

WAYFINDING
STRATEGY FOR THE
CITY OF TORONTO



Toronto Vehicular Visitor Destination Signage Strategy

MAY 2016



Introduction

This document describes the context and rationale behind Toronto's updated vehicular visitor destination signage strategy. It includes clear selection criteria for destinations wishing to be included as destinations on road signage.

The updated vehicular visitor destination signage policy is underpinned by the TO360 wayfinding strategy, an initiative led by the City of Toronto to coordinate information across all transportation modes.

Key objectives of the policy update are to:

- Create a framework that enables equitable selection and display of commercial/non-commercial visitor destinations for drivers on all roads such that they can find destinations safely and with confidence
- Promote city visitor assets and appropriately reflect destination hierarchy
- Better manage commercial vs. public interest
- Reduce roadside clutter on expressways and city roads
- Provide the City with an economically sustainable model

The content of this document has been presented to stakeholders on several occasions and feedback has been evaluated and included as appropriate.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The document is structured as follows:

- **Context** - describes the overarching TO360 project currently being undertaken in Toronto, that the vehicular visitor destination strategy forms one part of
- **Background and current policies** summarizes road ownership and current destination signage guidance
- **Issues** highlights the key issues related to current destination signage
- **Benchmarking** provides an overview of national and international standards
- **Principles of destination signing** identifies the key principles that underpin the new vehicular visitor destination policy
- **Wayfinding strategy** describes how information should be provided, organized, and presented on signs
- **Eligibility criteria and signs** describes the criteria that determine which destinations should be included in the new system and the proposed family of signs for expressways and arterial roads
- **Decision-making process** outlines the two-tiered decision process
- **Sign positioning** illustrates where signs should be placed on expressways and arterial roads
- **Recommendations** provides an overview of the next steps required to take this strategy to implementation

Context

Wayfinding and signage encompasses all the ways in which people understand their surroundings and navigate from place to place. Consistency is important from the outset of a journey which may include several modes, including walking.

Stakeholder group includes representatives from:

Beach Village BIA
City of Toronto
Cycle Toronto
Distillery District
Downtown Yonge BIA
EMS
Exhibition Place
Financial District BIA
First Canadian Place
Think Fresh Group
Mariposa
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport
Ministry of Transportation
Ripley's Aquarium
Sony Centre
Residents
St Lawrence Market BIA
St Lawrence Neighbourhood Association
Toronto Entertainment District BIA
Toronto Parking Authority
TTC
UP Express
Walk Toronto
Waterfront Toronto

TO360 WAYFINDING STRATEGY

In 2011 the City of Toronto launched the Toronto 360 (TO360) Wayfinding Strategy to develop a unified multi-modal wayfinding system for the city.

The Strategy is a three-phase process:

- **Phase One (2011-2012)** develop guiding principles, themes, and a conceptual design for the system
- **Phase Two (2014-2015)** detailed design, implementation and evaluation of a pilot scheme centred on the city's Financial District
- **Phase Three (2016 and beyond)** creation of final design guidelines and roll-out city-wide

The need to include vehicular visitor destination signage was determined during the analysis and consultation activities delivered during Phase One of the project as car drivers are usually pedestrians at some stage of their journey and consistency is required across systems.

CONSULTATION

Stakeholder consultation took place at various instances of the process. Directly involved stakeholders were consulted through the early stages to discuss and agree on the main parameters upon which the updated policy is built.

A draft of the updated vehicular visitor destination signage policy was presented to the wider stakeholder group as part of the TO360 Phase 2 stakeholder and public consultation groups. Participant suggestions have been considered within the final policy and recommendations.

Overall, the key feedback was that the draft policy was positive, described as “a big improvement”, and that it would “reduce clutter”.



Background

The current state of vehicular visitor destination signing in Toronto was assessed using a number of techniques - including desk based research, signage guidance reviews and road sign audits.

Research was undertaken into relevant vehicular signage standards which included municipal as well as provincial guidance documents. A comparison of international standards was also carried out.

