

Idea Exchange

Computerized sign systems

Tracking your signs for inventory, condition, and repair can be a challenge. Municipalities are responsible for hundreds and thousands of signs, and any one damaged or missing sign can potentially contribute to a crash or become part of a liability suit.

Buffalo County recently received a state DOT Highway Safety Grant which paid for about half of the cost of establishing a computerized sign inventory. They hired a commercial vendor to set up the software and used highway employees to create the initial inventory.

The sign worker can now get a computer print out of all the signs along a stretch of road. He uses the listing to stock his truck with each sign in order according to the direction he will take. As each sign is checked or replaced, the sign worker marks a check-off inventory and service form. The data is entered later by a clerical worker, keeping the county's sign inventory up to date.

"All I was looking for was something we could keep current," says Highway Commissioner Dave Brevick, "and we got so much more."

The text-based system runs on an IBM-PC-type 486 computer and the software cost about \$1500 installed. The vendor also fixed some program bugs and provided some updates. It took two highway department employees a total of 50 work days to do a physical inventory of the county's 6120 signs. Data entry took one office employee 35 work days to complete.

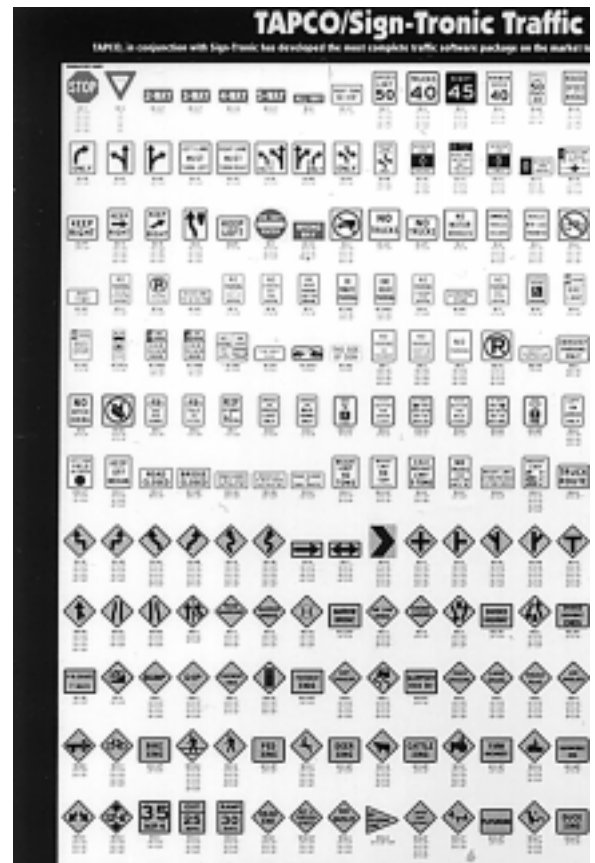
"It took more time than I thought it would to do the input and set up the information," says Brevick, "but revision and updates have been a lot easier. Sign department workers have received the system very well." They hope to use data from the system next year to try to reduce sign vandalism by publicizing the costs to the county.

For information about the Buffalo County computer-based sign system, contact David Brevick at 608/685-6226.

The **McTrans** catalog lists three computer programs for sign inventories: Sign Inventory System, SIGNS³, and Traffic Operations System Software (TOSS), a "total traffic operations management systems tool" of 10 modules one of which is Sign Inventory. Other paper-based and video-based systems are also available.

McTrans is a software distribution and user support center established by the FHWA at the University of Florida Transportation Research Center. You can reach them by phone: 800/226-1013 (24-hour message hotline) or 904/392-0378; by FAX at 904/392-3224; or on their 24-hour electronic bulletin board 904/392-3225. A quarterly newsletter and annual print catalog are available free.

Free MUTCD sign poster



Upper quadrant of poster.

A full-color poster showing every sign in the MUTCD is available free from TAPCO, Traffic & Parking Control Company, in Wauwatosa. The 30 x 48 inch poster was created as a quick reference guide to illustrate all the traffic signs included in their Sign-Perfect Traffic Signmaking system. You can receive a poster by writing to SIGN-PERFECT™, Traffic & Parking Control Company, Inc., 120 North 120th St., Wauwatosa, WI 53226-3994, or call 800/236-0112.

Crossroads

A newsletter providing information on roads and bridges to local officials, published quarterly by the Transportation Information Center, located at the UW-Madison, Dept. of Engineering Professional Development, 432 N. Lake St., Madison, WI 53706. Phone: 800/442-4615. Fax: 608/263-3160.

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