



EDWARD BROOKS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Testimony from Rep. Ed Brooks in Support of 2015 Assembly Bill 550

THANK YOU MR. CHAIR AND MEMBERS FOR HEARING ASSEMBLY BILL 550 TODAY.

A RECENT LAW CHANGE PROHIBITS SIGNS PLACED IN THE HIGHWAY RIGHT-OF-WAY, INCLUDING COMMUNITY WELCOME SIGNS. I'VE INCLUDED A DETAILED BACKGROUND EXPLANATION AS AN ATTACHMENT.

THE IMPACT IS STATEWIDE, AND MAUSTON'S CITY ADMINISTRATOR NATHAN THIEL IS HERE TO EXPLAIN WHAT THIS MEANS TO MAUSTON, AND TO COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT WISCONSIN.

THE BILL IS STRAIGHT FORWARD. IT PERMITS THE CITY OF MAUSTON TO ERECT AND MAINTAIN WELCOME SIGNS IN THE HIGHWAY RIGHT-OF-WAY WITHIN THE CITY'S BOUNDARIES.

WHY DOES THIS BILL JUST APPLY TO MAUSTON? WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE HOPE THIS BILL WILL BE ENOUGH FOR THE DOT TO DEVELOP A COMMON SENSE ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTION THAT APPLIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE. HOWEVER, I DON'T THINK THAT WILL HAPPEN UNTIL THE LEGISLATURE SPEAKS ON THIS ISSUE.



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ATTACHMENT 1 OF 1 TO TESTIMONY FROM REP. ED BROOKS IN SUPPORT OF 2015 ASSEMBLY BILL 550

From: Nathan Thiel [mailto:nthiel@mauston.com]

Sent: Friday, August 14, 2015 11:12 AM

To: Sen.Marklein <Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Brooks <Rep.Brooks@legis.wisconsin.gov>

Subject: Welcome Signs

This year the City of Mauston wanted to get with the times and place welcome signs in our main entryways coming into town. When we contacted DOT they said this year the law changed and that these signs would no longer be allowed in ROW as of January 1st of 2015. They further mentioned that existing welcome signs if there were any modifications would be removed. I understand sight lines and keeping ROW uncluttered, but this rule is so anti-community and state pride it is not funny. In some areas the ROW of is so far from the road it would take binoculars to see the sign. We spent over \$30,000 and now I have to store these signs because I have nowhere to place them. Is there anything we can do. Help!?

