doesn’t agree with committee’s decision, legislators may still be contacted by the requester.
Current Process	A contact initiates a memorial designation request either through MnDOT or the legislature. A memorial designation bill is introduced.	MnDOT’s process checks location availability and appropriateness immediately; advises legislators and the proposing group with a quick turnaround. MnDOT is able to advise all parties quickly and efficiently. This process functions well.	No new costs	Not as transparent as a standing committee

There are two options for managing the process for designation of memorial highways and bridges on the trunk highway system:

1. Establish a Standing Committee

Considerations: Through this approach, a standing committee collaborates with requestors to determine if a request meets the established criteria and makes a final determination on designation. The committee would

work with requestors to help them establish locations and meet criteria. One contact could be established for requestors and legislators if they have questions or need information regarding a specific request.

For a standing committee to be most effective, and to ensure the time invested by committee members into the process is valued, it would be important for the legislature to grant the committee the full authority to make final memorial designation decisions. If the legislature does not recognize the full authority of the committee, this approach will not work effectively, and unpopular decisions made by the committee could be overridden. This would likely result in all requests going back to a legislative-only process. This has happened in other states that have established memorial designation committees.

If a standing committee was formed, at a minimum it should include representation from: MnDOT, Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Department of Veteran and Military Affairs, and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

To assess public interest and community support, the process could include a requirement to obtain a resolution of support from:

- a. The county or counties the highway segment or bridge is located if it is within unincorporated areas of the State; and/or
- b. The city or cities the highway segment or bridge is located if it is within an incorporated area.

It should be noted that a resolution of support (or a decision not to support) from a city or county may not fully reflect statewide public interest and support for a given memorial designation.

Benefits:

- The need to consider legislation each session for memorial designations is therefore eliminated.
- Allows more efficient management of designations and timely retirement of designations if legislation is not required.
- A schedule for committee consideration and approval of designation requests can be developed that allows for more timely installation of signing that fits better with seasonal installations. Legislation typically approved in June, and becoming effective in August, does not always allow for signs to be fabricated and installed before winter.

Costs/Challenges:

- Even with full authority granted to the committee, there will always be the possibility of requestors approaching legislators to author and support bills to legislate designations. This will add time/effort for legislators in addition to time/effort from committee members that could be fruitless.
- This approach may not fully address the need to assess public interest and community support.
- Will require additional time from state agency staff to review and make final determinations on designation, but this approach could be supported at a cost for staffing, and administrative support.

2. Use Current Process

Considerations: Under the current approach, requestors collaborate with legislators to determine if a legislator will author a bill for designation. MnDOT has developed “Memorial Highway Signing Guidance for Requesters” (Appendix A) to help guide legislators and requestors on designation and signing location, design, fabrication, installation, and cost elements. Agency staff review proposed bills against established criteria and make recommendations to the legislature on each bill.

Legislators, their staff, and other state agencies requesting memorials work with MnDOT Government Affairs staff to assure proposed designations meet established criteria and to ensure requestors understand the process and costs. This often involves multiple legislators and staff doing work for several separate requests in one session.

The legislature makes final decisions on designation through the legislative process. This allows the legislature to provide a gauge for public interest and community support as it does today.

Benefits:

- Requester often only works with one contact, their legislator throughout the process.
- Legislators determine public interest and community support.
- MnDOT staff have flexibility and ability to respond quickly to requests on available locations and sign designs.
- Known process that is working well today. Guidance document has helped inform legislators and requesters, making the process more efficient.

Costs/Challenges:

- Legislators have to learn the process and work with requesters, which can be challenging if they haven't been through the process before.
- Each legislature may have different methods of gathering public support and community involvement which may lead to inconsistencies.

Resources and Support

Under either approach discussed above, MnDOT staff does/would manage all approved designated routes. Some responsibilities include tracking the status of all requests and documenting the date of designation.

Appropriate MnDOT staff would be responsible to identify all designated routes that are older than 20 years. This list could be assembled and brought to the legislature each year to review prior to sunseting their designations. There could be some responsibilities on determining if the route is still active and trying to identify the person responsible for the designated route that could be included in the report to the legislature.

