

Section 6F.55 Portable Changeable Message Signs

Standard:

Portable Changeable Message signs shall be TTC devices with the flexibility to display a variety of messages. Each message shall consist of either one or two phases. A phase shall consist of up to three lines of eight characters per line. Each character module shall use at least a five wide and seven high pixel matrix.

Support:

Portable Changeable Message signs are used most frequently on high-density urban freeways, but have applications on all types of highways where highway alignment, road user routing problems, or other pertinent conditions require advance warning and information.

Portable Changeable Message signs have a wide variety of applications in TTC zones including: roadway, lane, or ramp closures, crash or emergency incident management, width restriction information, speed control or reductions, advisories on work scheduling, road user management and diversion, warning of adverse conditions or special events, and other operational control.

The primary purpose of Portable Changeable Message signs in TTC zones is to advise the road user of unexpected situations. Some typical applications include the following:

- A. Where the speed of vehicular traffic is expected to drop substantially;
- B. Where significant queuing and delays are expected;
- C. Where adverse environmental conditions are present;
- D. Where there are changes in alignment or surface conditions;
- E. Where advance notice of ramp, lane, or roadway closures is needed;
- F. Where crash or incident management is needed; and/or
- G. Where changes in the road user pattern occur.

Guidance:

The components of a Portable Changeable Message sign should include: a message sign panel, control systems, a power source, and mounting and transporting equipment.

Portable Changeable Message signs should subscribe to the principles established in Section 2A.07 and other sections of this Manual and, to the extent practical, with the design (that is, color, letter size and shape, and borders) and applications prescribed in this Manual, except that the reverse colors for the letters and the background are considered acceptable.

The front face of the sign should be covered with a protective material. The color of the elements should be yellow or orange on a black background.

Portable Changeable Message signs should be visible from 800 m (0.5 mi) under both day and night conditions. For a trailer or large truck mounted sign, the letter height should be a minimum of 450 mm (18 in). For Changeable Message signs mounted on service patrol trucks, the letter height should be a minimum of 250 mm (10 in).

The message panel should have adjustable display rates (minimum of 3 seconds per phase), so that the entire message can be read at least twice at the posted speed, the off-peak 85th-percentile speed prior to work starting, or the anticipated operating speed.

Messages should be designed taking into account the following factors:

- A. Each phase should convey a single thought.
- B. If the message can be displayed in one phase, the top line should present the problem, the center line should present the location or distance ahead, and the bottom line should present the recommended driver action.
- C. The message should be as brief as possible.
- D. When a message is longer than two phases, additional Portable Changeable Message signs should be used.
- E. When abbreviations are used, they should be easily understood (see Section 1A.14).

Option:

The message sign panel may vary in size.

Smaller letter sizes may be used on a Portable Changeable Message sign mounted on a trailer or large truck provided that the message is legible from at least 200 m (650 ft), or mounted on a service patrol truck provided that the message is legible from at least 100 m (330 ft).

Two Portable Changeable Message signs may be used for the purpose of allowing the entire message to be read twice at the posted speed.

Standard:

Portable Changeable Message signs shall automatically adjust their brightness under varying light conditions, to maintain legibility.

The control system shall include a display screen upon which messages can be reviewed before being displayed on the message sign. The control system shall be capable of maintaining memory when power is unavailable.

Portable Changeable Message signs shall be equipped with a power source and a battery back-up to provide continuous operation when failure of the primary power source occurs.

The mounting of Portable Changeable Message signs on a trailer, a large truck, or a service patrol truck shall be such that the bottom of the message sign panel shall be a minimum of 2.1 m (7 ft) above the roadway in urban areas and 1.5 m (5 ft) above the roadway in rural areas when it is in the operating mode.

The text of the messages shall not scroll or travel horizontally or vertically across the face of the sign.

Guidance:

Portable Changeable Message signs should be used as a supplement to and not as a substitute for conventional signs and pavement markings.

When Portable Changeable Message signs are used for route diversion, they should be placed far enough in advance of the diversion to allow road users ample opportunity to perform necessary lane changes, to adjust their speed, or to exit the affected highway.

The Portable Changeable Message signs should be sited and aligned to provide maximum legibility. Multiple Portable Changeable Message signs should be placed on the same side of the roadway, separated from each other at distances based on Table 6C-1.

