

**Policy:** 6755-9- Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements  
on GDOT Right of Way

**Section:** Permits - Miscellaneous

**Office/Department:** Office of Traffic Operations

**Reports To:** Division of Permits & Ops

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This policy is effective December 1, 2011.

Submit questions or comments specific to the Landscape and Enhancement Policy Manual to [landscape@qdot.ga.gov](mailto:landscape@qdot.ga.gov)

## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

Any enhancement activity which encroaches on State right of way requires a Special Encroachment Permit or Department contract authorization accompanied by a Maintenance Agreement to provide continuous maintenance of the proposed enhancement by means of GPAS AMPS (Refer to the [Access Management Permitting System Tutorials](#)). The applicant must indemnify the Department and provide a suitable bond or escrow, and proof of liability insurance.

The purpose of this policy is to update and combine all existing enhancement policies of the Department into one document. Most of the basic rules, relative to issuing Special Encroachment Permits which allow applicants to perform landscaping or enhancements on State rights of way, are found in the current edition of [Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control](#), Chapter 7, Special Encroachment. This policy provides applicants with requirements to prepare plan proposals and permit submittals for the Department to evaluate their request and to help the Department clearly understand what the applicant proposes to do.

Requests to enhance the appearance of the State rights of way, such as landscaping, welcome signs, murals, bridge embellishments, or special features, will be reviewed by the local District Traffic Engineer/Manager. If recommended for approval, the request will be forwarded to the State Office of Traffic Operations for review and approval by means of GPAS AMPS. If the request includes removal of trees or significant vegetation, the planting of vegetation, or irrigation it will be sent to the State Office of Maintenance - Landscape Architecture Unit by means of GPAS AMPS Ad-Hoc Reviewer for their comments prior to formal approval. Review of enhancement requests may take up to 30 business days for review by District Traffic Operations and Landscape Design Office. Formal approval will be granted by the District Engineer unless it is located on a limited access, ~~or~~ Interstate facility or the proposal requires completion of the Plan Development Process (PDP). In that event, permit approval or contract authorization will be granted by the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee.

## **CHAPTER 2 - REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.1. - Maintenance Agreement**

Any landscape or enhancement feature requires a perpetual Maintenance Agreement for maintaining the proposed feature or plant material. A Special Encroachment Permit shall become part of a required Maintenance Agreement. The Maintenance Agreement shall become part of the contract documents for projects processed outside the Special Encroachment Permit process and must be signed before a project is let. A letter may be required to express concurrence/endorsement between local government and other property owners/agencies or organizations that are adjacent to the areas proposed for change. An approved, detailed, maintenance work plan shall be included as part of the Maintenance Agreement to ensure acceptable maintenance of the site.

The Maintenance Work Plan must address each element of the proposed landscape of enhancement feature, and must clearly describe all activities required to keep the landscape or enhancement feature in a safe and acceptable state of repair or maintenance. Sample Work Plans can be provided upon request. Submit requests to [landscape@dot.ga.gov](mailto:landscape@dot.ga.gov) with "Sample Maintenance Work Plan Request" as part of the subject line.

Maintenance activity shall be performed in a manner that will not affect the safety and operation of the highway or pedestrian safety.

## 2.2 - Access Notification

A GDOT district representative must be made aware 48 hours in advance of all intentions to access the rights of way for any proposed enhancement, cutting, or mowing activity as well as any limited access fence replacement in writing or by email.

## CHAPTER 3 - LANDSCAPE REVIEWS

The Office of Maintenance Landscape Architecture Unit will review plans for vegetation or tree removal, sight distance requirements, clear zone requirements, horizontal clearance requirements, plant maintenance and watering needs, and for exclusion of invasive plant material. The current [Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control](#) include specific information about intersection sight distance and clear zone requirements based on AASHTO design guidelines.

### 3.1 - Plan Requirements

Provide two sets of preliminary site plans and supporting items with the following information to the District Traffic Engineer/Manager for an initial review:

1. An overall site plan and location sketch map which includes:
  - A. The scale of the drawing. The scale should be 1" = 50' or larger. If a smaller scale is used for "overall plans", then enlarged details of the work on the rights of way must be furnished on a 1" = 50' or larger scale. Draw all features on the submitted plan to accurate scale.
  - B. All existing features should be shown with dashed lines and all proposed features shown with solid lines. This should be clearly shown on the plan legend.
  - C. Locations of all property lines and the names and types of businesses and/or the property owners on either side of the property being developed.
  - D. Location and labeling of the right of way line. A general statement such as "Right of Way Varies" is not acceptable.
  - E. A dashed line indicating the location of the right of way boundary, properly labeled.
  - F. A heavy dashed line indicating the clear zone boundary.
  - G. State Route Numbers, U.S. Route Numbers (if applicable), names of all highways and roads which appear on the plans. Designations such as "County Road", "Cross Road" or "City Street" are not specific enough and should not be used.
  - H. Existing and proposed contour lines or elevations sufficient to show the natural and proposed drainage features within the property to be developed. This should include all of the adjacent highway rights of way and any elevations needed to show how the water flows once it leaves this property.
  - I. A north arrow.
  - J. The GDOT milepost, estimated to the nearest tenth of a mile to some point on the property being developed.
  - K. The posted speed limit(s) along the state route(s).
  - L. All existing GDOT signs within the frontage being developed.
  - M. All existing permitted billboards within 500 feet of the site. Locations of permitted billboards and other information can be viewed in [GDOT's Public Permit Search Website](#).
    - i Permits will not be issued for encroachments within 500 feet of outdoor advertising signs that enhance the visibility of the signs. [Policy 6170-1, Vegetation Management at Outdoor Advertising Signs](#) should be referred to for tree removal in the right of way that involves visibility for a permitted outdoor advertising sign.

- ii If a billboard exists within 500 feet of the proposed landscape, plant material that will grow to obstruct the billboard within the 500-foot view zone of the sign face cannot be planted.
  - N. The width of existing roadway pavements, lane widths, lane lines and direction of travel within the lanes, including the edges of the road.
  - O. Indication of the length of the frontage being developed under the permit.
  - P. A title block showing the name of the property owner (and the permit applicant, if different from the property owner), the GDOT district number, and the county in which the project is located. The name of the engineer or individual who prepared the plans should also be included.
  - Q. Location and size of any existing and proposed side drain or cross drain culverts, pipes, catch basins, detention ponds, ditches, etc., and direction of flow within the structure.
2. A utility plan showing all utilities above and below ground that are within proximity of proposed plant material.
  3. Suitable photography in hard copy or electronic version of the site showing all existing features.
  4. An irrigation plan showing the location of water source, valves, controllers, pipes, sleeves, and sprinkler heads, if a system is proposed.
  5. Refer to section [8.4, Necessity to Prove a Benefit to the Department for Excess Grading](#), for activities related to excess grading.

## **CHAPTER 4 – TREE CLEARANCES**

### **4.1 – Plants in Medians and on Shoulders**

Shrubs which exceed 30 inches in height cannot be planted within the horizontal clearance zone in medians. Trees cannot be planted within the horizontal clearance zone in medians and on shoulders. Trees planted in medians must be limbed up to a minimum of 7 feet from the ground. The horizontal clearance minimums are listed in the [Table of Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs](#) in Section 4.2. Clear zone distances are found in the current issue of the AASHTO Roadside Design Guide or the current [Regulation for Driveway and Encroachment Control](#). The larger of the Posted Speed or Design Speed is used to determine horizontal clearance criteria.

#### 4.2 – Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs Table

Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs	
Posted / Design Speed	Minimum Horizontal Clearance <sup>1</sup>
≤ 35 mph (Commercial Area <sup>2</sup> )	4-ft. 8-ft. in median
≤ 35mph	8-ft. 8-ft. in median
40 mph	10-ft. 16-ft. in median <sup>3</sup>
45 mph	14-ft. 22-ft. in median <sup>3</sup>
>45 mph	Outside the clear zone
Interstates	120% of the clear zone requirement
<sup>1</sup> From center of tree to face of curb.  <sup>2</sup> In a Central Business District and/or where commercial businesses are typically directly adjacent to the rights of way.  <sup>3</sup> Small trees and shrubs that mature at ≤ 4" in diameter may be planted a minimum of 8 feet from the face of the curb in medians adjacent to 40 to 45 mph speeds. Tree size is diameter of the tree at maturity, measured at dbh (4.5 feet above the ground).  Certain situations may require an increased horizontal clearance setback for additional safety considerations.  For rural shoulders, trees should be placed outside the clear zone.	

Street trees within medians and in pedestrian traffic areas are to be limbed up a minimum of 7 feet. Utilities and intersection sight distance requirements may affect the location of proposed trees in the horizontal clear zone. Additional requirements for clearance setbacks are provided by the [Design Policy Manual](#).

#### Chapter 5 – INVASIVE PLANTS

The GDOT does not allow invasive species, listed in the table below, to be planted on the State's rights of way. Invasive species can limit land use and in the future, cause harm to the industries and resources of the state of Georgia, and can decrease the public's ability to enjoy outdoor recreational activities. It is much harder and more expensive to eliminate an established invasive species than to prevent it getting a foothold. An "invasive species" is defined as a species that is:

1. Non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and
2. Whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. (Executive Order 13112 [Section 1. Definitions])

For more information about invasive species, visit the following websites:

- [USDA National Invasive Species Information Center](#)
- [The Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health](#)
- [The Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council](#)

## 5.1 – List of Invasive Plants

This is not a comprehensive list. New threats to Georgia’s resources and industries can develop over time, and will be taken into consideration during reviews. All cultivars of prohibited species are prohibited. Plants that are not problematic in one climate or soil can be invasive in others. Once you see a plant everywhere, it is too late. See [Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council](#) for details.