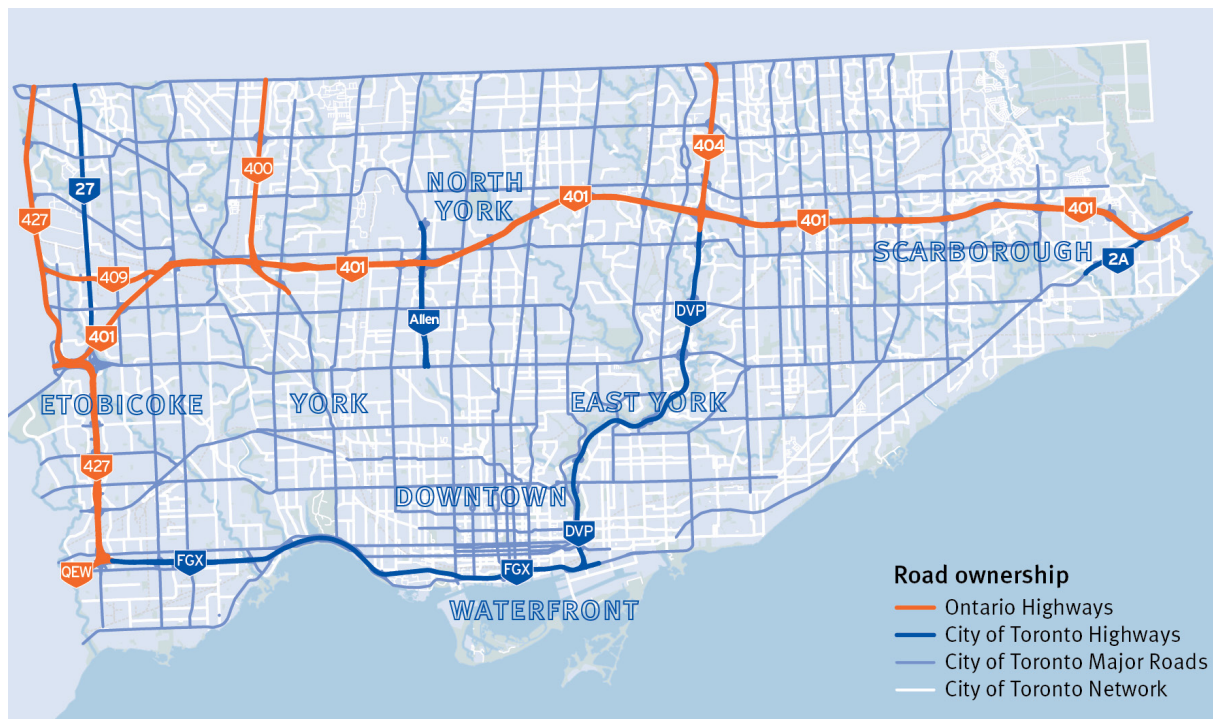
ROAD OWNERSHIP

Within Toronto's city boundaries, roads are governed either by the City or by Ontario's Ministry of Transportation. The latter owns the entire 400-series highways, including highways 400, 401, 404, 427 and Queen Elizabeth Way.

There are five other expressways that are maintained by the City of Toronto via Transportation Services Division. These are: Allen Road, Don Valley Parkway, Gardiner Expressway, Ontario Highway 27 and Ontario Highway 2A.

One of the following five classifications has been assigned to every City-owned road:

- Local road
- Collector road
- Minor arterial road
- Major arterial road
- Expressway



Current policies

Current policies were reviewed to identify and understand relevant policy and guidelines on vehicular visitor destination signage.

MUNICIPAL LEVEL

The municipal document **Identification and Directional Road Signage Policy (2003)** covers the following types of signage:

- Neighbourhood/Community Signing
- Service Group Signing for non-profit organizations
- Directional Destination Signs for commercial establishments; and
- Commercial Identification and Directional Signs for a variety of venues.

CURRENT DESTINATION SIGNING GUIDANCE

The City of Toronto currently has four criteria to assess which destinations should be included on expressway vehicular signage (relating to the latter two types mentioned above). These criteria are listed in the table below.

