

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

Travel is the major activity that connects people with the multiple uses of National Forest System lands.

6.1 Access and Travel Management - General

The Forest Service is responsible for managing over 191 million acres of public land. Travel is the major activity that connects people with the multiple uses of those lands. The management of that travel is essential to the stewardship of the National Forest System lands.

Access and Travel Management (ATM) provides specific direction on the access opportunities for administrative and public use on National Forest System lands. Travel management makes resource activities available that fit the environmental setting, minimize effects on the land and resources, promote public safety, and control conflicts with other users (FSM 7712.1 Roads Analysis).

ATM also involves sharing information with the public on motorized and nonmotorized opportunities as well as seasonal and yearlong restrictions and emergency closures in a clear, uniform, and consistent manner through the use of appropriate media such as maps and/or signs.

Lack of consistency leads to confusion and undermines public support. Public acceptance of travel management is essential to successful implementation.

6.2 Definitions

6.2.1 Restriction

A restriction precludes the use of the route or area during a specified time period by:

- Type of vehicle, such as motorized vehicles, passenger cars, log trucks, all-terrain vehicles (ATV), motorcycles, or snowmobiles.
- Type of traffic, such as nonmotorized, public, or commercial traffic.

Other types of nonrestricted traffic or vehicles are accepted. Restrictions may include those routes or areas where either the “**prohibit**” or the “**eliminate**” traffic management strategy is used.

6.2.2 Closure

When referring to access and travel management restrictions, the term “closure” means the route or area is closed to **ALL** types of traffic, including foot traffic. This option is seldom used except in emergencies such as fire or weather closures or special management situations such as protection of an eagle-nesting site. The term “closed” should not be used to refer to routes that have been decommissioned or converted, or on routes where only some uses have been restricted.

The R11-2 ROAD CLOSED sign shall not be used for long-term access and travel management road use restrictions. Refer to Chapter 3A.4 for direction on the appropriate use of the ROAD CLOSED sign.

6.2.3 Designated Road, Trail, or Area

These terms include a National Forest System road (NFSR), a National Forest System trail (NFST), or a specifically defined area on National Forest System lands that is designated for motor vehicle use pursuant to 36 CFR 212.50 and is shown on the Motor Vehicle Use Map contained in a forest transportation

atlas. Motorized use may only occur on routes that are displayed on the Motor Vehicle Use Map.

A route may be designated for particular classes of vehicles (e.g., highway-legal vehicles, vehicles less than 50 inches in width, or motorcycles). Routes may also be identified by other descriptors, such as a scenic byway or a road suitable for high-clearance vehicles. Routes are designated on the motor vehicle use map after appropriate public involvement, environmental analysis, and documentation.

6.3 Traffic Management Strategies

Traffic management strategies shall be employed on forests, grasslands, and other administrative units where it is necessary to manage or control any class or type of traffic (FSM 7731.11). These strategies are also used to guide visitors from the time they first enter National Forest System lands until they depart. These strategies or combination of strategies, when consistently and properly used, should provide a positive experience while traveling on system roads and trails. As an example, a “prohibit” strategy may be used to prohibit snowmobile traffic on a cross-country ski trail where skiers are encouraged. (See 6B.1 for examples of travel management signs for the strategies below.)

Traffic should be encouraged only on routes that are designed, managed, and maintained for the type of traffic desired.

6.3.1 Encourage

Traffic should be encouraged only on routes that are designed, managed, and maintained for the type of traffic desired (e.g., a groomed snowmobile trail is managed such that it encourages snowmobile traffic only). “Encourage” strategies should be consistent with the condition of the route during the normal season of use.

Opportunity maps are one method used to encourage a specific type of traffic on appropriate routes, such as a map showing groomed snowmobile or cross-country ski trail systems.

Guide signs also may be used to encourage traffic on a route. Use site approach signs, Federal recreation symbols, and destination signs to provide the public with information about destinations, facilities, and opportunities located ahead. Appropriate route markers should be installed at intersections.

