To: Mayor and City Council
From: Mike Nielsen, City Engineer
Brad Borders, Public Works Director
Anita Rasmussen, Planning and Community Development Director
Subject: Sign Retroreflectivity Policy
Date: May 2, 2014

The City is required to adopt a sign retroreflectivity policy which establishes how the city will implement a management method to meet the minimum sign retroreflectivity requirements in the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MN MUTCD) by June 13, 2014.

The goal of the policy requirement is to improve public safety on the city's streets and roads and prioritize the city's limited resources to replace signs. Adopting a sign retroreflectivity policy will significantly reduce tort liability lawsuits involving traffic signs. However, there will be a budgeting impact for the replacement of signs which will be discussed further during the budgeting process.

The policy applies to all regulatory, warning, and guide signs as set forth in the MN MUTCD, except for:

A. Parking, Standing, and Stopping signs (R7 and R8 series)
B. Walking/Hitchhiking/Crossing signs (R9 series, R10-1 through R10-4b)
C. Acknowledgment signs, including Memorial signs
D. All signs with blue or brown backgrounds
E. Bikeway signs that are intended for exclusive use by bicyclists or pedestrians

The City started efforts to come into compliance with the requirement in 2011 when the inventory of all signs was completed by an intern and entered into our GIS system. This inventory will be used to assess the timing of the replacement.

The policy is required to identify a way of assessing and replacing signs. Possible methods include:

Nighttime Visual Inspection - This method requires a minimal investment of resources on the part of the city, although there is a need for a record-keeping system for inspection data and the potential for higher labor costs where overtime pay is required. Cities using visual inspections must establish procedures to provide consistency in inspections. This implies the need for training programs and certification of inspectors to assure consistency of inspections.

Measured Sign Retroreflectivity. This method requires the purchase of retroreflectometers which measures the reflectivity of the sign. This method is labor and time intensive and other factors have to be considered when determine whether or not a sign is adequate for continued use at any given location.

Expected Sign Life Method. Signs would be replaced before they reach the end of their service life. The expectation is that the City would know the approximate age of the sign and cross examine that with the manufacturer's warranty and replace as appropriate.

Blanket Replacement. The blanket replacement method is essentially the expected sign life method executed on a spatial or strategic basis. On a spatial basis, all the signs in a particular area or corridor get slated for replacement at the same time, when the effective service life is reached. For example, the city may replace all stop signs every 5 years, but all other signs such as street signs in any given neighborhood every 10 years. Overall, the City has approximately 4,957 signs (includes county sign numbers). Those signs subject to this policy total 3,541 (includes county sign numbers).

Control Signs. The control sign method is based on measurements made of a subset of signs that represent the city's inventory. The subset of signs represents a population of signs made with the same material for which the retroreflectivity performance over time is monitored by actual measurements. As the retroreflectivity levels of the control signs approach the minimum levels, it triggers action to begin replacement of the entire associated population of city signs.

Staff is recommending a blanket replacement of all the City Signs. Initially, all existing signs in the City of a given type will be replaced at specified intervals. This eliminates the need to assess retroreflectivity or track the life of individual signs. The initial replacement interval is 10 years. Those developments which are newer – will be on the end of the 10 year cycle. Probably the biggest concern of this method is the waste associated with "throwing out" new signs. However, most of our developments are at least 5-7 years old – already reaching the expectant life of sign reflectivity. For budgeting purposes, we may consider the costs to replace 300 signs every year

Next steps for compliance include:

- Continue to maintain the traffic sign inventory for the city
- Remove excess and unnecessary signs (children at play)
- Develop a budget for replacing signs
- Use the selected method to evaluate the retroreflectivity of the city's traffic signs
- Identify signs that do not meet the minimum retroreflectivity requirements
- Prioritize and schedule replacement of signs that do not meet the minimum retroreflectivity requirements
- Plan for long-term compliance to better manage your city's signs
- Document the city's actions

Requested action:
Adopt the City of Sartell Sign Retroflectivity Policy

City of Sartell, Minnesota
Sign Retroreflectivity Policy

Article I. Purpose and Goal.