Current guidance criteria
• Government owned or sponsored
• Unique to the City of Toronto
• Minimum annual attendance of 40,000 persons
• Institutions cover the cost of signs and their installation

The current policy complements but did not replace other existing policies such as Neighbourhood/Community Signing (see Appendix C) and Service Group Signing for non-profit organizations (Appendix D).

PROVINCIAL LEVEL

There is no specific policy guidance for destination signage at the provincial level.

The provincial **Tourism Oriented Destination Signage (TODS)** is a privately operated program that gives tourist operators an opportunity to apply for directional signs on the 400 series highways. TODS are not applicable within the boundaries of Toronto, irrespective of road ownership.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

The provincial **Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM)** provides sign design and location guidance for signs on the provincial road network. It is also acknowledged as a design reference for the implementation of municipal signing.

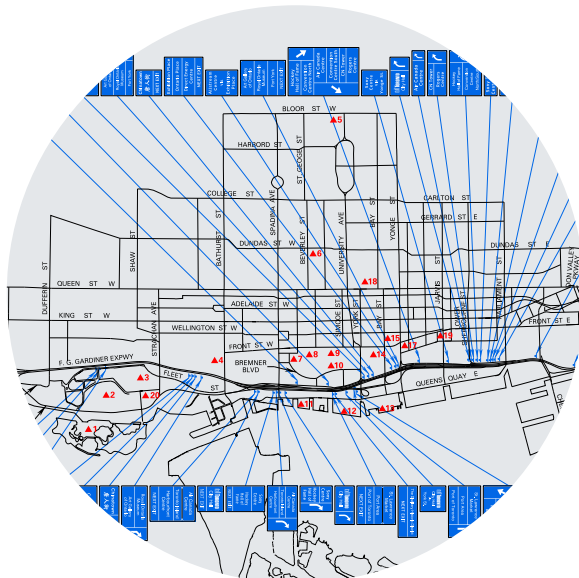
Issues

Physical and visual clutter and proliferation of signs on sought-after routes such as the Gardiner Expressway evidence some of the most obvious shortcomings of the current policy.

ISSUES

Based on the research, signage audit and feedback, key issues were identified:

- Clutter:** A profusion of signs on especially sought-after routes such as the Gardiner Expressway, have created physical and visual clutter which may be confusing to drivers and may potentially lead to dangerous driving behaviour.
- Definition of attractions and attractors:** Current annual attendance criteria (40,000) is easily met by many destinations. Policy is biased towards visitor attractions and does not consider other important journey attractors such as transit hubs.
- Disconnect with Ontario Traffic Manual design principles:** Legibility issues and information overload are common. Implementation of the system largely disregards good practice principles such as prominence, comprehension and driver response – thereby compromising the ability of drivers to make the desired action as a result of reading the signs.
- Lack of information continuity:** Signs often fail to provide continuous information from first mention to arrival at final destination and focus excessively on expressway exits. Generally, Toronto road signage lacks directional information other than turning signs with road names or trailblazer signs directing to the Expressway.
- Lack of meaningful area naming elements:** Destinations are shown as unique places. The system does not rely on larger destinations or area names as points of reference.



National and International Benchmarking

A comparison of vehicular visitor destination signage criteria from other jurisdictions was undertaken comparing Toronto's existing policy to other Canadian cities as well as international examples.

Benchmarking was undertaken against relevant vehicular signage standards, both within Canada as well as internationally. The purpose of the review was to understand the criteria used in other jurisdictions to inform the selection of destinations for inclusion on vehicular signage. A summary of relevant examples is included below.

NORTH AMERICAN EXAMPLES

Québec - The highway destination guidance in Québec provides the following principles: Signs are self-financing; coherence is necessary; and directional signing from the highway to the destination must be continuous. For private signs, the eligibility criteria are ranked by order of importance. Number of visitors is the dominant criteria, followed by number of opening days.

Charlotte, NC - Highway destination signing in Charlotte uses colour coding to identify the four major districts in Uptown Charlotte. This ties in with the local pedestrian wayfinding system.