<b>Non-native Invasive Plants in Georgia</b>	
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>
<a href="#">Achyranthes japonica</a>	Japanese chaff flower
<a href="#">Ailanthus altissima</a>	tree-of-heaven
<a href="#">Albizia julibrissin</a>	himosa
<a href="#">Alternanthera philoxeroides</a>	alligator weed
<a href="#">Ardisia crenata</a>	coral ardisia
<a href="#">Arthraxon hispidus</a>	small carpetgrass, joint head grass
<a href="#">Arundo donax</a>	giant reed
<a href="#">Celastrus orbiculatus</a>	oriental bittersweet
<a href="#">Cinnamomum camphora</a>	camphortree
<a href="#">Dioscorea polystachya</a>	Chinese yam
<a href="#">Egeria densa</a>	Brazilian waterweed
<a href="#">Eichhornia crassipes</a>	water hyacinth
<b><a href="#">Elaeagnus pungens</a></b>	<b>thorny olive</b>
<b><a href="#">Elaeagnus umbellata</a></b>	<b>autumn-olive</b>
<a href="#">Fallopia japonica</a>	Japanese knotweed
<b><a href="#">Hedera helix</a></b>	<b>English ivy</b>
<a href="#">Hydrilla verticillata</a>	hydrilla
<a href="#">Imperata cylindrica</a>	cogongrass, <b>Japanese bloodgrass</b>
<a href="#">Lespedeza bicolor</a>	shrubby lespedeza
<a href="#">Lespedeza cuneata</a>	sericea lespedeza
<a href="#">Leucanthemum vulgare</a>	oxeye daisy
<b><a href="#">Ligustrum japonicum</a></b>	<b>Japanese privet</b>
<b><a href="#">Ligustrum sinense</a></b>	<b>Chinese privet</b>
<a href="#">Lonicera japonica</a>	Japanese honeysuckle
<a href="#">Lonicera maackii</a>	Amur honeysuckle
<a href="#">Lygodium japonicum</a>	Japanese climbing fern
<a href="#">Melia azedarach</a>	chinaberry
<a href="#">Microstegium vimineum</a>	Japanese stillgrass
<b><a href="#">Miscanthus sinensis</a></b>	<b>Chinese silvergrass</b>
<a href="#">Murdannia keisak</a>	marsh dayflower
<a href="#">Myriophyllum aquaticum</a>	parrotfeather
<b><a href="#">Nandina domestica</a></b>	<b>sacred bamboo</b>
<a href="#">Nasturtium officinale</a>	watercress
<a href="#">Paederia foetida</a>	skunk-vine
<a href="#">Panicum repens</a>	torpedograss
<a href="#">Paspalum urvillei</a>	vaseygrass
<a href="#">Paulownia tomentosa</a>	princesstree



<u>Phragmites australis</u>	common reed
<u>Phyllostachys aurea</u>	golden bamboo
<u>Pueraria Montana var. lobata</u>	kudzu
<b><u>Pyrus calleryana</u></b>	<b>Callery Pear, Bradford Pear</b>
<u>Rosa multiflora</u>	multiflora rose
<u>Salvinia molesta</u>	giant salvinia
<u>Sesbania herbacea</u>	bigpod sesbania
<u>Sesbania punicea</u>	red sesbania
<u>Sorghum halepense</u>	johnsongrass
<b><u>Spiraea japonica</u></b>	<b>Japanese spiraea</b>
<u>Tamarix gallica</u>	French tamarisk
<u>Triadica sebifera</u>	Chinese tallowtree
<b><u>Vinca major</u></b>	<b>big periwinkle</b>
<b><u>Vinca minor</u></b>	<b>common periwinkle</b>
<b><u>Wisteria floribunda</u></b>	<b>Japanese wisteria</b>
<b><u>Wisteria sinensis</u></b>	<b>Chinese wisteria</b>

Plants in bold type are commonly available in the nursery trade. These are not allowed on GDOT Right of Way.

## CHAPTER 6 – PLANT MATERIAL

### 6.1 – Specifications

All landscaping, roadside development, and maintenance should conform to the most current edition of GDOT Standard Specifications.

Georgia DOT requires the use of Georgia Grown trees, shrubs, and other nursery plants for Right of Way plantings. The Georgia Grown program is a marketing and economic development program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. For more information, refer to the [Georgia Grown](#) homepage.

