Highway Sponsorship Project Guidance

90-120 Day Pre-Development Process for partners proposing projects to enhance or maintain the state highway right of way

Authorized by **Minnesota Statute Section § 160.801,** MnDOT's highway sponsorship program works with **businesses, civic organizations and individuals to assist with the improvement and maintenance** of real property comprising the trunk highway system to install and maintain landscaping, create pollinator habitat, perform enhanced maintenance or pick up litter along highway roadsides. The sponsoring organization is responsible for underwriting the full cost of the project, including the cost of landscaping design, purchase of plant material, installation and on-going maintenance activities. Highway Sponsorship Licenses are typically 2-5 years in duration, or up to 10 years. Sponsored projects may be eligible for a roadside Sponsor Acknowledgement Sign displaying the name or logo of (1) partner organization. (See sample highway road sign on last page).

The highway sponsorship proposal process is outlined below.

- ✓ Step 1 Submit your highway sponsorship **project concept** with a map of the proposed project location (**guidance below in section A.**)
- ✓ Step 2 – Schedule a pre-proposal consultation meeting with the Highway Sponsorship Director, Jessica Oh. If concept is approved, continue to Step 3.
- ✓ Step 3 – Prepare and submit a **full highway sponsorship proposal** (**guidance below in section B**.).
- ✓ Step 4 – Await notification of project approval or denial (review occurs in 30-60 days). Do not begin work in the right of way without authorization.
- ✓ Step 5- Sign and execute a **Highway Sponsorship License** with MnDOT.
- ✓ Step 6- Begin work in the right of way. MnDOT installs a Sponsor Acknowledgment Sign (when feasible).
- ✓ Step 7- Conduct a brief annual check-in with MnDOT on the performance of the project, discussing maintenance quality, concerns, or questions.

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i. Concept Guidance (please submit a concept first, then await confirmation of concept before submitting a full proposal):

1. Describe the proposed highway sponsorship project. (Include preliminary details or your general plan for site preparation, installation, maintenance activities, etc.).
2. Include a map of the project location: Include a Google earth image/map of proposed sponsorship project with desired project area clearly indicated. You may also use MnDOT's right of way mapping application to view/indicate right of way boundaries: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/maps/gisweb/row/.
3. Include a site plan: a drawing of the property showing the key elements such as buildings, parking lots, sidewalks, driveways, landscaping, grading, storm water drainage utilities, fences, and lighting.
4. Indicate project type: Enhanced Landscaping/Pollinator Project/Habitat Project/Maintenance-Focused Project/Etc.
5. Access for installation and maintenance: How will you access the project location? Enter from private property or off the shoulder?
6. Proposed site preparation date: (if requested)
7. Proposed installation/or maintenance initiation date:
8. Project partners/project funder:
9. Preferred Sponsorship License duration (typical Sponsorship Licenses will be 2-5 years in duration, but licenses of up to 10 years will be considered):
10. Organization that will perform site preparation/installation/on-going maintenance activities:
    a. Will a contractor perform the work or volunteers?
    b. Is your organization interested in learning about hiring a landscaping contractor that is a small businesses, including Minority, Veteran, Woman-Owned firms with experience working in the right of way?

ii. Proposal Guidance (you should receive a confirmation of concept before submitting a sponsorship proposal):

A. Site Plan: Proposed highway sponsorship project area
Submit a copy of plans of proposed work with detailed drawing showing type and location of work in relation to MnDOT right of way boundaries. Use MnDOT's right of way mapping application to view right of way boundaries: http://www.dot.state.mn.us/maps/gisweb/row/. A site plan should show the key elements such as sidewalks, driveways, landscaping, grading, storm water drainage, utilities, fences, and lighting. MnDOT may assist community-based nonprofit organizations with preparing site plans as requested.

B. Project Description: Describe proposed highway sponsorship project and your goals for the project.

C. Provide a description of all partners involved with the project. Have you discussed your proposed project with your city or county?

D. Funding sources for installation and maintenance phases:

E. Site Preparation/Installation Plan:

What plant species are you including in your proposed plan (if proposing enhancement plantings)?