6.3.2 Accept

On routes where particular types or classes of traffic are accepted but not encouraged, sign only with the appropriate route marker. Typically, guide signs are not used. Traffic should only be accepted on routes that are suitable for that type of traffic during the normal season of use.

6.3.3 Discourage

Traffic may be discouraged through entrance management techniques such as carrying cross-ditches through intersections and using warning or informational signs, maps, or other sources. Route markers should be used. Guide signs may be used if discouraging one type of traffic but encouraging or accepting another type (e.g., discouraging passenger car traffic but encouraging high-clearance traffic on an ML 2 road).

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

Eliminate is not an applicable strategy for designated motor-vehicle routes.

6.3.4 Eliminate

Eliminate types of traffic using suitable restriction methods that physically block the route to the restricted traffic. Use of appropriate barriers can physically eliminate one type of traffic while allowing passage of another type of traffic. For example, gates can eliminate public traffic while still allowing administrative traffic. This strategy is used without a CFR order and is not enforceable.

Eliminate is not an applicable strategy for designated motor-vehicle routes.

6.3.5 Prohibit

The Code of Federal Regulations establishes enforceable prohibitions. There are two types of prohibitions:

- Motor vehicle traffic is automatically prohibited under 36 CFR 261.13 and 212.5, unless the route or area is designated as a motor-vehicle route. Once motorized vehicle use designations are complete, an official Motorized Vehicle Use Map shall be published. This map is the only requirement needed for enforcement.
- Other vehicle or traffic prohibitions not covered under 36 CFR 261.13 and 212.5, such as snowmobiles or nonmotorized traffic, may be established under an order pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50, Subpart B. An order should not be issued applying a prohibition to a road, trail, or area unless it is clearly needed and enforcement is feasible and intended. If enforcement is not planned and/or feasible, access should be managed by physical methods to eliminate the traffic.

6.4 Restriction Devices and Methods

Restriction and closure methods vary. Seasonal restrictions or closures usually are implemented with signs and/or gates. Restrictions of a year or more are typically implemented by installing or constructing physical barriers such as gates, earth berms, and rocks or diskings and ripping the roadbed. The extent and duration of restrictions are a function of road and trail management objectives.

Appropriate signs, restriction devices, barriers, or other methods should be installed as necessary to prohibit the restricted traffic from traveling the route. Signs and markings of physical closures or barriers on roads shall meet the MUTCD and Forest Service requirements. Refer to Chapter 3A for appropriate standards and guidelines.

When discouraging, eliminating, or prohibiting traffic, turnarounds should be available at the point of restriction. Advance warning signs may be needed to advise the traveler of restrictions ahead.

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing



FR5-11

6.5 Signs

6.5.1 Regulatory Signs

Regulatory signs may be used for notifying the public that travel restrictions are in effect. Signs should be sized according to principles in Chapter 3A. Additional sign messages shall be coordinated with the Regional Sign Coordinator.

6.5.2 Portal Signs

Portal signs may be used for notifying the public that they are entering an area with cross-country travel restrictions in effect.



FR5-12a

This sign indicates restrictions only on wheeled motorized vehicles. It does not include snowmobiles and mountain bikes.



FR5-12b

This sign indicates restrictions on all motorized vehicles. It does not include mountain bikes.



FR5-12c

This sign indicates restrictions on all vehicles. It includes snowmobiles and mountain bikes.



FR5-13

This sign may be used if there is a combination of road and trail restrictions in addition to the cross-country restrictions. Any of the above messages may be used on the top section of this sign.

Coordinate installation locations to minimize the number of signs needed.

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

Sign substrates will vary depending on the need, length of restrictions, and vandalism problems.

6.5.3 Travel Management Signs

Travel management (TM) signs (TM-1 for a Travel Management sign and TM-2 for a Travel Management decal) inform the public of the types of travel prohibited on areas, roads, and trails as well as applicable dates and a brief explanation of why the restriction or closure is in effect. A standard appearance and symbol order allows for immediate recognition of the sign and promotes understanding and acceptance by the public regardless of the administrative unit traveled. (See Figures 6-1 and 6-2 for examples.)