Portable Changeable Message signs should be placed on the shoulder of the roadway or, if practical, further from the traveled lane. They should be delineated with retroreflective TTC devices. When Portable Changeable Message signs are not being used, they should be removed; if not removed, they should be shielded; or if the previous two options are not feasible, they should be delineated with retroreflective TTC devices.

Portable Changeable Message sign trailers should be delineated on a permanent basis by affixing retroreflective material, known as conspicuity material, in a continuous line on the face of the trailer as seen by oncoming road users.

Section 6F.56 Arrow Panels**Standard:**

An arrow panel shall be a sign with a matrix of elements capable of either flashing or sequential displays. This sign shall provide additional warning and directional information to assist in merging and controlling road users through or around a TTC zone.

Guidance:

An arrow panel in the arrow or chevron mode should be used to advise approaching traffic of a lane closure along major multi-lane roadways in situations involving heavy traffic volumes, high speeds, and/or limited sight distances, or at other locations and under other conditions where road users are less likely to expect such lane closures.

If used, an arrow panel should be used in combination with appropriate signs, channelizing devices, or other TTC devices.

An arrow panel should be placed on the shoulder of the roadway or, if practical, further from the traveled lane. It should be delineated with retroreflective TTC devices. When an arrow panel is not being used, it should be removed; if not removed, it should be shielded; or if the previous two options are not feasible, it should be delineated with retroreflective TTC devices.

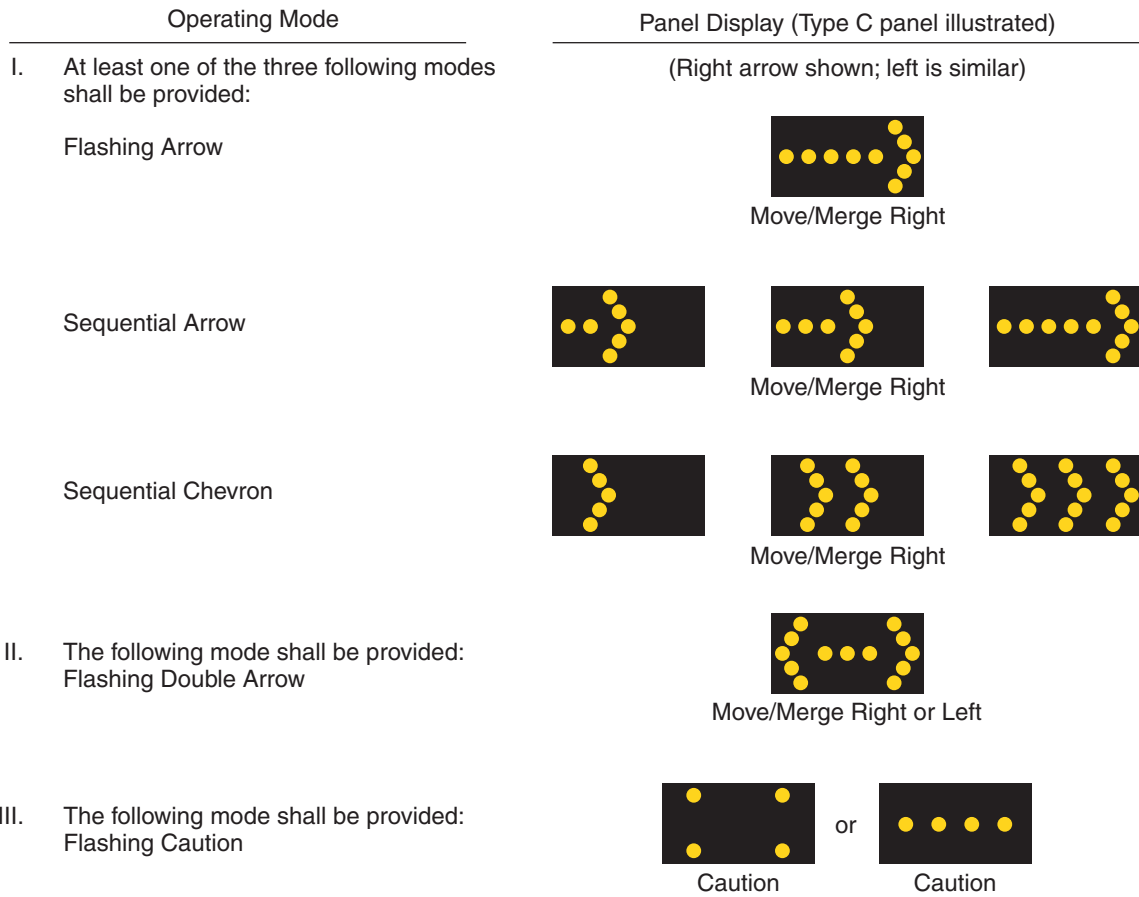
Standard:

Arrow panels shall meet the minimum size, legibility distance, number of elements, and other specifications shown on Figure 6F-6.

