Washington State Department of Transportation

Memorandum

May 28, 2026

TO: Dongho Chang, P.E.
State Traffic Engineer/ Director of Transportation Operations

FROM: Jessi Henderson
Headquarters Transportation Operations

SUBJECT: Roadside Memorial Program Policy Updates

Your concurrence is requested to implement the Roadside Memorial Program Policy.

Background

The Roadside Memorial Program has been a pilot program for WSDOT since 1994 and has evolved throughout the years, most recently in 2024 with a change to the color and number of signs erected in honor of the deceased. However, limited updates have not addressed the longevity of signs currently in the field, with many maintained beyond their useful life. In addition, costs for installing and maintaining the signs continue to rise. In 2025 we aimed to update the program to tackle these issues. Due to public feedback, we paused the proposed updates to re-evaluate. After gathering public feedback and reviewing the program, the attached policy is proposed.

Highlights

Eligibility and Application

Any person who lost their life as a result of a motor vehicle collision on the State Highway System will be eligible to have a Memorial Sign erected in their honor. In incidents involving multiple fatalities, the Department has discretion to deny a sign if a person was driving under the influence (RCW 46.61.502) or driving recklessly (RCW 46.61.500).

Applicants may request a Memorial Sign by first filling out the Roadside Memorial Application Form either electronically on the Department's website at https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/highway-signs/get-roadside-memorial-sign or by printing and submitting the completed form. Applications must be submitted to the Department no more than six years from the date of the collision.

Sign Duration and Removal

Memorial signs are installed and maintained for ten years from the date of installation. If a sign is stolen, vandalized, or damaged by vehicular impact, the Department will replace it one time at no cost to the applicant. Any additional replacements require the applicant to re-enter the program and pay the associated fee.

At the conclusion of the 10-year period, applicants may re-enter the program by submitting a new application and paying the $1,500 fee. The Department will notify applicants prior to removal, providing an opportunity to renew and re-enter the program.

If the applicant chooses not to renew, the sign will be removed and stored for thirty (30) days at the nearest maintenance facility for retrieval. After this period, unclaimed signs will be recycled. Applicants may renew the memorial an unlimited number of times, provided they reapply and pay $1,500. Additionally, applicants may re-enter the program up to six (6) years after a memorial sign has been removed following the initial 10-year term.

Existing Sign Inventory Removal

The Roadside Memorial inventory currently shows 1,011 signs still active on Washington State Highways. Of those still active, 600 signs are outside of the initial agreement timeframes. With the proposed update, any sign that exceeds the agreement period of ten years will be removed. This update would apply retroactively to all signs currently exceeding their agreement period.

Under this update, all original applicants with signs outside their agreement period will receive a notice informing them of the sign removal. This will allow the applicants to re-enter the program, if they choose. The signs will be stored at the nearest maintenance facility for 30 days, during which the applicant may retrieve them. If the signs are not claimed within this period, they will be recycled.

Sign Cost

During the 2023 update, a flat fee of $1,000 was established for all signs, regardless of location. However, this cost is insufficient to keep pace with the rising costs of labor and materials. As a result, the cost was increased to $1,500. This fee covers fabrication, installation, maintenance and removal throughout the agreement period.

Private Memorials

While the Roadside Memorial Program discourages the placement of private memorials on state highways, no policy has previously been in place to explicitly prohibit their installation. With this update, private memorials will no longer be permitted due to safety concerns.

As stated within the Policy for Roadside Memorials, WSDOT reserves the right to remove it without prior notice. The contents of private memorials will be removed with care and stored for thirty (30) days at the nearest maintenance facility where they can be retrieved. After thirty days, the contents will be discarded.

Concurrence: Dongho Chang, P.E. 5/28/2026
State Traffic Engineer Date
Director of Transportation
Operations
Signature on file

joh
Attachments: Policy for Roadside Memorials

Washington State Department of Transportation

Transportation Operations Division
P.O. Box 47344
Olympia, WA 98504-7344
www.wsdot.wa.gov

Policy for Roadside Memorials

Since 1994, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has honored individuals who lost their lives on Washington highways through the Roadside Memorial Program. This program allows families and friends to honor their loved ones safely while also providing messaging to encourage safe driving.

Definitions

Applicant – Applicants for a memorial sign can be an immediate family member of the deceased or a sponsor with written consent from an immediate family member.

State Highway System – As defined in WAC 468-51-020

Memorial Sign – Signs erected by WSDOT to honor a person who lost their life due to a vehicle collision on the State Highway System.