A message indicating any allowed or encouraged traffic may be included (for example, NONMOTORIZED TRAFFIC ACCEPTED). The final line should be a contact number for the responsible office. The Forest Service shield shall be at the bottom of the sign. Logos from other cooperating agencies or organizations may also be added as appropriate.

Site- or situation-specific wording may be developed as necessary. Consult the Regional Sign Coordinator for assistance.

Sign substrates will vary depending on the need, length of restrictions, and vandalism problems. TM signs may be printed or silk-screened on a durable, corrugated plastic substrate with interchangeable decals to relay the desired message, or they may be retroreflective on a more permanent substrate such as fiberglass or HDO.

The sign shall be posted at the point of restriction. The sign may be mounted on or near closed gates. Another variation for seasonal restrictions is to mount the TM sign on a post next to the gate so it is visible when the gate is open.

TM signs should NOT be used to convey information on open ML 3, 4, or 5 roads. Signs on such roads need to have minimum 4-inch letters and should not include the Forest Service shield.

Sign sizes may vary to accommodate needed symbols, special needs, or placement requirements other than gates. A horizontal variation accommodates gate signing and helps avoid vandalism. (See Section 6B for sign standards.)

Accepted traffic/vehicle symbols should not be displayed on TM signs or other guide signs for several reasons:

- It is not practical or efficient to sign for all possible combinations of accepted traffic types, including motorized and nonmotorized.
- Signs showing accepted traffic implies encouragement.
- Signing for accepted pedestrian use REQUIRES provision of barrier-free access around gates for accessibility. (See Section 6.9.)

Combining messages for roads, trails, and areas on the same sign should be done carefully to avoid confusing and misleading the public. Confusing signs limit the ability of law enforcement to assist in the intended management of the area.

Refer to Chapter 6B for TM signs for specific situations.

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing



Figure 6-1—Sample travel management signs.



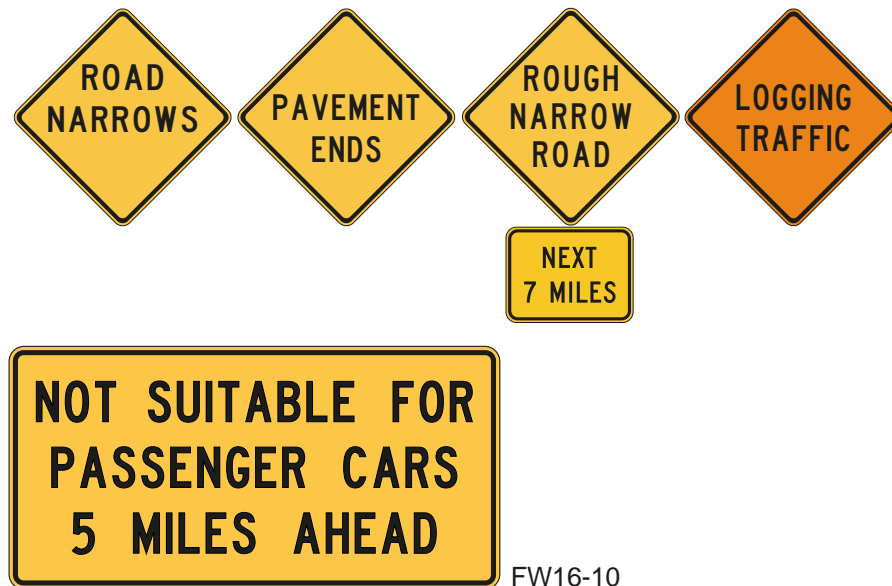
Note:
Travel management decals (TM-2) may also be used on flexible posts that clearly display the travel management information.

Figure 6-2—Sample travel management decals.

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

6.5.4 Warning Signs

Standard warning signs may be used to implement a “discourage” traffic management strategy. Warning signs may inform the driver of conditions that could affect or preclude use of the route by certain types or classes of traffic.



Warning signs also may be used to notify the driver of road suitability for certain vehicle types if road conditions are a hazard to the driver that may not be apparent at the intersection. They should not be used for every ML 2 road. Use engineering judgment to determine the need for such signs.