If a standing committee for memorial designations is formed, and depending on who is identified for committee membership, this may require involving other entities in the process that are not involved today. Their resources and commitments would be determined once they are identified.

Recommendations

The current process is working well and maintains a lower number of requests thereby maintaining the importance for all designations. However, a standing committee could be implemented as well at a cost in staff time.

There are two recommendations related to the program that could be beneficial to everyone:

- 1) Remove scenic byways that are listed in Minn. Stat. 161.14 to clean up the statute. This will not affect those scenic byways and their status as such but would clean up the memorial designations section.
- 2) Sunset memorial dedications. Generally, the life of any sign is 15-20 years, so a 20-year designation would be practical to match the longer life cycle of a sign.

Appendix A: Memorial Designation Sign Guidance

Memorial Highway Signing Guidance for Requesters

(Designation, Location, Design, Fabrication, Installation and Cost)

Note: designating a highway or bridge requires legislative approval (see MN Statutes 161.139 and 161.14).

Introduction

There is tremendous demand for signing along our highway system; many businesses, organizations and agencies feel that they need and deserve signing to advertise, inform, and/or aid the motorist in locating their establishment or advertising their cause.

The main purpose of signing is to inform motorists of regulations such as speed limits and stops, warn them of any impending dangers such as sharp curves and steep grades, and help them find their destination by clearly marking routes and cross streets. Signs must be properly spaced and the messages on them must be clear so that motorists have time to perceive the information on the signs and make the appropriate driving maneuvers. This leaves limited space for other types of signing and sign messages. Excessive sign clutter can lead to driver distraction and can become a serious safety issue.

Highways and bridges are typically designated or memorialized to recognize an individual or organization that have provided a significant public service or sacrifice to the State of Minnesota.

Step 1: How to Designate a Highway or Bridge

Task 1a: Initiating Legislative Approval with the Help of Your Legislator

To begin the process of designating a memorial route or bridge, you or your group is responsible for contacting your state legislator and initiating the process for legislative approval. MnDOT requires that all route and bridge designations receive approval from the Minnesota State Legislature.

To find your state legislator, call (651)296-2146, or use this link: <http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/>

Task 1b: Determining a Location (Designation) for Your Memorial Sign

The location you select for your memorial sign must be a section of highway or a bridge that is *not* already designated as a memorial route or bridge. To see which routes and bridges are already legislatively-designated see the map on MnDOT's Transportation, Data, and Analysis website at:

http://www.dot.state.mn.us/maps/gdma/data/maps/memorial_routes.pdf

If you need assistance in determining a suitable highway section or bridge contact the [MnDOT District Traffic Engineer](#).

Before moving on to Step 2, you will need to wait for approval of your designation request from the Minnesota State Legislature. Upon approval by the legislature MN State Statute 161.14 will be amended to provide for memorializing the person or entity in your request specifying the memorial highway segment, bridge, or location. Proceed to Step 2 after the legislation has passed and signed into law.

Another Signing Option:

Adopt a Highway

The Adopt a Highway program is another avenue that groups can use to identify a roadway segment. This program does not cost any money. A commitment is needed by your group to pick up litter along a highway two to three times a year for at least two years. A 3'x5' blue sign would be erected to recognize your group's commitment and will read ADOPT A HIGHWAY (followed by the volunteer name). For further information on this program see www.dot.state.mn.us/adopt/.

Step 2: Process for Sign Installation

Contacting the MnDOT District Traffic Engineer

Now that you have completed Step 1 and have received legislative approval with the passage of a state statute to designate a highway or bridge for a memorial sign contact the [MnDOT District Traffic Engineer](#) to begin the process for sign installation.

The District Office will:

- a) Coordinate with you and explain next steps,
- b) Determine exact locations for the memorial sign's for your review and input,
- c) Design the memorial sign for your review and input,
- d) Provide you with the fabrication and installation costs,
- e) Provide you with the application and compliance form along with directions for payment, and
- f) Coordinate the installation of the signs.

Memorial Sign Location

MnDOT will place memorial signs in accordance with state statute and signing standards. Standards for sign locations vary, depending upon the type of roadway or facility that the sign will be installed on. MnDOT will work with the requester to determine the best place to install signs.