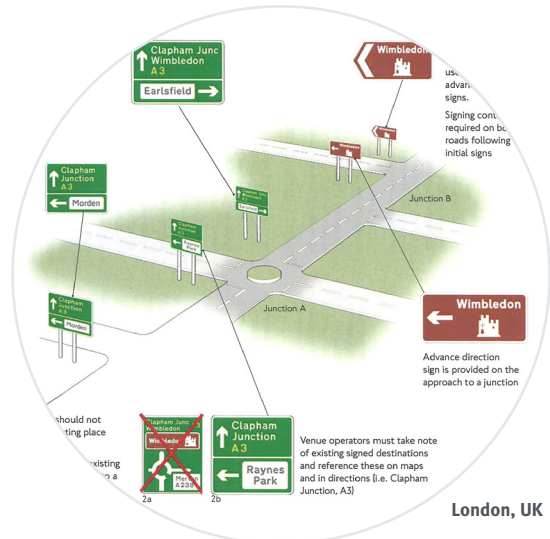


Charlotte, NC

EUROPEAN EXAMPLES

France - The purpose of the destination signage in France is to inform visitors about the most relevant cultural and tourism places of interest. Principles include enhancement (only useful signs are permitted); signs that should be seen together need to be clustered; information continuity; and legibility (signs should be simplified as much as possible).

London, UK - The aim of the highway signage in London is to assist visitors already seeking their destination using pre-obtained information. Eligibility criteria include venue type, annual visitor numbers (commercial/tourist), off-road parking, Public Transport Accessibility Level [PTAL], one-off and new visitors, marketing, as well as being a specialist attraction.



London, UK

BENCHMARKING COMPARISON TABLE					
	Montreal, QC	London, UK (Tourist Destinations)	London, UK (Non-Tourist Destination)	Toronto	TODS in Canada
Attendance	750,000 annual visitors	Undivided highway: 40,000 - 100,000; Divided highways: 100,000 - 200,000	150,000 - 300,000 annual visitors	40,000 annual visitors	No
Off-road Parking	Provide appropriate parking facilities on site	Undivided highway: 35 - 100 spaces; Divided highways: 85 - 200 spaces	200 - 500 spaces	No	No
Opening Days	Open year-round	Minimum of 120 days per annum	No	No	Minimum of 12 consecutive weeks per annum
Operation	5 days a week - set schedule (days & hours)			No	5 days a week during the normal operating season
New Visitors	No	Less than 25% of first time visitors lowest priority - 50% of first time visitors highest priority	Less than 25% of first time visitors lowest priority - 50% of first time visitors highest priority	No	No
Location	Located in the same tourist region as the reserved highway section	No	No	No	Maximum distance of service of 40km of the intersection of provincial highway

In addition to benchmarking for the eligibility criteria, one of the main lessons learnt from the review of national and international examples was the need to support quantitative selection criteria with strong guiding principles that better serve drivers' information needs.

Destination signage is not isolated from other road information and as such it requires the same principles of good design.

Principles of destination signing

Principles of good design common to all road signage need to be followed to establish an effective vehicular visitor destination signage strategy.



Wayfinding strategy

Progressive disclosure is essential to simplifying information – by organizing messages in manageable pieces delivered at appropriate stages of a journey.

Organizing individual destinations in meaningful groups reduces redundancy and the number of messages required, allowing for more effective communication and supporting drivers' en-route decision-making process.

Toronto is known as a city of neighbourhoods, however, current directional signage does not provide any indication of area or neighbourhood names – a mechanism commonly used to cluster destinations geographically.

Acknowledging this gap and the difficulty of agreeing on area naming conventions that are relevant for both locals and visitors, a combined approach of numbered exits and street names is proposed as the basis for the updated strategy for expressways.

NUMBERED EXITS

- Easy-to-use shorthand to identify expressway exits –requires supporting information such as street names.
- Numbers to be included on exit approach and turn-off signs. These can be easily referenced elsewhere and identified by a distinctive colour.
- Exits will be numbered according to the provincial kilometre-based numbering system for distance markers and interchange exits.