6.5.5 Guide Signs

6.5.5a Route Markers

For passenger cars on NFSRs, the Forest Service uses three route marker shapes—primary, horizontal, and vertical—to identify the three travel management strategies—“encourage,” “accept,” or “discourage.” (See Section 6.3.)

Primary (M1-7)—The primary route marker identifies the best routes through the forest. These are normally arterial/collector roads at ML 4 or 5. They shall be used only on roads that are passable by passenger cars during the normal season of use and when the travel management strategy is “**encourage for passenger cars.**”

Horizontal (FM-1)—The horizontal route marker is intended to identify ML 3 to 5 roads that are not identified by the primary route marker. The travel management strategy is typically “**encourage or accept standard passenger cars.**” They shall be used only on roads passable by standard passenger cars during the normal season of use.

Vertical—The vertical route marker shall be used only on ML 1 and 2 roads, which are not maintained for travel by standard passenger cars. Passenger car travel is discouraged on ML 2 roads, but not necessarily prohibited. This marker also can be used to accept or encourage high-clearance traffic.



Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

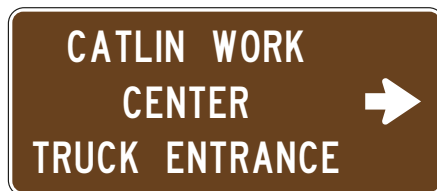
6.6 Use of Federal Recreation Symbols

The Federal recreation symbols shown in the MUTCD, Section 2H, may be used for informational and directional route signing. Recreation symbols also may be used in conjunction with entrance strategies for roads, trails, and areas. A red slash across a symbol indicates that the activity is prohibited.

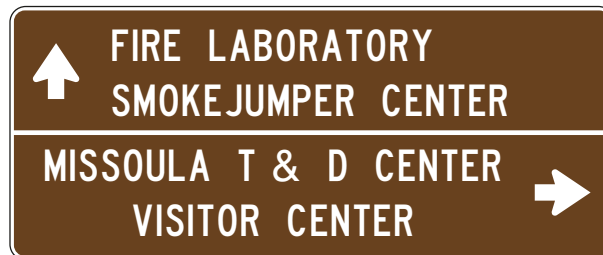
6.6.1 Destination Signs

Guide signs with destinations and mileages, when appropriate, may be used to encourage certain types of traffic to routes designated for their use.

This sign encourages commercial or administrative truck traffic at an administrative site.



This sign encourages visitor and administrative traffic to different locations at an administrative site.



This sign only encourages motorcycle traffic to a trailhead that accesses a designated motorcycle trail with the use of a Federal recreation symbol. Refer to Chapter 3B and MUTCD Section 2H for appropriate use of symbols.



This sign encourages all off-highway vehicle (OHV) traffic to a trailhead that accesses a designated OHV trail.



Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

6.7 Signing for Strategies

6.7.1 Signing for Prohibitions

Signs indicating motor vehicle closures, restrictions, or the prohibition of cross-country motor vehicle travel are not required for enforcement under 36 CFR 261.13 and 212.5. As a practical matter, signs may be needed in addition to the Motor Vehicle Use Map to draw attention to the prohibition. Consider using travel restriction signing for the following:

- In trespass or other problem areas with poor compliance from the public
- For educational purposes when the restriction or prohibition is new to the public
- When a route has been open historically to motor vehicles
- To avoid confusion with other prohibitions established under Subpart B
- To provide reassurance to the public as needed

When signs are necessary, the TM sign or decal clearly displaying all the prohibitions shall be used. Every effort should be made to ensure that all designated routes have route identification signing that corresponds with the Motor Vehicle Use Map.

The TM sign reflects the actual intent of the order and clearly displays the prohibition, not the accepted traffic.

When road, trail, or area traffic is prohibited with an order under Subpart B, the prohibition must be signed at the point of restriction using the TM sign or decal. The TM sign reflects the actual intent of the order and clearly displays the prohibition, not the accepted traffic.