- Include detail on plant species/seed mix proposed
- Site preparation is the responsibility of the partner proposing the highway sponsorship project in MnDOT's right of way. What site preparation activities are proposed? Spraying/removing turf? Adding soil amendments, rototilling?
- What are the access points for installation and maintenance? No vehicles or equipment may be on the shoulder at any time during installation or maintenance.
- What equipment will be used for site preparation and installation?
- Include general dates of site preparation activities.

F. Plant Establishment/Maintenance Plan: How will you conduct weed control (spraying?), frequency of mowing or proposed burns? **Complete the Maintenance Plan Template on page 10 of this document and include in your proposal in addition to the information below.**

a. Name of maintenance vendor or indicate if volunteers will be doing on-going maintenance activities, or a combination of approaches.
b. Describe proposed type and frequency of maintenance activities proposed (mowing, pruning, plant replacement, proscribed burns with special permit only, etc).
c. Plan for controlling noxious weeds (if present).
d. Herbicide usage plan (please note that a herbicide applicator license is required for herbicide usage, see Section H. below).
e. Plan for litter pick up (litter pick up will be required on a bi-monthly basis in the project area).
f. Plans for erosion prevention.

G. Herbicide Application Licensing & Application Requirements: (indicate you will meet this requirement): YES/NO

MnDOT requires that if a Sponsor is proposing the use of herbicides on MnDOT's right of way, these herbicides can only be applied by licensed, trained herbicide applicators conforming with MnDOT's Pesticide Guidance. For all Sponsors wishing to use herbicide in the right of way, MnDOT requires a Commercial applicator license with categories A (CORE) and J (Natural Areas, Rights of Way, & Forestry). If the application is being made to water, category F (Aquatic) is also needed. In addition to the license, the applicator is responsible for following ALL label instructions and the herbicide must be labeled for use on Rights of Way.

Include a copy of the Herbicide Applicator License with Sponsorship Proposals, if applicable. For more information on obtaining the appropriate herbicide applicator license visit the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) website. The training includes integrated pest management, pesticide labeling, personal hazards and first aid, personal protective equipment, storage, incident management, impacts pesticides have on the environment, proper application, and record keeping. Licensed applicators have passed required exams administered by MDA. To maintain their licensure, applicators are required to attend additional on-going training courses.

H. Temporary Traffic Control Plan and Permit Application (indicate you will meet this requirement): YES/NO

To keep the traveling public and sponsoring organizations safe while working in the right of way, sponsors are required to submit a temporary traffic control plan and permit application. For example, this could involve hiring a sign firm to do a temporary shoulder closure and multiple "Work Ahead" signs to be placed

on either end of the sponsorship project area to alert drivers of the activity on the highway roadside. Each project requires individual analysis for temporary traffic control requirements.

If you are a community or philanthropic organization proposing a highway sponsorship project, your city or county's public works departments may be willing work with you to submit a MnDOT temporary traffic control permit and provide signs. See page X for a statewide list of MnDOT certified traffic control vendors to meet this requirement.

I. **Construction Stormwater Permit**: **(indicate you will meet this requirement): YES/NO**
Some proposed sponsorship projects may require a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Construction Stormwater Permit. If you are the owner or operator of a project disturbing one acre or more of soil you will likely need to prepare a plan and request a MPCA Permit. MPCA issues coverage to construction site owners and their operators under the Construction Stormwater general permit to prevent stormwater pollution during and after construction, and protect Minnesota's water resources. Requirements and process are located here: https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/construction-stormwater

J. **Utilities in the Right of Way (indicate you will meet this requirement): YES/NO**
To aid in project planning, an analysis of the current utilities in your proposed project area (overhead and underground) may require you request a design-locate with Gopher One State. In addition, as required under Minnesota Statute Chapter 216D, at least 48 hours prior to the project, you must contact Gopher One State to mark utilities if any earthwork occurs that disturbs the soil to a depth of 18 inches or more (Phone 651-454-0002 Twin Cities Metro Area or Toll Free 1-800-252-1166).

K. **Labor plan:** Will volunteers be used for installation or a paid contractor? Who will do the on-going maintenance (indicate if different companies or organizations will do site prep, installation, maintenance, litter pick up, etc).

L. **Community engagement:** Have you contacted the adjacent landowners, businesses or residents to share your proposed project? Describe any community engagement activities.