Every effort should be made to use plant material native to Georgia. Seventy-five percent of all trees should be native, large-canopy shade trees.

The minimum size for proposed hardwood trees planted on the rights of way shall be 2 ½ inch caliper. Multi-stem trees and evergreens that do not meet the minimum 2 ½ inch caliper requirements shall be a minimum of 8 – 10 feet tall. The minimum acceptable container size for shrubs is 3-gallons. The minimum size ground cover container is 1-gallon.

Shrubs and/or ground cover used for mitigation are to be spaced for total coverage in two (2) years. To determine shrub quantities for a given area (X), use the factors given below:

Recommended Plant Spacing (On Center)	Divide Total Square Footage (X) by:
12"	1
18"	2.25
24"	4
36"	9
48"	16

Example: To determine the quantity of shrubs spaced 36" On Center needed for 50 square feet,  $50 \div 9 = 5.56$ , or 6 shrubs.

Label the sizes, quantities, spacing and names of all proposed plant material on all plans.

## 6.2 – Planting Dates

The GDOT Specifications limit the months in which landscape related work for trees and shrubs can occur. Plant installations are to be done between the dates of October 15 and March 15.

## PRUNING

### 7.1 – Pruning Standards

Pruning shall take place at the appropriate time of year. No more than 25 percent of the leaf-bearing crown may be removed when pruning. No topping of trees is permitted. Selective tree and shrub pruning is to be done in conformance with industry standards (according to current ANSI A300 Part 1 guidelines). These guidelines can be purchased online from the [American National Standards Institute](#).

### 7-2 – Daylighting

Daylighting, which is not permitted, is any vegetation removal whose primary purpose is to enhance the visibility of adjacent property.

Provide details for any proposed pruning or removal of dead, diseased, uprooted or broken trees, as determined by the Department. Minor tree trimming (removal of low limbs up to a height of six 6 feet measured from the base) may be done as long as no more than 25 percent of the leaf-bearing crown is removed. This is not to be undertaken for the sole purpose of "daylighting."

## 8 – MITIGATION FOR AUTHORIZED VEGETATION REMOVAL

### 8.1 – Definition

Mitigation is the process of minimizing or rectifying the impact of vegetation removed from the rights of way for commercial driveway and Special Encroachment Permits. It takes place when there is a proven benefit to the Department for additional grading. Mitigation can be a landscape enhancement, site restoration, or as payment of Contributory Value fees.

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## 8.2 – Requirements

Mitigation is required for:

1. The authorized removal or disturbance of trees or native understory vegetation from the rights of way.
2. Grading activities which are determined to be a benefit to the Department and which involve vegetation removal.

Mitigation is not required for:

1. Removal of invasive plant species.
2. Vines, shrubs, and colonizing seedling trees removed within two (2) feet of limited access fence.
3. Trees removed from the clear zone.
4. Driveway construction that does not result in removal of any trees four (4) inches in diameter or greater.

## 8.3 - Restrictions

No tree removal, pruning, or ground disturbance shall take place within any stream buffer.

The Department may reject a permit application if the permit review determines the proposed vegetation removal will jeopardize the stability of the slope and erosion and sedimentation control.

Vegetation removal for commercial driveway and Special Encroachment Permits is not allowed for the sole purpose of daylighting a sign or business. Vegetation removal within the rights of way View Zone of an outdoor advertising sign must be done using a permit according to [Policy 6170-1, Vegetation Management at Outdoor Advertising Signs](#).

## 8.4 - Necessity to Prove a Benefit to the Department for Excess Grading

Grading activity or vegetation removal on the rights of way, not directly related to commercial driveway access construction or for a Special Encroachment Permit, must demonstrate a substantial benefit to the Department. Provide a base map as outlined in [the Section 3-1 - Plan Requirements](#). When "vegetation control", "grading with tree removal", "driveway clearing", "landscape clearing", "landscape clean-up", "vegetation management", "tree trimming", or "vegetation removal" requests are made for work to be done on the rights of way, the following additional items must be included in the proposal:

1. Existing and proposed grading contours
2. The construction grading boundary reasonably required to create a new driveway access.
3. The boundary of the additional excess grading.
4. The beginning and ending points at the edge of the road that mark the boundaries of proposed tree removal for the new driveway access point. Measure the number of feet between these two points.

A tree inventory. *When proposing tree removal beyond what is required for driveway construction, provide an inventory of the trees that are to be removed that are four (4) inches or greater, measured at diameter at breast height (dbh), which is 4 ½ feet above ground. Provide a total of the caliper inches of those trees.* During review, if a substantial safety or maintenance benefit to the Department is verified for additional vegetation removal as a result of additional grading or clearing activities beyond what is necessary for driveway access construction, or as the result of grading for approved Special Encroachment Permits, the applicant must provide landscape enhancement, site restoration, and replacement plants as mitigation for any lost vegetation.