- **Freeways**

For designated routes along freeways, memorial signs shall first be considered for installation in rest areas or other roadside areas. If installation of a sign in the nearest rest area or roadside area is not practical, installation of the sign at the top of the freeway entrance ramp shall be considered. If memorial signs are installed on freeway entrance ramps, one sign in each direction of travel may be installed at the top of the nearest entrance ramp at the beginning of the designated route. If installation

of a memorial sign on the entrance ramp is not practical, then installation of the sign on the mainline may be considered. If memorial signs are installed on the mainline, one sign in each direction of travel at or near the beginning of the designation may be installed. In all cases memorial signs shall be placed in an area that will not interfere with any other traffic control device.

- **Expressways**

For designated routes along expressways, memorial signs may be installed along the mainline roadway. If memorial signs are installed on the mainline, one memorial sign in each direction of travel at or near the beginning of the designation may be installed and shall be placed in an area that will not interfere with any other traffic control device.

- **Conventional Roadways**

Memorial signs may be installed along conventional highways. One sign in each direction of travel at or near the beginning of the designation may be installed and shall be placed in an area that will not interfere with any other traffic control device.

- **Bridges**

Designated bridges will be signed for road users on the carrying roadway and not for the roadway beneath.

- **Rest Areas and Other Roadside Areas**

Memorial signs installed in rest areas or other roadside areas intended for viewing by the non-motoring public may use a non-standard design, such as a photo of the person being commemorated or symbols. A new sign panel should be installed on its own sign structure. Standard signs installed on the entrance ramp from the rest area shall be installed on the right side of the ramp, between the entrance gore and the rest area parking area, with 150- to 200-foot spacing between signs.

- **Prohibition of Signs Mounted Overhead**

Under no circumstances will memorial signs be mounted overhead on a roadway or bridge.

Memorial Sign Design

If the proposed sign does not follow the engineering standards set forth, MnDOT will have an opportunity through the legislative process to provide comments and testimony to oppose nonconforming sign designs.

- **Legend**

A typical memorial sign message is the name of the person or entity being recognized, followed by the words "Memorial Highway" or "Memorial Bridge." Upon request, a title may be added before the memorialized person's name. Some examples include Trooper, Officer, Corporal, and Mayor. Non-standard symbols, pictures, words, or abbreviations are not allowed in accordance with the MN MUTCD Section 2M.10.

- **Sign Size**

Memorial signs shall be designed in accordance with the MN MUTCD, Section 2M.10. The sign design shall use a 6" text with a combination of an upper and lower case letters for the person or entity being recognized. Smaller text size may be used for the remainder of the sign text. Text size may be reduced in urban areas where physical space is restricted. The typical memorial sign size is 4'x 4'.

- **Sign Color**

The memorial signs shall have a white legend and border on a brown background. This is in accordance with the MN MUTCD Section 2M.10.

Memorial Sign Fabrication, Installation, and Cost

- **Sign Fabrication and Installation**

MnDOT will fabricate and install the memorial signs. No other sign fabricators or installers are allowed because of safety and consistency issues.

- **Memorial Sign Cost**

The requester sponsoring the memorial highway or bridge sign shall pay MnDOT in advance, in accordance with MnDOT's Traffic Engineering Requester Pay Signing Costs, for the cost of fabricating, installing, and maintaining the memorial sign(s) (Minnesota Statute 161.139). The typical sign cost is about \$1,650 per sign or \$3,300 for two signs (a typical memorial sign placement is one sign in each direction on the designated roadway segment or bridge, for a total of two signs). This cost may vary, depending upon the final size of the sign. The requester is responsible for all maintenance costs of the sign(s). This includes the replacement of the sign(s) in case of damage or when the sign requires replacement due to deterioration (typically after 15 years).

- **Replica Memorial Sign**

A small replica (e.g. 18"x18") of the official memorial sign may be fabricated by others for your personal use. MnDOT can provide you with a PDF and JPEG file of the sign design. There are multiple sign vendors that can fabricate these signs. Contact the MnDOT District Traffic Engineer for a list of sign vendors.

