Florida Department of Transportation

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OFFICE OF DESIGN BULLETIN 26-02
DCE MEMORANDUM 26-05
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING AND OPERATIONS BULLETIN 26-01
(FHWA Approved 05/06/2026)

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TO: District Directors of Transportation Operations, District Directors of Transportation Development, District Traffic Operations Engineers, District Design Engineers, District Construction Engineers, District Consultant Project Management Engineers, District Maintenance Engineers, District Program Management Engineers, FDOT Design Manual Holders

FROM: Will Potter, P.E., Director, Office of Design
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SUBJECT: Evaluation & Submittal Requirements for New and Replacement Dynamic Message Signs (DMS)

This Bulletin updates the ***FDOT Design Manual (FDM)*** to optimize and improve the Department's criteria for Dynamic Message Sign (DMS) placement.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Delete ***FDM 233.11.1*** and replace with Attachment 'A'.

Projects seeking to install, relocate, or replace a DMS must follow the process detailed in the Traffic Engineering and Operations DMS Action Request Package (DARP).

BACKGROUND

The Department began deploying modern Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) as part of its early 2000s push into Intelligent Transportation Systems. Initial deployments positioned DMS as the message-delivery element of Florida's ITS program – following detection and verification, the signs provided actionable guidance to motorists.

The first generation of modern DMS were text-only displays of fixed amber characters against a black background. By the early-to-mid 2010s, districts started migrating to full-color, full-matrix DMS that can show standard MUTCD symbols (e.g., route shields, lane arrows) against a colored background.

A 2025 Pew Research Center trends analysis found that over 90% of U.S. adults own a smartphone, and a 2024 national survey found that roughly 60% of drivers use GPS navigation at least weekly. This widespread adoption of personal wayfinding and traffic-optimization applications (e.g., Google Maps, Waze, Apple Maps) has materially changed how motorists receive and act on traveler information. As a result, the benefits of several DMS use cases have declined while capital, operational, and maintenance costs of the signs have risen.

Given this shift, the Department has revised the FDM to replace mandatory DMS installation language with criteria-based guidance in order to ensure maximum value is realized from every DMS installation.

IMPLEMENTATION

The requirements of this bulletin are effective on the following DMS types:

- Walk-In DMS
- Front Access DMS, with the exception of Lane Status signs used for Managed Lanes

The requirements of this bulletin are effective immediately for all design-bid-build projects for which design development is less than 90% complete (Phase III Submittal). These requirements should be employed on projects beyond 90% complete where implementation will not adversely impact the production schedule.

The requirements of this bulletin are effective immediately for all design-build projects for which the final Request for Proposal (RFP) has not been released. Implementation of this bulletin for design-build projects for which the final RFP has been released is at the discretion of the District.

The requirements of this bulletin are effective immediately on all construction projects that include the installation of a DMS structure type noted above where implementation will not adversely impact the construction project. These deletions of work will not be considered a CSI or include the 14.5% for deleted work as the Department is initiating the change.

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MM/WP/TL/ab/jf

Attachment ‘A’

233.11.1 Dynamic Message Sign (DMS)

The following criteria describe conditions under which a DMS may be installed or DMS replacement approval (including relocation and retrofitting) may be requested. Final placement is subject to engineering judgment, Systems Engineering documentation, Regional and Statewide ITS architecture consistency, and agency approval via the Chief Engineer or a designee.

Select the appropriate DMS type based on specific project needs. Position the DMS to be legible from the roadway based on the display characteristics of DMS technology (e.g., the vertical and horizontal viewing angles of LED displays).

DMS placement may be considered when the following conditions are met:

- The DMS is compatible with the message library proposed for use on the project, including text and graphics.
- The DMS is capable of displaying minimum character heights and line spacing per MUTCD Chapter 2L.
- The proposed location is upstream of high crash locations or recurring traffic bottlenecks; and can influence driver decisions via advance messaging
- There is sufficient space available between the edge of travel lanes and the R/W limits, while meeting the minimum lateral offset requirements in FDM 215.
- No conflict with underground or overhead utilities exists.
- The proposed location can accommodate safe access for service and maintenance.
- The segment serves a key commuter or evacuation corridor.

On Interstate and Freeway facilities, DMS placement may be considered in advance of interchanges that offer alternate routes, when MUTCD Chapter 2L and the following conditions are met:

- Advance of exit signing: Typically before the 1-mile exit sign.
- Sign spacing: Provide a minimum 800-foot spacing between existing and planned overhead static and other signs, per the MUTCD. Provide increased spacing when conditions allow.
- Structure use: Walk-in DMS should be mounted on support structures without static signage.
- System Interchanges: DMS may be considered in advance of interchanges where interstates meet to allow for advance messaging of traffic conditions on both roadways. For major interchanges, consider locations that are two exits before as well as immediately prior to the interchange.

- Embedded DMS (where applicable): Mount embedded DMS over or under the static sign panel or use a static sign cut-out, consistent with MUTCD and FDOT design standards.

On arterials, DMS placement may be considered prior to major intersections and interchanges when:

- The site is approximately 1/4 to 1/2 mile in advance of a major intersection or interchange.
- The DMS is at least 600 feet from adjacent signalized intersections.
- The DMS is continuously visible to motorists for 600 to 800 feet, depending on the design speed and geometry of the roadway.
- No existing or planned guide signs exist within the 600-foot minimum visibility distance.
- There is minimal interference from lighting, adjacent driveways, side streets, or commercial signage.
- The location is outside of designated historic districts or neighborhoods; or has documented, context sensitive approvals (where applicable).

233.11.1.1 Express Lanes DMS

Express lanes DMS must be full-color or full-matrix DMS and conform to the following application criteria:

Table 233.11.1 DMS Characters

DMS Type		Minimum Character Size (inches)	Minimum Number of Characters Per Line	Maximum Resolution (millimeter pixel pitch)
Lane Status	LA Facility	18	18	20
	Arterial	12		
Toll Amount	LA Facility	18	7	
	Arterial	12		