M. **Sponsor Acknowledgement Sign:**
In certain circumstances, roadside signs may be available to recognize the partner investing in the sponsorship project. In some locations, sponsor acknowledgment signs may not be allowed, as other signs have priority (including warning, directional, safety signs, etc) on US, State and Interstates. For instance, sponsor acknowledgment signs will have limited placements on Interstates, and Federal Highway Administration must approve signs on Interstates.

If an acknowledgement sign is allowable, what organization should be recognized on the sponsor acknowledgement sign? Partners must provide their primary business logo in a high DPI logo in an AI or TIF files type.

Sample Sponsors Acknowledgement Sign sizes:

1. Conventional Roads under 55 MPH: 42' x 24'

2. Expressways/Freeways over 55 MPH: 72' x 48'

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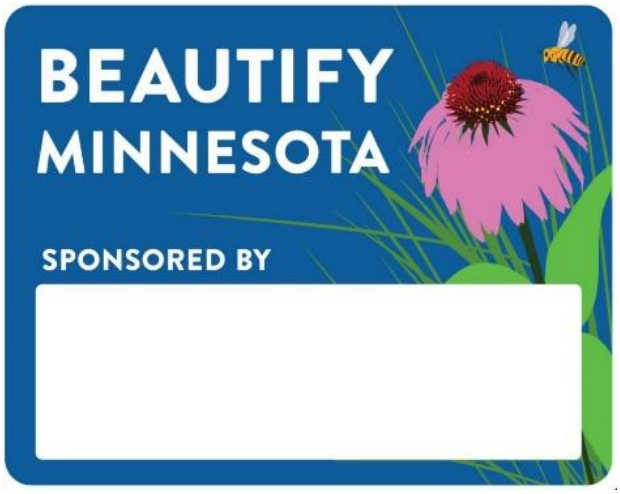

Highway Sponsorship License: Maintenance Guidance & Maintenance Plan Template

MnDOT Roadside Vegetation & Landscaping Maintenance Standards

X - Optimum time **O - Less then optimum time**

ACTIVITY	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Pruning	See Table 1 on page 2 for best time for specific species											
Conifers	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XOOO	OOXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Deciduous Trees/Shrubs (Except Oak)	XXXX	XXXX	XXOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOXX	XXXX	XXXX
Oak Trees	XXXX	XXXX	XXXO				OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOXX	XXXX	XXXX
Weed Control	Planting beds (if proposed) must be kept in a weed free condition											
Mow 5' from bed edges				--OO	OXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXOO	O---		
Re-mulch			--OO	OOXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXO	OO--	
Herbicide	Must be applied by a Licensed Pesticide Applicator – See MnDOT 2571.3K2a for methods											
Fertilization	See Table 5 for rates of application											
Shrubs Trees			---O	XXXX	O---							
Turf								---O	XXXX	O---		
Insect and Disease	Time of control depends on the type of insect or disease and when it is detected											
Watering	During first and second growing season approximately once a week or as needed to maintain adequate but not excessive soil moisture											
Maintain Rodent Protection	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO	OOOO				OOXX	XXXX	XXOO	OOOO
Mowing – Prairie Establishment						--OO	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	OO--		
Mowing – Turf Establishment					OOX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXOO		
Replant –Coniferous				-OXX	XXOO			--OX	XXXO			
Replant –Deciduous – B&B, B.R.				-OXX	XXXX	O----				OXXX	XO--	
Replant –Container Plants				-XXX	XXXX	XXXO	OOOO	OOOX	XXXX	XOOO		