Dedication Ceremony (optional)

- **Dedication Ceremony Location**

If you plan on having a dedication ceremony it should be located in an area that can easily and safely accommodate parking and a large group of people. Possible locations include rest areas or a nearby park or building. The ceremony shall not take place on the roadway where the signs will be installed.

- **Coordination**

If a dedication ceremony is planned, the MnDOT District Traffic Engineer will coordinate installation of the memorial signs on the designated route or bridge and make every effort to ensure that the memorial signs are installed prior to the dedication ceremony, plan for about 4-6 weeks for fabrication and installation.



Appendix B: Methods Used by Other States

*Not all states are listed, only the ones that responded to MnDOT's request for information

State	Who officially names the roadway or bridge?	What is the process your state uses to review and approve memorial signing requests?	Do you have a committee assembled for this purpose?	What criteria do you use for evaluation of memorial signing requests?	Are there methods you use to evaluate community support for a proposed memorial signing request? (the legislative request specifies we consider this)	Are there any other best practices you can share?	Comments	Cost/Who pays?
Alaska	Legislature							
Colorado	Legislature				Not required			Requester
Delaware	Legislature	We have no standard process since legislation is proposed and DelDOT staff reviews.	No.	No standard criteria, but we will evaluate the sign size, color, location, etc.	Community support is typically completed by the Elected Official drafting the legislation. However, in some cases the County could be involved if the road name is changing through the memorialization process.	Instead of a memorial sign, we encourage individuals to consider honoring someone who has been killed in a highway crash at the Delaware Highway Memorial Garden		
Idaho	Legislature		We don't have any department procedures or committees in place to evaluate these requests.	Typically, our only action is to comment on the fiscal impacts associated with the designation but otherwise we don't offer official department opinion in support or in opposition of the designation.			We've been lucky, Idaho's had very few requests and usually the need for legislative action has been enough to deter people from going further than just asking the question. Our recent designations have all been military memorials: Vietnam Veterans, POW/MIA, Medal of Honor.	
Indiana	Legislature or Governor	A memorial highway or bridge is signed in Indiana after a concurrent or joint resolution is adopted by both the State House and Senate or an Executive Order designating a memorial highway or bridge is approved by the Governor.	The resolutions are reviewed by the State House or Senate Transportation Committees	INDOT checks that the segment is available, typically before the resolution is referred to the Transportation Committee and provides a few potential alternate segments if the desired route already has a memorial designation.	No	In addition to the highway signs, INDOT also provides a smaller version of the sign (typically about 12"x10") to the family member(s) or for the dedication ceremony.		
Kansas	Legislature	An individual interested in designating a segment of highway or bridge on the state system must request introduction of a bill to designate such segment or bridge through their legislator. This process is listed in the attached "Kansas Dedicated Signs Fact Sheet" document. The document is provided to legislators every two years after elections as part of informational materials the agency provides.	There is no committee assembled by KDOT. These bills typically go to either the Senate Transportation Committee or the House Transportation Committee	KDOT uses the MUTCD guidance for reference on naming protocols.	This is left to the legislative body to determine/evaluate community support.	I do not see any best practices KS is doing that MN is not already also doing related to memorial signage.		Requester
Kentucky	Legislature			Current policy does not allow "double naming" of a bridge or a road segment.	No. The previous Official Order method did require a Resolution from the local governing agency showing their support for the proposed naming, but that is no longer required under the legislative process.	proposed policy regarding bridge and road naming (which removes the previously allowed Official Order process) and the Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) associated with this practice	Memorial signing (i.e.: bridge and road naming) is entirely a legislative process as of the 2022 General Session. Before that, we did have a process in place where the Secretary of Transportation can name a bridge or roadway outside of the legislative process via Official Order, but that option was removed in 2022. We do keep a database of all bridge and road namings and share that each year with our legislative liaison	
Louisiana	Legislature	review bills to ensure the roadway isn't already named		review bills to ensure the roadway isn't already named				
Maine	Legislature	All naming of roads and bridges to memorialize entities is done through the legislature. MaineDOT ensures the road/bridge hasn't been named before and we put up signs commemorating the section of road		Legislator has to put forward a bill.	No reviewed by legislature	We have a generic sign that we use for road/bridge naming, and we don't vary from that to manage expectations of what the entities will be getting for a sign		