STREET NAMES

- Street names are the current preferred approach across the city as they reinforce the link between the exit and the street that it serves.
- Builds on existing prevalence of street name-based orientation among Torontonians.



Expressways: Criteria

The updated eligibility criteria aim to support the equitable selection and display of commercial/non-commercial visitor destinations on vehicular signage.

Signage policy for other destination types is contained in:

Appendix C
Road Signage Policy for Community and Neighbourhood Identification (including BIAs)

Appendix D
Service Group Signing for Religious Institutions and Recreation Centres.

The following destination selection guidelines are applicable to expressway signs (see Appendix A for definitions). Other than for some institutional and city-owned destinations, **all** criteria need to be met in order for a destination to be considered for inclusion on a sign.

Applicants are responsible for evidencing compliance against all criteria at their own cost.

Destinations that individually qualify for signs may be clustered with other destinations as determined by the City.

TYPE OF DESTINATION

Destinations to be considered for inclusion on expressway signs are single venue types and include:

- Tourist attractions
- Large regional shopping centres (e.g. malls)
- Exhibition/convention centres
- Sports stadiums
- Civic buildings (e.g. City Hall)
- Rail and transit hubs

Destinations that should **not** be included are:

- Small tourist destinations (e.g. cinemas, theatres, hotels, guest houses, restaurants, bars, picnic sites, camping areas)
- Local facilities (e.g. libraries, town halls)
- Local shopping centres or local retail
- Schools, universities and colleges
- Hospitals and health care

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE NUMBERS

For signs on expressways and expressway interchanges: a minimum of 500,000 annual visitors.

DISTANCE

The destination should be within a maximum distance of 3 km from the expressway centreline.

OFF-ROAD PARKING

Eligible destinations shall provide evidence of minimum off-road parking capacity equivalent to 1 parking space for every 20 visitors (based on the greater of either peak daily visitors or maximum venue capacity).

Parking must be either attached to the destination itself or in close proximity, not further than 500 metres from the property boundary of the destination.

OPENING DAYS

The destination should be open for a minimum of 120 days per annum in order to be considered.

OPERATION

The destination should be open for a minimum of 5 days a week to qualify.

Expressways: Signs

The following illustrative products and content are proposed for expressway signs.

Expressway signage

A Pre-Advance information

OTM Equivalent: G103 - Freeway Pre-Advance Sign

Colour: green

Exit number (yellow box)

Exit location/street

Destinations

Distance to exit



Size: 210mm (H) x variable (W)

B Advance information

OTM Equivalent: G100 - Freeway Advance Sign (Ground Mounted)

Colour: green

Exit number (yellow box)

Exit location/street

Destinations

Distance to exit



Size: 220mm (H) x variable (W)

C Turn-off information

OTM Equivalent: G101 - Freeway Turn-off Sign (Ground Mounted)

Colour: green

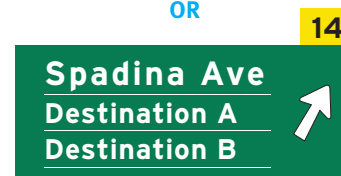
Exit number (yellow box)

Exit location/street

Destinations



OR



Size: 210mm (H) x variable (W)

D Exit information

OTM Equivalent: n/a (Overhead)

Colour: green

Exit number (yellow box - provincial distance-based system)

Exit location/street



Size: n/a

Arterial roads: Criteria

The updated eligibility criteria aim to support the equitable selection and display of commercial/non-commercial visitor destinations on vehicular signage that wish to be considered for inclusion on signs.

Signage policy for other destination types is contained in:

Appendix C
Road Signage Policy for Community and Neighbourhood Identification (including BIAs)

Appendix D
Service Group Signing for Religious Institutions and Recreation Centres.

The following destination selection guidelines are applicable to major and minor arterial signs (see page 5 or Appendix A for definitions). Other than for some institutional and city-owned destinations, **all** criteria should be met in order for a venue to be considered for inclusion on a sign.