Private Memorial – Any decoration(s) on a State or Federal Highway intended to honor or memorialize a person who lost their life due to a vehicle collision on the State Highway System. Private Memorials include, but are not limited to, markers, flowers, balloons, religious or other symbols, wreaths or non-approved signage. Official signs placed by WSDOT under this document are not Private Memorials.

Eligibility

Any person who lost their life as the result of a motor vehicle collision on the State Highway System will be eligible to have a Memorial Sign erected in their honor, except in cases of two or more deaths where, at the discretion of the Department:

- Such person was the operator of a motor vehicle and was driving under the influence as set forth in RCW 46.61.502
- Such person was the operator of a motor vehicle and was driving recklessly as set forth in RCW 46.61.500

Application

Applicants may request a Memorial Sign by first filling out the Roadside Memorial Application Form either electronically on the Department's website at https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/highway-signs/get-roadside-memorial-sign or by printing and submitting a form (See Appendix A) to the following address:

Washington State Department of Transportation
Roadside Memorial Program
P.O. Box 47344
Olympia, WA 98504-7344

Each application is limited to one name; if multiple names are requested, each must be submitted on a separate application as a package.

An application will be accepted by the Department when submitted by an immediate family member of the deceased. If the Applicant is not an immediate family member, the application must include written permission from an immediate family member of the deceased. If any member of the deceased's immediate family requests that a sign application not be granted, the application will be denied without prejudice.

Applications must be submitted to the Department no more than six years from the date of the collision.

Upon review and approval of the application, applicants will pay a fee of $1,500, payable to WSDOT by money order or check, for the costs related to design, materials, fabrication, installation and removal of the signs.

Sign Specifications

All memorial signs will have a blue background with white lettering (See Appendix B). Each memorial sign assembly will consist of one Safety Message Sign (I20-201 through I20-201L) and one supplemental Memorial Message Plaque (I20-203). No other words, depictions, or symbols will be allowed on the memorial sign.

Safety Message Sign (I20-201 through I20-201L)

Each safety message sign will measure 36" x 48" and include one of the following safety messages which, will be chosen by the applicant:

I20-201	Please Don't Drink and Drive
I20-201A	Please Don't Drug and Drive
I20-201B	Please Don't Speed
I20-201C	Please Drive Safely
I20-201D	Please Drive Sober
I20-201E	Please Ride Safely
I20-201F	Please Watch for Bicycles
I20-201G	Please Watch for Pedestrians
I20-201H	Reckless Driving Costs Lives
I20-201J	Please Watch for Motorcycles
I20-201K	Seat Belts Save Lives
I20-201L	Stay Alert Drive Safe

Headquarters administration will review additional requests for different sign messages periodically and may revise this list.

Memorial Message Plaque (I20-203)

Each memorial message plaque will be placed directly below the safety message sign and will measure a minimum of 36" x 12", with varying height pending the number of names. If multiple applications for separate fatalities are seeking placement at the same location, the names will be placed together on a single plaque and listed in alphabetical order by last name.

Sign Placement

Placement location of the memorial sign will be at the sole discretion of the Department. The memorial sign will be placed as close to the collision location as possible, in the direction of travel in which the collision occurred. Locations may be adjusted to address conflicts with existing signing and roadway configurations. For interstates and freeways, the sign will be

placed on the closest on-ramp to and in the same direction of travel of the collision. Memorial signs cannot be placed on the mainline of the National System of Interstates and Defense Highways.

Memorial signs, including I20-201F and I20-201G, will not be placed at locations where bicyclists and/or pedestrians are not permitted.

Sign Duration and Removal

Each memorial sign will remain in place and be maintained for ten years from the date of installation. If the sign is stolen, vandalized or damaged by vehicular impact, the Department will replace the memorial sign one time at no cost to the applicant. Should a subsequent incident occur, the applicant may choose to re-enter the program and pay the fee of $1,500.

After the deceased has been memorialized for the full ten-year agreement period, applicants may choose to re-enter the program and renew the agreement. Renewals may be completed by submitting a new application as described above.

At the end of the ten-year period, applicants will be notified by the Department of the pending removal. This allows the applicant the chance to renew and continue in the program. If the applicant chooses not to renew, the associated signs will be removed and stored for thirty (30) days at the nearest maintenance facility where the applicant may retrieve the signs during this time. After thirty days, the signs will be recycled.

Applicants may renew as many times as they choose, provided they pay the fee of $1,500. Applicants may re-enter the program up to six years after an associated fully memorialized sign has been removed.