State	Who officially names the roadway or bridge?	What is the process your state uses to review and approve memorial signing requests?	Do you have a committee assembled for this purpose?	What criteria do you use for evaluation of memorial signing requests?	Are there methods you use to evaluate community support for a proposed memorial signing request? (the legislative request specifies we consider this)	Are there any other best practices you can share?	Comments	Cost/Who pays?
Massachusetts	Legislature	All naming of roads and bridges to memorialize entities is done through the State Legislature by means of a special Legislative Act. MassDOT's involvement in this process is only to ensure that the road/bridge hasn't been named before. Once the Legislative Act has passed, we will then fabricate and install signs commemorating the bridge or section of roadway.		Once a Legislator puts forth a Bill for a memorial sign, the evaluation of the request is done at the Legislative level. Note that specifics of the sign location and exact text to be displayed are incorporated into the Bill itself. As noted above, MassDOT only reviews the Bill to ensure that the road or bridge does not already have a memorial designation.	Potential community support for any given memorial sign request is evaluated by the Legislature as part of their review of the specific Bill concerning that request.	To ensure uniformity, minimize the potential for sign clutter, and to facilitate easier fabrication and installation, MassDOT utilizes a standard design for memorial signs – see attached. These signs are fabricated from 0.080-inch sheet aluminum and are mounted on a single telescopic or U-channel post.		
Michigan	Legislature	Michigan operates as Minnesota currently does, with all highway memorialization requiring a legislative action. We also have Guidelines (attached) to help legislators and requestors understand MDOT's approach to sign installations.	No	guidelines outline the elements that we review when receiving a request for new signs. Elements include passed legislation, sign locations, sign legends, payment process.	This is not part of our evaluation currently, but often when a sign is requested within a community, the local government is the entity requesting signs.	We have established standard prices for sign installations to assist requestors understand that commitment prior to pursuing new legislation, and to create consistency with regional offices' handling of requests after legislation is passed. Our guidance also encourages legislators/requestors to coordinate with MDOT while the legislation is being considered to ensure no surprises when it comes time to request signs.		Requester
Mississippi	Legislature	MDOT doesn't install Memorial highway signs unless a bill is passed by the State legislature. MDOT has no part in this other than to take the initiative to evaluate the proposed legislation. If there are any issues found with the bill as introduced, those issues might be communicated back to the congress member who introduced the bill.		The section of highway (or bridge, intersection, etc.) proposed to be designated will be evaluated to determine if it has already been designated with some other memorial. The proposed legislation is also evaluated for general accuracy to make sure the proposed section of highway is in fact on the State highway network and that the description of the designated section identifies the correct highway in the correct county or city.	The State legislature passed a bill years ago that requires the legislature to get the local government(s) to adopt a resolution requesting the designation of the memorial highway in question and file this resolution with the Chairman of the Senate or House Committee as applicable; however, this appears to be largely ignored.	MDOT has created a Memorial Highway GIS application where all memorial designations can be found with the referenced bill. This has been helpful in at least informing that some highway sections have already been designated.		