## **8.5 - Replacement Planting Requirements for Mitigation**

When landscape enhancement replacement plants are required:

1. Provide a landscape design proposal plan for replacement plants at a ratio of one-half (1/2) of the total caliper inches of trees removed and one-fourth (1/4) of the total square feet of existing native understory vegetation removed.
2. Thirty percent (30%) of the replacement shrubs and seventy-five percent (75%) of replacement trees shall be native species or cultivars of native species.
3. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all proposed trees shall be large-canopy, hardwood shade trees.
4. Grass all disturbed ground areas not planted in trees and shrubs according to GDOT Specifications.

If the Department determines that landscape mitigation cannot be reasonably accommodated, then the remainder of the mitigation shall be fees according to [Section 16-2 - Excess Clearing Fees](#).

## **CHAPTER 9 – LIMITED LANDSCAPES**

### **9.1 – Criteria for a Limited Landscape**

A "limited landscape" Special Encroachment Permit for landscape enhancement of small areas (less than ¼ acre) on non-interstate or non-limited access roads may be possible under specific, special circumstances. See the Limited Landscape Policy Document.

## **CHAPTER 10 – LOCAL/INTERSTATE MOWING**

If a group or business proposes to mow a limited section of the rights of way adjacent to their frontage, exclusive of any landscape enhancement, they may complete a Limited Landscape agreement.

### **10.1 – Local Mowing**

If a local government entity or group proposes to mow limited sections of the rights of way, exclusive of any landscape enhancement, they must complete a Maintenance Agreement through the local District Traffic Engineer/Manager. An extensive Special Encroachment Permit review is not needed.

### **10.2 – Interstate Centerline Mowing**

If a local government entity proposes to mow sections of the rights of way that include interstate centerline rights of way, exclusive of any landscape enhancement, they must complete a Maintenance Agreement that includes a work plan with special safety guidelines for large-scale mowing operations. An extensive Special Encroachment Permit review is not needed.

## **CHAPTER 11 - DECORATIVE WELCOME SIGNS OR GATEWAY SIGNS**

### **11.1 – City and County Line Signing**

Local Governments may erect a city limit or county line sign according to the Department's standards on State routes as long as they meet the following criteria. (no permit is required):

1. Maximum sign size to be no larger than 48" X 30".
2. Principal legend should be a minimum of 4" in height, preferable 6".

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3. Colors: Background of any color except red, orange, yellow, or fluorescent yellow-green.
4. Sign is to be ground mounted on a maximum 3 pound u-channel steel post or a 4" X 4" wood post. The sign should be placed so the bottom of the sign is a minimum of 7' above the ground line. The post shall be embedded a minimum of 3' into the ground.
5. Sign shall be erected and maintained by governing authority.
6. Signs must be installed in accordance with Figure 2A-2, Examples of Heights and Lateral Locations of Sign Installations, of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) 2009 Edition.
7. No more than one city limit sign per direction will be erected on each route.
8. No sign will be allowed to indicate when leaving the city or county.
9. Signs for Unincorporated areas will be reviewed for processing upon official request.
10. No additional signs may be added or attached to sign or post.

### **11.2 – Gateway/Monument/Custom Decorative Signing/Structures on Non-Limited or Limited Access Highways**

Local governments may elect, ~~instead,~~ to erect a custom-designed decorative sign(s). Decorative signs that exceed the requirements of Department-fabricated city limit and county line signs described above require Special Encroachment Permit approval by means of GPAS AMPS. Signs will be reviewed and approved by the State Office of Traffic Operations after recommendations from the District Office.

Custom-designed decorative signs on non-limited or limited access highways must meet the following criteria:

1. The signs shall be erected and maintained by a local governing authority.
2. Locations considered should be coordinated with major tourism area/regions that create out of state and regional travel. Signs and associated text will only be considered for the appropriate local governing authority, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), or appropriate roadway name. Additionally, anything containing advertisement or logos for organizations, clubs and non-profit businesses will not be considered for gateway signing.
3. All signs not frangible and crashworthy must be located a minimum of 120% (typically 42 feet) outside the clear zone. In no circumstance will the sign be placed in an area where new roadside safety hardware would be required. The applicant may propose a location behind existing barrier. If signage is placed behind guardrail, it shall be at a minimum of 5 feet behind the guardrail.
4. The Maximum Height of the proposed gateway sign shall be limited to ensure adequate clear zone for all circumstances.
5. Signs installed without federal funds are to be processed as a Special Encroachment Permit by means of GPAS AMPS and will not require FHWA approval.
6. Lighting and landscaping issues must be addressed in the Special Encroachment Permit by means of GPAS AMPS via Adhoc Approver by the Office of Design Policy and Support.
7. A Maintenance Agreement will be established specifying who will maintain the decorative sign/structure. The Maintenance Agreement must ensure that maintenance activities will be performed in a manner that will not affect the safety and operation of the highway.
8. No more than one city limit sign per direction will be erected on each route.
9. No sign will be allowed to indicate when leaving the city or county.
10. No sign will be allowed in a median or traffic island.
11. Proposed sign text shall be reviewed by the State Review Panel for concurrence. Refer to [section 12.2](#) of this policy.
12. Sign structures shall feather into the cut or fill slope rather than present a flat end wall facing the direction of traffic flow.
13. No more than one sign shall be allowed on each interchange quadrant/approach.
14. Aesthetic features of the sign must conform to the review criteria found in [section 12.3](#).