STATE OF WISCONSIN
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

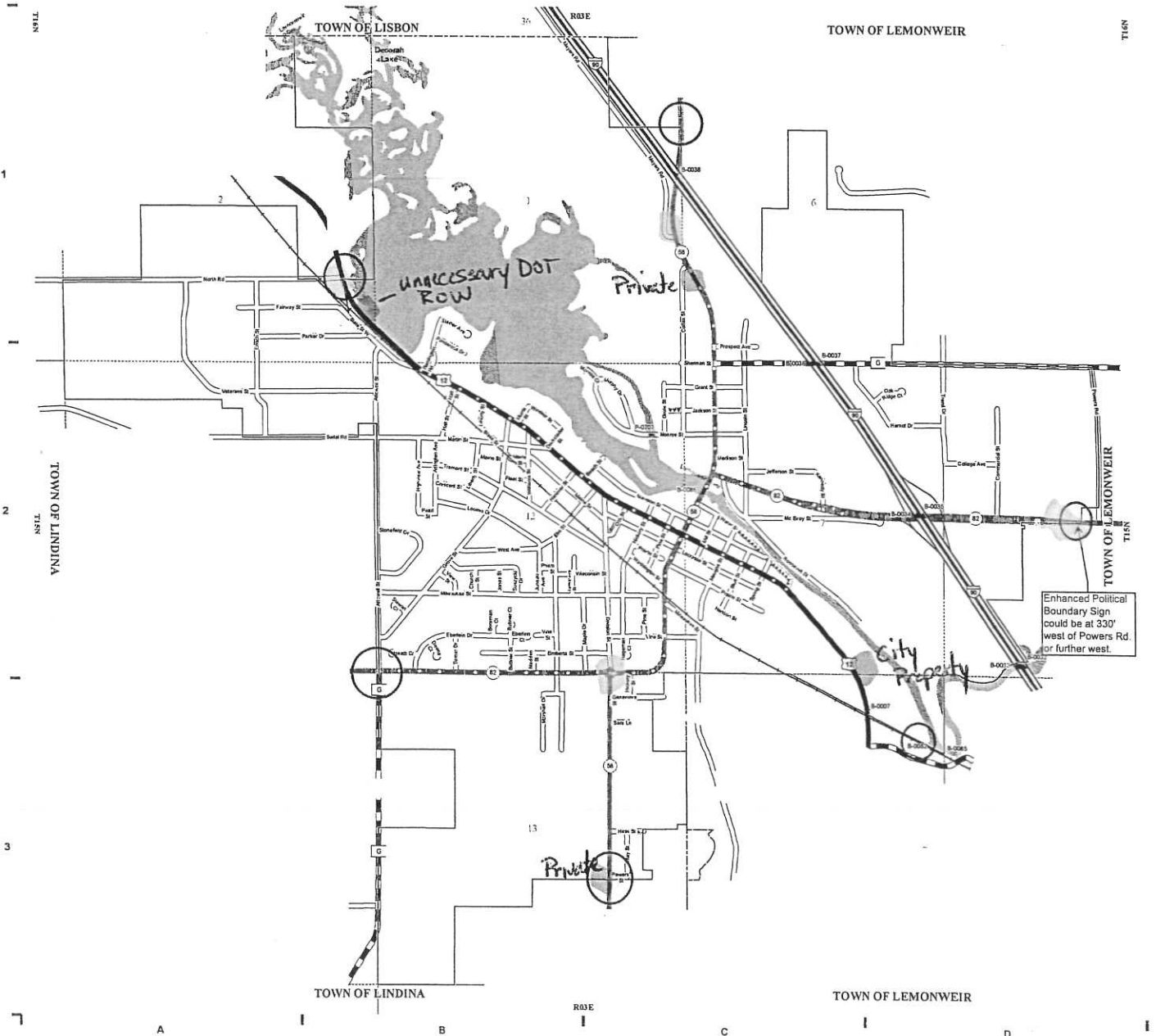
CITY OF
MAUSTON
COUNTY: JUNEAU

DATE	MILEAGE FOR LOCAL ROADS/STREETS	LOCAL ROADS/STREETS Certified in accordance with sec. 86.30 Wis. stat.	
(1) 4-1-15	27.61		
(2) 1-1-16		Name: _____	Title: _____
(3) 4-1-16		Signature: _____	Date: _____

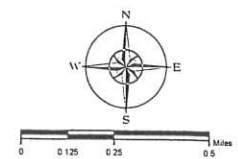
MILEAGE FOR COUNTY TRUNKS	MILEAGE FOR COUNTY OTHER ROADS
0.93	00.00

- (1) THIS DATA REPRESENTS THE LAST CERTIFIED MILEAGE AS CORRECTED BY WISDOT WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN USED FOR PAST TRANSPORTATION AIDS.
- (2) THE TOWN CHAIRMAN OR CITY/VILLAGE CLERK IS TO FILL IN THE MILEAGE TO BE CERTIFIED AS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AS OF THE FOLLOWING JANUARY, INCLUDING THE NEW CHANGES THAT ARE MADE ON THE PLAT.
- (3) THIS DATA REPRESENTS MILEAGE ADJUSTMENTS MADE BY WISDOT DUE TO FIELD VERIFICATION, INVENTORY, ANNEXATION, ETC. TRANSPORTATION AID PAYMENTS MAY BE MADE BASED ON THIS FIGURE.