Applicants are responsible for evidencing compliance against all criteria at their own cost.

Destinations that individually qualify for signs may be clustered with other destinations as determined by the City.

TYPE OF DESTINATION

Destination types to be considered for inclusion on arterial signs are single destination types and include:

- Tourist attractions
- Large regional shopping centres (e.g. malls)
- Exhibition/convention centres
- Sports stadiums
- Civic buildings (e.g. City Hall)*
- Rail and transit hubs*
- Places of worship
- Schools, universities and colleges*
- Hospitals with emergency services*

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE NUMBERS

For signs on arterial roads: a minimum of either 200,000 annual visitors (for destinations within the downtown core) or 50,000 annual visitors (elsewhere).

Boundaries for arterial signage zones will be defined by the Transportation Services Division.

DISTANCE

The destination should be within a range of 500 metres from the sign location.

OFF-ROAD PARKING

Eligible destinations shall provide evidence of minimum off-road parking capacity equivalent to 1 parking space for every 20 visitors (considering peak daily visitor number or maximum venue capacity).

Parking must be either attached to the destination itself or in close proximity, not further than 500 metres from the property boundary of the destination.

OPENING DAYS

The destination should be open for a minimum of 120 days per annum in order to be considered.

OPERATION

The destination should be open for a minimum of 5 days a week to qualify.

* These destinations will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the sign committee, even if they cannot demonstrate all criteria.

Arterial roads: Signs

The following illustrative products and content are proposed for arterial road signs.

Arterial signage

Typical municipal information sign

**OTM Equivalent: n/a
(Pole-mounted)**

Colour: blue

Directional arrow

Destinations



Typical Size:
6ft (H) x 4ft (W)



Typical Size:
4ft (H) x 4ft (W)

Decision-making process

The process to decide which destinations can be added to vehicular signs is a two-stage system.

A two-stage process will be followed to determine the eligibility of any destination in order to regulate the number of those approved for inclusion on arterial and expressway vehicular signs.

STAGE ONE

The eligibility criteria stated in the previous section will be used to determine if a destination qualifies for consideration for inclusion on road signs.

STAGE TWO

Where there is limited space in the same location or on a single sign, the Transportation Services Division will use the following secondary criteria to prioritize applications:

For **expressway signs** the following criteria to prioritize applications apply, in descending order of importance:

- annual visitor attendance numbers; and
- proximity to the expressway; and
- destinations that can be clustered with other eligible destinations under one place name.

For **arterial signs** the following criteria to prioritize applications apply, in descending order of importance:

- destinations that have been approved for expressway signs;
- annual attendance numbers;
- proximity from the destination to the sign location; and
- destinations that can be clustered with other eligible destinations under one place name.

COST

All requests for a vehicular destination sign will be subject to an application fee.

If successful, applicants will cover the cost of signs, including costs for the design, fabrication, installation and major maintenance (i.e. replacing damaged signs), or changes to the destination name.

To create continuous signage for drivers across their entire journey, destinations included on expressway signs will also be required to have signs on arterial roads.

All costs associated with minor maintenance (i.e. replacing damaged hardware), as determined by the Transportation Services Division, are the responsibility of the City.