Replant –Turf				---O	XXXX	XXOO	OOOO	--OX	XXXX	OO--		

Table 1 – Required Landscape Maintenance Activities

Plant Groups	Pruning		Weed Control	Fertilization	Watering	Insect and Disease Control	Rodent Protection	Removals and Replacements
	When To	Type of						
Evergreen Tree	Anytime- Dry Conditions	Corrective and Deadwood Removal	Maintain Mulch at a 3" minimum depth and a 2' minimum radius around trees in mowed areas in a weed free condition	Yes	Yes until established (2 years Supplemental Watering may be needed during drought periods (especially during July and August) Even after plants are established	As Needed - Remove diseased plants which pose threats to adjacent plantings.	Yes – Pine Only	Remove all Dead Plants. Replace dead or dying plants unless the visual appearance or design intent are not noticeably compromised by the lost plants.
Shade Trees	Deadwood removal anytime, when dormant for other pruning			Yes			Yes – Unless in an area with pedestrian use. Mowed turf in formal planting areas will help reduce rodent problems	
Oaks	Not in April, May, June, or July.			Yes				
Honeylocust	When Dormant, not when Humid or Wet			Yes				
Ornamental Trees	Deadwood removal anytime, when dormant for other pruning			Yes				
Evergreen Shrubs	Anytime – Dry Conditions	Deadwood Removal	Maintain mulch at 3" min. depth in a weed free condition until shrub crown closure	Yes			No – Rodent protection is generally not practical for mass shrub plantings. Maintaining clean mulched planting areas free of weed growth will reduce problems	
Deciduous Shrubs	Dormant	Corrective and renewal		Yes				
Vines	Dormant		Maintain mulch at 2"-3" min. depth in a weed free condition	No				
Groundcovers	Not Needed			Yes				

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Table 1a. REQUIRED LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES

MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATION				
PLANT GROUPS	PRUNING		WEED CONTROL	FERTILIZATION See Table 5, Fertilization Schedule
	When To	Type Of		
Evergreen Trees	Anytime - Dry	Corrective and Deadwood Removal	Maintain mulch at 3" minimum around trees in mowed areas, keep weed free.	Yes
Shade Trees	Anytime - Dry*	Training and Corrective		Yes
Ornamental Trees	Winter**	Corrective		Yes
Evergreen Shrubs	Anytime - Dry	Deadwood Removal		Yes
Deciduous Shrubs	Dormant	Corrective and Renewal	Maintain minimum 3" woodchip mulch in a weed free condition until shrub crown closure.	Yes
Vines	Dormant	Deadwood Removal		No
Groundcovers				

* Do not prune oaks during April, May and June. Do not prune Honeylocust while dormant or when humid or wet.

** Do not prune apples, crabapples or Mountain Ash during April, May and June.

TABLE 1b. REQUIRED LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES

MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATION				
PLANT GROUPS	WATERING	INSECT AND DISEASE CONTROL	RODENT PROTECTION	REMOVALS AND REPLACEMENTS
Evergreen Trees	Yes until established (2 yrs.). Supplemental watering may be needed during drought periods (especially during July and August) even after plants are established.	As needed. Remove diseased plants that pose threats to adjacent plantings.	Yes - Pine Only	Remove all dead plants. Replace dead or dying plants unless the lost plants do not noticeably compromise the visual appearance or design intent.
Shade Trees			Yes	
Ornamental Trees			Yes	
Evergreen Shrubs			No*	
Deciduous Shrubs			No*	
Vines			No*	
Groundcovers			No*	

* Rodent protection is generally not practical for mass shrub plantings, maintaining clean mulched planting areas free of weed growth will reduce problems. Mowed turf in formal planting areas will help reduce rodent problems.

Table 3. PRUNING STANDARDS

TYPES OF PRUNING	WHEN TO PRUNE	DESCRIPTION
Disease Removal	After Diagnosis	Removal of fungal bacterial growths. Sterilize pruners between cuts.
Deadwood Removal	See Table 1	Removal of dead branches, normally from the interior portion of the crown.
Training	See Table 1	Maintaining the central leaders and acceptable symmetry in evergreen, shade and ornamental trees. Removal of suckers and water sprouts.
Corrective	See Table 1	Removal of storm-damaged, vehicle-damaged or vandalized limbs.
Renewal	See Table 1	Removing all top growth at or near the ground line and remulch. Or removal of 1/3 of the oldest stems at the ground line.

TABLE 4. WEED CONTROL METHODS - INTEGRATED APPROACH

METHOD	CATEGORY		
	TREES	SHRUB BEDS	TURF
Replanting - Filling Voids		X	X
Fertilization	X	X	X
Remulch*	X	X	X
Herbicides	X	X	X
Weed Whip	No	X	

* Wood chip mulch should be replenished around shade trees and low growing shrubs every 3-5 years. Place mulch to a 4" depth. Mulching will help control weeds, reduce mower damage and conserve moisture.