If a decorative sign is proposed to include an LED panel it will need to meet the following additional criteria:

1. LED portion of the sign shall remain fixed for at least 2 minutes, and each transitional change shall occur within 2 seconds.  
(Sign shall be programmed to automatically freeze in a single display in the event of a malfunction or computer error)
2. LED portion of the sign shall not cause glare or impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle or to otherwise interfere with the safe operation of a motor vehicle.
3. Sign shall not deploy any display which is flashing, intermittent, or moving when the sign is in a fixed position.
4. LED portion of the sign cannot display any form of advertising or logos.

## **CHAPTER 12 - AESTHETIC FEATURES, MURALS AND BRIDGE EMBELLISHMENTS**

### **12.1 – Public Art**

All requests to enhance the State rights of way with aesthetic features, art murals, banners, or road structure embellishments will be reviewed by the proper District Traffic Engineer/Manager, and forwarded on to the State Office of Traffic Operations, or forwarded directly to the Office of Maintenance – Landscape Architecture Unit for their comments and then on to Traffic Operations for comments prior to approval. Formal approval will be granted by the District Engineer unless, it is located on a limited access or Interstate facility.

The Department recognizes that art, by nature, is appreciated in a personal way and may not appeal to everyone equally. The Department encourages organizations or local governments to enhance the rights of way with natural vegetation rather than using murals, embellishments, or banners, etc.

Murals, ~~or~~ embellishments or banners that are proposed within state rights of way must be requested by a local government entity sponsor as a Special Encroachment Permit. The sponsor must sign a Maintenance Agreement to perpetually maintain regular upkeep of the mural, embellishment, or banner and prevent the mural from falling into disrepair or structural unsoundness. The Maintenance Agreement will require the applicant to make provisions for removal of murals, embellishments, or banners if they are not maintained. The agreement will also convey unlimited rights to the Department for modification or removal of the mural, embellishment, or banner.

### **12.2 – Review Panel**

A review panel consisting of the Director of Operations, State Traffic Engineer, State Maintenance Engineer or their designees will review the conceptual drawings or final artistic design using the criteria described below. The Department reserves the right to refuse any and all proposals. Murals, ~~or~~ embellishments or aesthetic elements must meet the criteria below.

### **12.3 – Review Criteria**

1. The feature shall not create a new fixed object within the rights of way.
2. Clear sight line shall not be obstructed.
3. The feature shall be securely affixed and permanently attached to a substantial, existing structure.
4. The feature shall not contain multiple messages or moveable parts.
5. The feature shall not be made of materials that can come loose and fall into the rights of way or road. Any proposed veneer surface must include details of how the surface will be permanently affixed and how the mural can be removed and the structure restored to its original surface.
6. The feature shall not pose a distraction to the traveling public.

7. The feature shall maintain a unified aesthetic character with the landscape and unmanaged woods along the roadway.
8. Advertising or business logos are prohibited. The mural or embellishment must not be perceived to be advertising or incorporate school team mascots or logos.
9. Sign text is limited to the name of the appropriate governing authority, CID, or roadway name.
10. Offensive messages or images are prohibited.
11. The feature shall not include any content that could potentially divide a community.
12. The feature shall not contain recognition of sponsors.
13. The mural or embellishment shall not be painted on any natural feature.
14. The feature shall not emit sound.
15. The feature shall not be externally or internally illuminated.
16. The feature shall not include images of living people.
17. The feature shall not exceed 3000 sq. ft.
18. The feature shall be no closer than 1000 feet from any other mural visible from the rights of way.
19. Local government entities must provide sound evidence that local community input was involved in choosing the content and design of the mural, including but not limited to minutes from any public meeting.
20. The feature shall not incorporate espaliered plant material.
21. The feature shall be made of long-lasting materials and be easy to maintain.