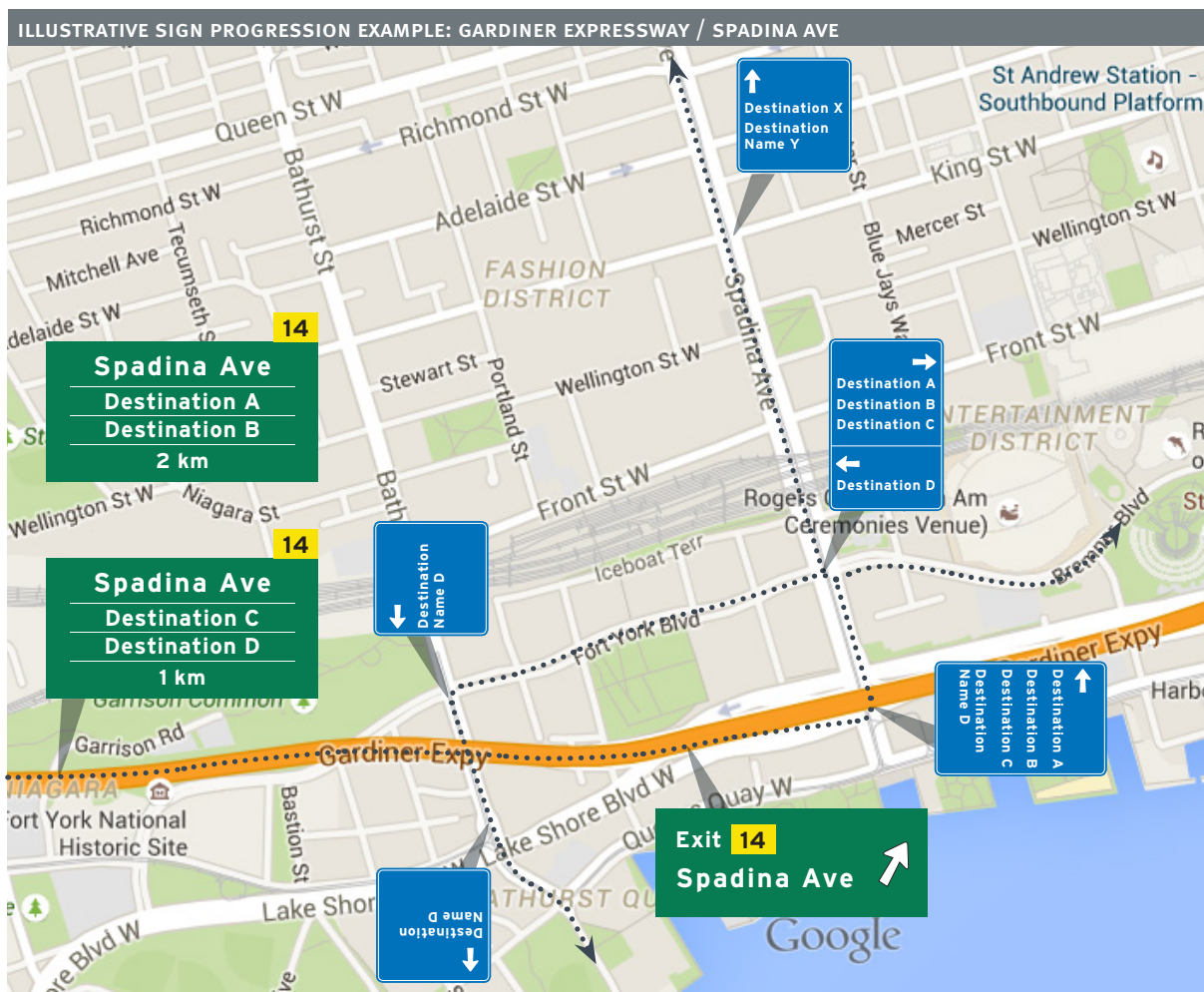
Sign positioning

Every effort must be made to adequately position signs in order to ensure easy-to-read information and to facilitate safe driving manoeuvres.

This sign positioning guidance provides for some flexibility while aiming to maximize the impact of the signs and minimize conflicts with other signage and city infrastructure.

The diagram below shows typical locations for the different sign types. Additional criteria to select the definitive location of signs include:

- **Avoid clutter:** Signs should not be placed in the immediate vicinity of existing traffic signs
- **Ensure clear sightlines:** It is essential that signs do not obstruct essential sightlines for drivers
- **Reduce information overload:** A minimum distance of 100 metres should be placed between signs



Recommendations

Additional measures should be considered in the next stage to expand and consolidate this strategy and ensure effective implementation.