TABLE 5. FERTILIZATION SCHEDULE

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	TIME OF APPLICATION	ANALYSIS **	RATE
Mowed Turf	Every 3 Years	April or October	23-0-30	1 lb (N)/1000 sq. ft.
Shrub Beds*	Every 3 Years	October or April	23-0-30	1 lb (N)/1000 sq. ft.
Shade Trees*	Every 3 Years	October or April	23-0-30	.5 lbs/1 Cu. Yd. of soil

Note: Do not fertilize trees and turf during the same season. Offset tree fertilization by one season in order to prevent fertilizer burn on turf.* Plants that fix nitrogen, like Silver Buffaloberry, Caragana, Honeylocust, Russian Olive or other legumes, should not be fertilized except under special conditions.

Tall shrubs do not need to be fertilized if leaf color remains normal.

** Analysis will be allowed within the following ranges: N (16-24) – P (0) – K (20-30).

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Highway Sponsorship License Maintenance Plan Template

Submit the information below with full Highway Sponsorship proposal.

ACTIVITY/SEASON	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Annual
Pruning					
Weed Control: Remulch Herbicide Application					
Fertilization: Turf Shrubs, Trees					
Insect & Disease control					
Sunscald Protection					
Watering					
Turf Maintenance Mowing/burn* *must request a special permit					
Replanting Evergreen Trees Deciduous Trees Container Plants Turf					
Litter Removal					
Tree Removal* *Must have explicit approval for tree removal after review by MnDOT Arborist					
Other					

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Additional Guidance from MnDOT:

I. MnDOT Roadside plant guidance:
- Search for plants based on site characteristics such as topography, plant community, USDA hardiness zones, soil types, soil compaction and texture.
- Search for plants based on vegetation characteristics, such as plant form and height, spread, textures, growth rate, foliage colors, flower colors, maintenance, insect and disease concerns and more.

II. MnDOT Seed Mixes & Vegetation Establishment Resources

- Seeding manual - 2014 (PDF)
- Erosion control and approved landscaping products

III. MnDOT Pollinator Resources

- MDA pollinator best management practices for roadsides and other rights of way (PDF)
- Protecting Bees and Butterflies with Right-of-Way

IV. Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Resources

Vegetation control methods
- Biological control – The use of natural plant enemies to reduce or mitigate the effects of noxious weeds
- Pesticides – The use of a chemical to control unwanted vegetation
- Mowing – The use of mowing equipment to reduce the height of vegetation
- Prescribed fire – The use of controlled fire to manage fire dependent plant communities

Additional Resources
- Minnesota Noxious Weeds
- Weed Control along Minnesota Roadsides
- Prioritizing Canada Thistle Control on State Highways
- Work Safely around Poison Ivy
- Work Safely around Wild Parsnip
- Poison Hemlock in Minnesota

V. Temporary Traffic Control Resources

MnDOT's Traffic Engineers will provide you with details on what type of temporary traffic control measures will be required. You may then hire a provider to complete the required temporary traffic control plan submitted through the MnDOT Permit Portal, as well as provide the signs. MnDOT's temporary traffic control manual, requirements and manuals are located here.

Temporary Traffic Control Contractors in Minnesota

Company	Contact	Phone	Email
Warning Lites of Mn	Tim Lewis	(612) 521-4200	tlewis@warninglitesmn.com
Safety Signs, LLC	Reed Leidle	(952) 469-6700	reed@safetysigns-mn.com
3D Specialties, Inc.	Ken Russell	(701) 293-8599	ken@dakotafence.com
NorthStar Safety, Inc.	Marc Rue	(701) 282-2110	mrue@northstarsafety.com
Shafer Contracting	Woody Bear	(651) 257-5019	woody@shafercontracting.com
All State Traffic Control, Inc.	Laurie Kissner	(320) 685-9911	laurie@allstatetrafficmn.com
Superior Traffic Control	Andrew Hemish	(320) 743-5535	superiortraffichh@gmail.com
Interstate Traffic Signs, Inc	Dennis Johnson	(218) 547-4900	its@arvig.net
Q3 (PSC)	Paul Bach	(651) 224-2424	PBACH@prim.com
Universal Traffic Control	Becky Hartung	(651) 528-6961	None
Tiger Traffic	Eric Tennessen	(612) 618-9911	erict@tigertrafficmn.com
Cross Cultural Business Resources	Faith Crump	(612) 310-4160	faith.crump2@gmail.com