State	Who officially names the roadway or bridge?	What is the process your state uses to review and approve memorial signing requests?	Do you have a committee assembled for this purpose?	What criteria do you use for evaluation of memorial signing requests?	Are there methods you use to evaluate community support for a proposed memorial signing request? (the legislative request specifies we consider this)	Are there any other best practices you can share?	Comments	Cost/Who pays?
Missouri	Legislature and Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight.	We have two processes, the legislative process by state statute is to be used for military, law enforcement, and state employees killed in the line of duty (as well as all medal of honor recipients living and deceased) and an application process is to be used for all other designations. But more times than not, most all go through the legislative process so the legislators can get the credit for passing the bill. And those signs that go through the legislative process are maintained for perpetuity where those that go through the application process have a 20-year sunset.	The applications are reviewed and approved by the Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight. MoDOT's role is to keep track of memorial designations, assist in identifying available roadways, bridges and interchanges and install and maintain the signs. By state statute nothing should have more than one designation (violated all the time) and no designation name shall be applied to more than one feature by statute (also violated). We have one person whose sole job is managing this program the best she can, she does her best to guide and educate legislators and offer options to try and keep as many designations as possible within the rule of statute...she is successful many times, but others just do what they want.	This is a link to our designation program, at least the way it should operate when legislators are not circumventing state statute. You will see we have way too many programs, programs dreamed up and created by legislators beyond the simple highway and bridge designation programs. Our program manager has worked to try and keep the information on the web site as complete as possible.	The application process requires 100 signatures for the region the memorial designation is taking place, in the end this is really ineffective as there is no way to really validate where the signature came from and it's something we would like to see eliminated as it creates more issues than it solves. The legislative process has done check in place.	Don't start allowing designation signing on your roadways, but I think we are all past that point. For us, the process was turned into a state statute thinking it would lock things down and help regulate it vs. the process just being a MoDOT policy, but that only worked for a while and has become a challenge to keep things on the correct path even as a statute. For us, all we can do is try to guide and educate legislators, but ultimately, we have to live with what they get approved. I can say that the application process is probably the most regimented as the Joint Committee really does try to follow state statute, so that may be one best practice, to try and stay away from a legislative process and go with an application process that is overseen by a strong committee who has some level of authority beyond just the DOT.		
Montana	Legislature, Transportation Commission, MDT Director, and Governor	Typically, we only get legislative designations where we only get to testify and encourage limiting sign proliferation, but every session several designations are passed. The language of the Bill usually allows for some flexibility in what the sign design looks like usually at the approval of MDT, however, many times the legend is dictated in the bill which can be frustrating. One of the most recent designations was "Chief Earl Old Person Memorial Highway." Typically, MDT installs and maintains these signs in recent years the practice has been to use Brown/White to designate the memorial. The Transportation Commission, the MDT Director, and the Governor	MDT does have a standing Sign Committee consisting of district traffic engineers, the Traffic Design Engineer, the Traffic and Safety Bureau Chief, the Preconstruction Engineer, the Chief Engineer, FHWA, Maintenance Administrator, who are all voting members, this is the highest authority on sign request considerations, and it meets as needed but no more than quarterly. However, many designated memorial signs are not run through this committee as the Bill overrides the authority of the committee. It would be preferable to receive the requests through this committee, but I don't foresee this happening as this is usually a political topic and the headlines are used in that nature as other states have experienced.	Not much criteria used here, as most of the time it is already designated and therefore, we have to match the legislative or other authority action to meet the MUTCD as close as possible. Sometimes this can be difficult.	Mostly this is addressed in either the legislative process or through the Transportation Commissions public comment on an action item. MDT receives very few Governor and Director designations (at least recently), so public comment is address via methods outside of MDT staff direct control.	Proper authority is probably the best advice I can offer, if a committee is formed, they must have the ability to say no, yes, or modify. Without legislative oversight or some other higher authority. Some of the answers will inevitably be unpopular so having the proper level of authority I believe is key. Additionally, some side boards on designations, like must be X, Y, Z otherwise any and all requests will come forth and this committee will be very busy. Then finally some typical sign design(s) so that requestors understand what they are getting (if approved) to manage expectations.		