AREA NAMING STRATEGY

At the consultation stage, the inclusion of neighbourhoods was suggested by stakeholders as neighbourhoods help people understand where they are and provide a sense of place in the city. It is suggested that a separate strategy to assess and incorporate neighbourhoods into vehicular visitor destination signs would be more appropriate. A local level area naming strategy is currently being developed in the context of the implementation of the TO360 Wayfinding Strategy with provisional names proposed to support various TO360 projects. As the system expands, more areas names will be agreed and included on pedestrian and cycling signage. Agreeing to unique and distinctive district names at a city-wide level will require considerable stakeholder, BIA and resident consultation and discussion.

REAL-TIME SIGNAGE

Stakeholders also mentioned that real-time signage would be useful which could also be used for temporary events and to better manage heightened traffic levels and parking capacity constraints.

It is recommended that the City explore opportunities to include traffic and parking management messaging related to large events in existing and future variable-message systems.

HAND-OFF TO SMALLER ROADS

Another element which requires more detailed consideration is the hand-off from expressways to smaller road classes (arterial, collector, local) so that destinations are continuously signed from first mention to arrival.

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

It is recommended that further design development is carried out to establish final proposed signage in keeping with the OTM and national signage standards.

Product testing should consist of the fabrication and installation of prototypes in real conditions, utilizing real materials and fabrication methods. These signs are to be tested for legibility, reflectivity and message understanding.

Product testing could run concurrently with a more substantial pilot implementation of signs on a continuous stretch of expressway –including several exits– and including smaller roads to final destinations.

The pilot implementation will provide an opportunity to test –and amend as required– the criteria against potential venue candidates. It will also help to validate the bumper policy and information density on signs.

COORDINATION WITH PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS

A successful updated policy and pilot implementation would allow the City to propose its adoption on Provincial highways within Toronto and potentially expanding the policy to the GTA and beyond.

Appendix A

Definitions

**TORONTO VEHICULAR VISITOR
DESTINATION SIGNAGE STRATEGY**

Definitions

2012 Update to the Road Classification System

More information regarding 2012 Update to the Road Classification System can be found in the City website: <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=6f2c4074781e1410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

ARTERIAL ROAD: Any roadway that is designated as a minor or major arterial road in the City's Road Classification System. See major arterial road and minor arterial road.

BIA: A Board of Management for a Business Improvement Area established according to Chapter 19, Business Improvement Areas.

COLLECTOR ROAD: Roads that provide access to property and traffic movement traffic movement (2,500 to 8,000 vehicles per day), subject to access controls and speed limits of 50 to 60 km/h.

DESTINATION: In the context of this document the term 'destination' or 'visitor destination' refers to individual commercial and non-commercial venues in Toronto that generate significant vehicular trips from their visitors.

EXPRESSWAY: Highest grade road type for high-speed traffic with access ramps and lane dividers. Toronto's Road Classification System defines expressways as roads where traffic movement is a primary function (greater than 40,000 vehicles per day), with no property access and speed limits of 80 to 100 km/h.

LOCAL ROAD: Roads that provide access to property (less than 2,500 vehicles per day) and low traffic speeds.

MAJOR ARTERIAL ROAD: Roads where traffic movement is a primary function (greater than 20,000 vehicles per day), subject to access controls and speed limits of 50 to 60 km/h.

MINOR ARTERIAL ROAD: Roads where traffic movement is a primary function (8,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day), some properties subject to access controls and speed limits of 40 to 60 km/h.

ROAD: A general term for all types of vehicular roads.

ROAD SIGNAGE: A generic terms to indicate traffic signs or vehicular signage. See Traffic Sign.

OTM: Ontario Traffic Manual –which provides information and guidance for transportation practitioners and promotes uniformity of treatment in the design, application and operation of traffic control devices and systems across Ontario.

TO360: Toronto 360 is a multi-modal wayfinding system for the city which includes pedestrians and cyclists. In order to provide consistency across systems, vehicular visitor destination signage is being considered as part of the remit.

TRAFFIC SIGN: A device (other than Markings, Delineators and Traffic Control Signals) which may be erected beside or above a roadway for the purpose of regulating, warning or guiding traffic (OTM March 2005).

**For further information
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