Support:

Type A arrow panels are appropriate for use on low-speed urban streets. Type B arrow panels are appropriate for intermediate-speed facilities and for maintenance or mobile operations on high-speed roadways. Type C arrow panels are intended to be used on high-speed, high-volume motor vehicle traffic control projects. Type D arrow panels are intended for use on authorized vehicles.

Figure 6F-6. Advance Warning Arrow Display Specifications



Panel Type	Minimum Size	Minimum Legibility Distance	Minimum Number of Elements
A	1200 x 600 mm (48 x 24 in)	0.8 km (1/2 mi)	12
B	1500 x 750 mm (60 x 30 in)	1.2 km (3/4 mi)	13
C	2400 x 1200 mm (96 x 48 in)	1.6 km (1 mi)	15
D	None*	0.8 km (1/2 mi)	12

*Length of arrow equals 1200 mm (48 in), width of arrowhead equals 600 mm (24 in)

Standard:

Type A, B, and C arrow panels shall have solid rectangular appearances. A Type D arrow panel shall conform to the shape of the arrow.

All arrow panels shall be finished in nonreflective black. The arrow panel shall be mounted on a vehicle, a trailer, or other suitable support.

Guidance:

The minimum mounting height of an arrow panel should be 2.1 m (7 ft) from the roadway to the bottom of the panel, except on vehicle-mounted panels, which should be as high as practical.

A vehicle-mounted arrow panel should be provided with remote controls.

Standard:

Arrow panel elements shall be capable of at least a 50 percent dimming from full brilliance. The dimmed mode shall be used for nighttime operation of arrow panels.

Guidance:

Full brilliance should be used for daytime operation of arrow panels.

Standard:

The arrow panel shall have suitable elements capable of the various operating modes. The color presented by the elements shall be yellow.

Guidance:

If an arrow panel consisting of a bulb matrix is used, the elements should be recess-mounted or equipped with an upper hood of not less than 180 degrees.

Standard:

The minimum element on-time shall be 50 percent for the flashing mode, with equal intervals of 25 percent for each sequential phase. The flashing rate shall be not less than 25 nor more than 40 flashes per minute.

An arrow panel shall have the following three mode selections:

- A. A Flashing Arrow, Sequential Arrow, or Sequential Chevron mode; and**
- B. A flashing Double Arrow mode; and**
- C. A flashing Caution mode.**

An arrow panel in the arrow or chevron mode shall be used only for stationary or moving lane closures on multi-lane roadways.

For shoulder work, blocking the shoulder, for roadside work near the shoulder, or for temporarily closing one lane on a two-lane, two-way roadway, an arrow panel shall be used only in the caution mode.

Guidance:

For a stationary lane closure, the arrow panel should be located on the shoulder at the beginning of the merging taper.

Where the shoulder is narrow, the arrow panel should be located in the closed lane.

Standard:

When arrow panels are used to close multiple lanes, a separate arrow panel shall be used for each closed lane.

Guidance:

When arrow panels are used to close multiple lanes, if the first arrow panel is placed on the shoulder, the second arrow panel should be placed in the first closed lane at the beginning of the second merging taper (see Figure 6H-37). When the first arrow panel is placed in the first closed lane, the second arrow panel should be placed in the second closed lane at the downstream end of the second merging taper.

For mobile operations where a lane is closed, the arrow panel should be located to provide adequate separation from the work operation to allow for appropriate reaction by approaching drivers.

Standard:

A vehicle displaying an arrow panel shall be equipped with high-intensity rotating, flashing, oscillating, or strobe lights.

Arrow panel(s) shall not be used to laterally shift traffic.

Option:

A portable changeable message sign may be used to simulate an arrow panel display.