State	Who officially names the roadway or bridge?	What is the process your state uses to review and approve memorial signing requests?	Do you have a committee assembled for this purpose?	What criteria do you use for evaluation of memorial signing requests?	Are there methods you use to evaluate community support for a proposed memorial signing request? (the legislative request specifies we consider this)	Are there any other best practices you can share?	Comments	Cost/Who pays?
New Hampshire	Legislature	All naming of bridges and roads is handled through the legislature. NHDOT tries to monitor pending legislation and will testify during its consideration. If we are lucky, we will get an inquiry in advance but in some cases, we need to testify that the desired element is already named.		This is all performed by the sponsoring legislator. NHDOT will provide input in advance if aware or will provide input during hearing testimony.	This is all performed by the sponsoring legislator. NHDOT will provide input in advance if aware or will provide input during hearing testimony.	We have worked to develop a standard template for memorial/dedication signs, both portrait and landscape orientation. We also encourage the legislation to include the phrases "...sign design subject to approval of department of transportation," and, "...at no cost to the state." We will then bill the sponsor for the nominal cost for the sign and installation and not be on the hook for maintenance/replacement.		Requester
Oklahoma	Legislature	Oklahoma memorial signage goes directly through legislation. We do have a policy and a Legislative Affairs Division that works to have the legislation line up with the policy.		See statute for requirements. (Title 69 OS 1600.1)	No, typically the representative requesting the signage would have community support for the request.	ODOT has standardization on typical designs including limitations to biographical information, font sizing, character limits per line, and overall dimensions. We have standard sizing for conventional highways as well as freeways and expressways. We maintain good relationships with our Legislative Affairs Division from which we receive the memorial sign requests from.	ODOT does have a public facing map for memorial dedications, however it does not have biographical information available in the details. We believe this would be beneficial to the Memorial Sign Program with the idea that it would simplify the design of the physical sign by removing previously mentioned biographical information within the legend.	Requester
Oregon	Legislature			Fallen Officer Memorial Highway Signs—This program was authorized by the Oregon Legislature and has administrative rules that must be followed for signs to be approved and installed. Again, the program web site has the pertinent information. Fallen Hero Memorial Highway Signs—Similar to the Fallen Officer program but recognizes individuals who were killed in action and who have been recognized by the Oregon Legislature through a concurrent resolution or POW/MIA recognized by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and the remains of the individual have been recovered, identified, and returned to Oregon. Again, there are administrative rules, and the program web site has the pertinent information.				Requester

State	Who officially names the roadway or bridge?	What is the process your state uses to review and approve memorial signing requests?	Do you have a committee assembled for this purpose?	What criteria do you use for evaluation of memorial signing requests?	Are there methods you use to evaluate community support for a proposed memorial signing request? (the legislative request specifies we consider this)	Are there any other best practices you can share?	Comments	Cost/Who pays?
Pennsylvania	Legislature	PennDOT Bureau of Operations will review potential locations (bridges, highways, interchanges, roundabouts) for availability to designate and provide draft language to the legislators for the legislation. On the legislative side, memorial signing must be run through both chambers of our General Assembly which includes the House and Senate Transportation Committees for approval.		PennDOT does not have any criteria and there is no state law dictating who can be memorialized. The House and Senate Transportation Committees have their own “unofficial rules” they follow when determining who can be memorialized.	Not aware of any	We maintain a spreadsheet of every memorial designation that is referenced whenever we are reviewing potential locations to determine if they are available for naming. We also track locations we get asked to review for availability because we had issues in the past where different legislators wanted to designate the same road or bridge. The number of memorial designations in legislation has gone from an average of 10 per year up to 2012 and has gradually increased to now being close to 100 per year over the past few years. A few years ago, there was proposed legislation to turn this program over to PennDOT and allow us to set criteria for designations, receive/review applications as well as charge fees to applicants to install the signs. This never progressed and the program is still under the control of the General Assembly.		
Texas	Legislature or ordinance/resolution passed by local government	TxDOT has a program coordinator that reviews memorial designation requests to ensure that they qualify per the Texas Transportation Code (TTC). Once approved within our division, the request is submitted to our Administration for review and final approval from our Executive Director.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas Transportation Code Chapter 225 • Texas Administrative Code Rule §25.9 • Sign Guidelines and Applications Manual, Chapter 7, Section 16 	In Texas, memorial designations can only be accomplished through state legislation or by an ordinance/resolution passed by a local government. The vetting for community support is the responsibility of the State Legislator(s) who author the bill or the city/county elected officials who passed the resolution.	TxDOT will not approve a request from a local government if the requested highway has an existing memorial designation; however, the state legislature can pass bills that overlap existing designations. Overlapping designations have routinely created negative feedback from citizens.		requester
Wisconsin	Legislature	policy is to only sign for memorial highways or bridges that are designated by Wisconsin Statute. If a requestor comes our way to request a memorial highway or bridge, we encourage them to work with their legislator to get the legislation drafted						