The purpose of this policy is to establish how the city will implement an assessment or management method, or combination of methods, to meet the minimum sign retroreflectivity requirements in the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MN MUTCD).

Substantial conformance with the MN MUTCD is achieved by having a method in place to maintain minimum retroreflectivity levels. Conformance does not require or guarantee that every individual sign in the city will meet or exceed the minimum retroreflective levels at every point in time.

The goal of this policy is to improve public safety on the city's streets and roads and prioritize the city's limited resources to replace signs.

Article II. Applicable Signs.

This policy applies to all regulatory, warning, and guide signs as set forth in the MN MUTCD.

Pursuant to Section 2A.8 of the MN MUTCD the city excludes the following signs from the retroreflectivity maintenance guidelines:

A. Parking, Standing, and Stopping signs (R7 and R8 series)
B. Walking/Hitchhiking/Crossing signs (R9 series, R10-1 through R10-4b)
C. Acknowledgment signs, including Memorial signs
D. All signs with blue or brown backgrounds
E. Bikeway signs that are intended for exclusive use by bicyclists or pedestrians

Article III. Sign Inventory

To meet the city's goal of maintaining sign retroreflectivity above certain levels, the city will maintain a sign inventory of all new or replacement signs installed after the effective date of this policy. The inventory shall indicate the type of sign, the location of the sign, the date of installation or replacement, the type of sheeting material used on the sign face, the expected life of the sign, and any maintenance performed on the sign.

As to existing signs, the city performed an inventory of all signs covered by this policy in 2011. The city recognizes this process will occur over time subject to the city's monetary and human resources. The city shall record the above information related to new signs to the extent that such information is known and shall also include a statement on the general condition of the sign.

Article IV. Removal of Signs

In recognition of the fact that excess road signs have been shown to reduce the effectiveness of signage, as well as impose an unnecessary financial burden on road authorities, it is the city's policy to remove signs determined to be unnecessary for safety purposes and which are not required to comply with an applicable state or federal statute or regulation. The removal of signs shall be based on an engineering study and the MN MUTCD.

Article V. Approved Sign Evaluation Method.

After reviewing the various methods proposed for sign maintenance, the City adopts one or more of the following methods to meet the minimum sign retroreflectivity requirements in the MN MUTCD:

Blanket Replacement. Initially, all existing signs in the City of a given type are replaced at specified intervals. This eliminates the need to assess retroreflectivity or track the life of individual signs. The replacement interval is based on the expected sign life for the shortest-life material used in the City or a given sign type. The initial replacement interval is 10 years.

Article VI. Sign Replacement.

Priority shall be given to warning and regulatory signs on roads with higher vehicle usage. After the initial replacement of signs as provided for in this Article or the installation of new signs, the City shall, for the purpose of complying with the requirements of the MN MUTCD, maintain minimum retroreflectivity standards, as budgetary factors allow, by replacing signs as they reach the end of the latter of their (a) warranty period; (b) expected life expectancy for the sheeting material used on the sign; or (c) expected life as determined by an authorized engineering study. Damaged, stolen, or missing signs may be replaced as needed.

Article VII. Modification and Deviation from Policy.

The City reserves the right to modify this Sign Retroreflectivity Policy at any time if deemed to be in the best interests of the City based on safety, social, political and economic considerations.

The Director of Public Works, or his or her designee, may authorize a deviation from the implementation of this policy in regard to a particular sign when deemed to be in the best interests of the City based on safety, social, political and economic considerations. Such deviation shall be documented including the reason for the deviation and other information supporting the deviation.

Adopted by the City Council of the City of Sartell on this 12th day of May, 2014.

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City Administrator

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Mayor