## **13 - SPECIAL PAVING**

### **13.1 – Stamped Concrete Alternative**

Concrete pavers are not allowed on State rights of way. The GDOT allows the use of stamped concrete for crosswalks if the following conditions are met:

1. The crossing is at a 90 degree angle with no curves to the roadway
2. The width of the treatment is less than 10 feet
3. Current ADT is 5,000 or less and truck volume is 10% or less

### **13.2 – Architectural Asphalt**

When architectural asphalt treatment is used, the Maintenance Agreement shall include the statement that the Department will replace the feature with standard pavement during any resurfacing activities unless the sponsor funds replacement of the architectural treatment.

## **CHAPTER 14 - NON-STANDARD FENCING**

Portions of the limited access fence may be removed for the purpose of cleaning the fence line of all vines and small brambles growing in the fence. If removed, the limited access fence must be replaced with GDOT standard fencing, in like kind, along the original location. The applicant must either replace the limited access fence at the end of each day of work or install a temporary construction fence. No gates or permanent access points will be allowed along the fence unless the applicant has entered into a Maintenance Agreement with the Department.

If fencing other than the standard hog wire or chain link is approved by the Department, it must be installed one foot inside the applicant's property and the applicant must agree to maintain the fence. All access to the work area is to be from the abutting property, not from the traveled way.

**Policy:** 6755-9 - Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements on GDOT Right of Way

**Date Last Reviewed:** 4/6/2022

## CHAPTER 15 - IRRIGATION

If the work includes installation of a sprinkler system within State rights of way, an **INDEMNITY AGREEMENT** must be signed by the applicant, approved by the GDOT Commissioner or designee and recorded by the applicant in the County Courthouse in which the site is located. No irrigation systems will be allowed within the median or traffic island unless approved by the GDOT Commissioner or designee.

The GDOT requires irrigation controllers be located outside the right of way.

Valve boxes need to be locked or located outside the right of way.

A shut-off valve at the meter connection will be required for emergency purposes.

Include tracer wires on all mainline and lateral pipes.

Sprinkler heads must be the "pop-up" type. Drip irrigation is typically not allowed within the GDOT rights of way. Sprinkler systems or some type of irrigation system are not permitted in medians except by written approval of the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee as a special approval. The procedure for a special request is stated in section 15.1.

### 15.1 – Procedure for a Special Approval Request (Irrigation Systems in Medians/Islands)

Irrigation systems in a median or traffic island area require written approval from the GDOT Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee. **This is not a variance or design exception.**

1. When a permit applicant desires to install irrigation in a median or traffic island, the applicant (local municipality) must submit a letter titled "Request for Special Approval" and a separate letter from the Engineer of Record.
  - a. The applicant letter must include:
    - The tracking number of the Special Encroachment Permit being applied for, and a description of the project with the State Route and location.
    - The reason why additional watering will be needed after plant establishment.
  - b. The Engineer of Record letter must include:
    - The note "The plantings do not violate standard design criteria."
    - A signature line for recommendation by the Engineer of Record including a Georgia Professional Engineer licensure number.
    - A signature line for concurrence for the Director of Engineering.
    - A signature line for approval for the Chief Engineer.
  - c. The plans must CLEARLY and ACCURATELY show the Right of Way line, as well as all other items required for a plan review.
2. After the initial review by the district, the plans will be sent to the State Maintenance Office Landscape Architecture Unit for review and comment. The State Maintenance Office Landscape Architecture Unit will send the request to the State Utilities Office for review and comment. The plans and comments will be forwarded to the GDOT Office of Design Policy and Support Design Policy Unit (via e-mail [designexception@dot.ga.gov](mailto:designexception@dot.ga.gov)), who will route the request for signature or make additional comments and return for correction. **Drawings and other submittals must be corrected per comments from SMO LAU, State Utilities, and the Design Policy Unit before forwarding.**
3. The Director of Engineering will sign the request letter or comments will be returned to the applicant through the district for correction.

**Policy:** 6755-9 - Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements on GDOT Right of Way

**Date Last Reviewed:** 4/6/2022



4. Once all comments have been addressed the request will be forwarded to the Chief Engineer for signature. The Chief Engineer will either approve the request, return the request for correction or deny approval.
5. After approval from the Chief Engineer, the request letter will be routed back to the district for distribution to the applicant.

If the irrigation system and plantings to be installed under the Special Encroachment Permit are not associated with an adjacent property owner, the meter, backflow, controller, and valves may be located on the Right of Way. HOWEVER, these must be located at the back of the right of way, and are not to be located in a median or traffic island.

## **CHAPTER 16 - FEES & PAYMENT**

### **16.1 - Typical Driveway Access Fees**

A Contributory Value Fee of ten dollars (\$10.00) per one (1) foot of road frontage affected by tree removal is required to compensate for all proposed removal of vegetation necessary for driveway access construction.