Unveiling Ceremonies

Sign unveiling ceremonies or in-person memorials are not permitted due to safety concerns for the traveling public and family members. Upon installation of the signs, the applicant will receive notification from the Region Coordinator with a photo confirming that the installation has been completed.

Private Memorials

Due to safety concerns, private memorials are not allowed on any State Highway. All private memorials, whether placed alone or in addition to the official Memorial Sign will be removed without notice. The contents of private memorials will be removed with care and stored for thirty (30) days at the nearest maintenance facility, where they can be retrieved. After thirty (30) days, the contents will be discarded.

Administration

The Roadside Memorial Program is managed statewide by the Headquarters Transportation Operations Division, with the Sign Program Specialist responsible for:

- Receiving all inquiries from the public
- Document, review, approve and process requests for purchasing a sign
- Updating any policy changes deemed necessary
- Updating any Roadside Memorial Website updates deemed necessary

Region Coordinator

The Region Coordinator will be responsible for:

- Collaboration and coordination with Memorial Sign Program Specialist and Headquarters Transportation Operations Division
- Coordinating sign locations for all local municipalities
- Coordination of sign installation with local maintenance personnel
- Notifying applicant of sign installation

Appendix A

Washington State Department of Transportation

Application for Roadside Memorial Sign

Submit the following items along with this completed form:

- Written consent from immediate family member of victim
- Copy of the Washington State Patrol's Collision Report or a Collision Report Number

For renewal applications, previously submitted documentation may not be required unless information has changed. Additional documentation may be requested if records cannot be verified.

Please complete separate applications per individual.

Application Type:

☐ New Application ☐ Renewal

Section I: Applicant Information			
Applicant Name	Applicant Email		Applicant Phone Number
Address	City	State	Zip Code
Relationship to Deceased	Do you have written consent if not an immediate family member? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A		

Section II: Collision Information		
Name of Deceased	Date of Collision	WSP Report Number
State Highway of Collision	Approximate Milepost, GPS Coordinates, or Approximate Address	
Nearest Cross Streets	County	Nearest City/Town

Section III: Sign Information		
Please Choose from the Following Safety Messages:		
☐ Please Don't Drink and Drive	☐ Please Don't Drug and Drive	☐ Please Drive Sober
☐ Please Drive Safely	☐ Please Ride Safely	☐ Please Watch for Motorcycles
☐ Please Watch for Pedestrians	☐ Please Watch for Bicycles	☐ Seat Belts Saves Lives
☐ Stay Alert Drive Safe	☐ Please Don't Speed	☐ Reckless Driving Costs Lives
Please write the name as it will be seen on the Supplemental Sign Message:		
In Memory Of:		

Section IV: Renewal Information
Are You the Original Applicant? ☐ Yes ☐ No If No, Explain Relationship to the Deceased:
Do You Want To: ☐ Renew With No Changes ☐ Update Safety Message ☐ Update Supplemental Sign Message Update Information:

Washington State Department of Transportation

Application for Roadside Memorial Sign

Instructions to Applicant:

In order to be considered for a new sign, the collision must have occurred on a Washington State Highway and have occurred within six years of the application date.

Complete this application and submit it to the Washington State Department of Transportation. Include written consent from immediate family member (if not an immediate family member), attach either a copy of the Washington State Patrol's collision report or collision report number.

Section I:

Fill in your name, e-mail, phone number, address and relationship to the deceased.

Section II:

List the full name of the deceased, date of the collision, Washington State Patrol collision report number, Washington State Highway location of the collision, other location details such as approximate milepost, GPS coordinates, or approximate address, nearest intersection, county, and nearest city or town.

Section III:

Choose from the approved list of safety messages to place above the supplemental name plaque. Then write the deceased person's name as you would like it to appear on the name plaque. This is how it will be printed on the sign and is subject to approval by the Department.

Section IV:

Complete section IV only if renewing a sign; indicate if you are the original applicant, if not, please explain your relationship to the deceased. Please indicate if you would like no changes to the signs or want to update either the safety message or the supplemental sign.

Section V:

Submit the completed form and all supporting documentation to the Washington State Department of Transportation by mail to the address shown below or by email to roadside.memorial@wsdot.wa.gov.

Submit to: Washington State Department of Transportation
Roadside Memorial Program
PO Box 47344
Olympia, WA 98504-7344

Appendix B

I20-201



I20-201A



I20-201B



I20-201C



I20-201D



I20-201E



I20-201F



I20-201G



I20-201H



I20-201J



I20-201K



I20-201L



I20-203