- = Potential Welcome Sign Locations
- = Original locations
- = modified locations



LEGEND:



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Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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DATE: December 8, 2015

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Transportation
The Honorable Keith Ripp, Chair

FROM: Tom Rhatican, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 550 (welcome signs erected in the highway right-of-way by the city of Mauston)

Chairman Ripp and Committee Members:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) would like to provide some important background information to committee members as you consider 2015 Wisconsin Assembly Bill 550 (AB 550). AB 550 proposes to authorize the City of Mauston to erect and maintain, within the right-of-way of any highway located within the municipality, signs welcoming motorists to the city and providing information about services and organizations available in the city.

Traffic safety is a top priority for WisDOT. While we certainly understand a municipality's desire to place signs at their respective boundaries welcoming visitors to their community, the Department is opposed to AB 550 for three reasons:

- 1) Allowing the placement of signs by a municipality within the right-of-way of *any* highway, without limit on the number or size of signs, poses a safety risk to the traveling public.
- 2) The Mauston signs do not comply with the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) – nor with state law (which adopted the MUTCD).
- 3) A suitable location for placement of each of the four signs originally requested by the City of Mauston has already been selected.

The Federal Highway Administration's MUTCD establishes standards for the design and use of signs erected on the highway, and is used nationally by state Departments of Transportation to ensure consistent application of signage erected on the roadway. County and local governments must also comply with the MUTCD on county and municipal roadways.

All signs erected within the highway right-of-way are required to meet certain safety standards, which includes the ability to successfully pass a crash test. In particular, the federal the Federal Highway Administration's MUTCD specifies that only signs necessary to regulate (e.g. speed limit), warn (e.g. bridge height clearance), or guide (e.g. destinations or information) traffic shall be placed within the right-of-way of a highway.

In addition to creating a physical risk in the right-of-way, signs are also a distractor to a driver and must therefore be managed and applied in a way to reduce the likelihood of unnecessarily distracting a driver.

Signs erected WITHIN the highway right-of-way

If a municipality is interested in having signs placed within the highway right-of-way, there are two potential options for the respective community:

1) Community Population Signs

- Erected at or near the entrance of the municipality.
- White lettering on green background.
- WisDOT pays for sign installation and maintenance.
- Signs may contain the official current decennial census figures.

Example:



2) Political Boundary Signs

- Installed at municipal limits.
- May include the words "Welcome to", but no other messages.
 - "Welcome" signs currently within the highway right-of-way were grandfathered for the life of the sign.
 - After sign has reached the end of its life, it is not allowed to be replaced.
- Federal MUTCD is descriptive on what items are allowable on sign.

- Specifies the colors and pictographs allowable on sign, in addition to guidelines on font size and type and size of pictograph.
- For example, white or yellow lettering on blue, green, or brown background is permitted.
- The municipality is responsible for all costs associated with the manufacture, installation and maintenance of the sign.
- Must meet safety standards and be retroreflective.
- Community population figure may be included on sign.

Example:



Signs erected OFF of the highway right-of-way

- Communities interested in the placement of other types of signs must identify a location and seek a permit from WisDOT for installation off of the highway right-of-way on private lands.
 - Signs must adhere to existing federal and state outdoor advertising sign requirements.
 - Signs may not be located in rest areas, park lands or scenic areas.
 - Prior to ordering signs, the Department encourages interested communities to consult with WisDOT regional staff.

The Department remains dedicated to working with local communities to find suitable locations for the placement of signs welcoming visitors to their community. To maintain both traffic safety and efficiency on the state’s transportation system, it is important that the placement of welcome signs on the highway represent an appropriate balance between the municipality’s desire to promote their respective community with current state and federal law, and the need and responsibility of the Department to protect the safety of Wisconsin’s motoring public.

WisDOT continues to be committed to providing the traveling public with the safest and most cost-effective highway system. Wisconsin residents and businesses rely on a safe and efficient transportation network as one of the foundations of a strong economy that will create and preserve jobs and enhance the quality of life in our state.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Nate Yahn, WisDOT legislative advisor, at (608) 266-1114.