### **16.2 - Excess Clearing Fees**

A Contributory Value fee is assessed to compensate for any remaining replacement plants to complete the mitigation for additional grading or clearing activities beyond what is necessary for driveway access construction where the Department determines that the required landscape replacement plants cannot reasonably be installed to compensate for the total amount of lost vegetation. The corresponding Contributory Value fees in this case can be calculated by multiplying the remaining caliper inches that cannot be replaced on the site by seven dollars (\$7.00). Refer to [Sections 3-1 – Plan Requirements](#) and [8.4 - Necessity to Prove a Benefit to the Department for Excess Grading](#).

### **16.3 - Payment Details**

After Department review and approval, submit a check to the made payable to the Georgia Department of Transportation to the following address:

Georgia Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 931718  
Atlanta, GA 31193-1718

Include the permit number on the check.

Contributory Value Fees will be deposited in the Roadside Enhancement and Beautification Fund to mitigate for the necessary vegetation removal that takes place during Special Encroachment and Driveway Permit construction.

All costs related to a Special Encroachment Permit project are the responsibility of the permit applicant.

## CHAPTER 17 – JUNKYARDS

### 17.1 - Screening

Screening, vegetative buffer planting, ornamental walls, architectural treatment, earthen embankments, or a combination of any of these may be used to effectively hide from view any deposit of junk from the main traveled way. Refer to [GDOT Rule 672-8](#) for specific requirements and definitions for Junkyards. The screening shall be located on the owner's land and **not on any part of the highway right of way**. Plant material should be predominantly evergreen. The minimum size of plant material at the time of planting is:

- 1 – 1 ½" for large canopy shade trees
- 4 – 5' tall for small flowering trees
- 4 – 5' tall for evergreen trees
- 2 ½ - 3' tall for evergreen shrubs

## CHAPTER 18 – MITIGATION FOR UNAUTHORIZED VEGETATION REMOVAL

### 18.1 - Damage to the State Rights of Way

Mitigation of value changes to the State rights of way or other costs for landscaping plans, traffic control, material handling, landscaping, vegetation replacement, subsequent maintenance, or other costs incurred by the Department as a result of damage to the rights of way will be the responsibility of the individual or company accountable for the value change. Mitigation includes a Maintenance Agreement for the rights of way affected, reimbursement for the materials and/or vegetation removed from the rights of way, and/or the replacement of the vegetation removed from the rights of way.

### 18.2 - Unauthorized Vegetation Removal

Unauthorized vegetation removal or tree damage that effectively destroys existing trees will be grounds for sanctions provided for in [GDOT Rule 672-14.08](#) and the Georgia Outdoor Advertising Control Act, [Official Code of Georgia Annotated \(OCGA\) Section 32-6-70](#) et.seq., and [OCGA Section 32-6-95](#). Procedures will apply the same as in cases wherein the Department believes that an illegal tree trimming has taken place. Any person engaged in unauthorized pruning, trimming, or removal of vegetation is subject to a penalty of \$10,000 to \$20,000 per incident and restitution in an amount equal to the appraised value of the trees or vegetation, or both. Reimbursement amounts for affected vegetation 4 inches in diameter or greater will be calculated by the Department using the BASIC TREE VALUE table in [section 18.3](#). Reimbursement of \$500 per 500 feet parallel to the traveled way will be charged in addition to the Basic Tree Value for unauthorized removal of any plant material less than 4 inches in diameter.

**18.3 – Basic Tree Values Table**

<b>Diameter of Effectively Destroyed Tree (dbh in inches)</b>	<b>Class (Size)</b>	<b>Hardwood Basic Value</b>	<b>Non-Hardwood Basic Value</b>
4 to 4.9	4	\$ 246.00	\$ 147.00
5 to 6.9	6	\$ 341.00	\$ 205.00
7 to 8.9	8	\$ 596.00	\$ 358.00
9 to 10.9	10	\$ 936.00	\$ 562.00
11 to 12.9	12	\$1,138.00	\$ 683.00
13 to 14.9	14	\$1,605.00	\$ 963.00
15 to 16.9	16	\$2,158.00	\$1,295.00
17 to 18.9	18	\$2,795.00	\$1,677.00
19 to 20.9	20	\$3,518.00	\$2,111.00
21 to 22.9	22	\$4,325.00	\$2,595.00
23 to 24.9	24	\$5,218.00	\$3,131.00
25 to 26.9	26	\$6,195.00	\$3,717.00
27 to 28.9	28	\$7,258.00	\$4,355.00
29 to 30.9	30	\$8,405.00	\$5,043.00

## **References:**

## **History:**

annual review: 04/06/22;

added to Manual of Guidance: 11/01/93

Reviewed: 4/6/2022