Where signing is required on roads, it shall comply with the MUTCD and as supplemented by this Guidebook. Refer to Chapter 5 for trail signing.

Signs showing accepted, discouraged, and eliminated traffic are not required.

Refer to Chapter 6B.1 for examples of appropriate signs for different strategies or combinations of strategies.

6.7.2 Signing for Areas Open to Cross-Country Motorized Use, Including Snowmobiles

If there are no area restrictions to cross-country motorized use including snowmobiles, no signing is required as long as the designated motorized use area is clearly delineated on the Motor Vehicle Use Map. Examples of clearly delineated boundaries for a Motor Vehicle Use Area are major ridge lines, streams, and roads. If not clearly delineated by natural features or potential for confusion exists, area boundaries should be signed. Guide signs may be used to encourage use in these areas.

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

6.8 Public Notices

Supplemental posters should be used to advise the public that short-term administrative use or a private activity is ongoing or will occur by permit behind a gate or restriction device. Posters also may provide advance notice that a route is to be restricted at a future date. These types of notices are essential to maintaining credibility and establishing good working relationships with the public. Posters may be made of cardboard, plastic laminated paper, or corrugated plastic. Suggested colors are black letters on a bright yellow or orange background. Posters should be no smaller than 12 by 18 inches.

6.8.1 Activities Behind Gate Notice

Notify the public when road or trail use prohibitions restrict public traffic but allow administrative, commercial, or other use by permit, and when short-term use is occurring behind a gate. The notice should include the type and specific times of the activity and the vehicles involved. This notice should be removed upon completion of the planned activity.

When long-term use is occurring, the restriction order should be revised to reflect the level of use for that time period. Long-term use should be indicated on the TM sign.

NOTICE

A permit has been issued for activities behind this gate. Road restrictions are still in effect.

Purpose: _____

Vehicle: _____

Dates: _____ to _____

Days: Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

Times: _____ to _____

**Please do not block the roadway—
and thank you for your cooperation.**

For information, contact the _____ District Ranger
at _____

6.8.2 Advance Restriction/Closure Notice

Many routes that historically have been open to the public may be restricted or closed in the future to meet management objectives. Place advance notices at the beginning of the route during NEPA planning efforts to solicit responses from the route users. The poster below is an example of the type of information to be contained.

NOTICE

**This road is being considered for yearlong restrictions to all motorized traffic.
Your comments are welcome**

**Please contact the
_____ District Ranger
at _____ - _____ for
further information.**

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

6.9 Accessibility

6.9.1 Clear Passage Around Gates/Berms and Other Restriction Devices When Pedestrian Travel Is Permitted or Encouraged Beyond Gate

The legal requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 impact roads and trails with restriction devices such as gates and berms. Section 504 states that no person can “be excluded from participation” in a Federal agency opportunity solely because of a disability. Under these regulations, a wheelchair is permitted anywhere pedestrian traffic is permitted.

The issue arises when gates, berms, or other barriers are placed on a route to prohibit vehicular traffic, but pedestrian traffic is encouraged beyond the restriction device. In these situations, the USDA Office of General Counsel has determined that 32 inches of clear passage shall be available around that device to ensure that a person who uses a wheelchair can also participate in the encouraged opportunity behind the restriction device. A space of 32 inches has been deemed sufficient because it is the minimum width required for a door under the current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) accessibility guidelines.

When pedestrian traffic is encouraged beyond a restriction device, a minimum of 32 inches of clear passage **SHALL** be available around that device to ensure that a person who uses a wheelchair can also participate in the encouraged opportunity behind the restriction. The following constitute encouragement:

- Destination signing
- A pedestrian recreation symbol without a slash
- A Forest Service map that highlights an opportunity behind the restriction device
- A TMO or RMO stating that pedestrian use is encouraged

In areas where pedestrian traffic is not encouraged, but occasional pedestrian use is accepted before and after installation of the restriction device, individuals who use wheelchairs may raise a concern about access at those restriction devices to reach remote destinations such as hunting areas. In these cases, the Forest Service unit must work with the individual to provide access around the restriction.

6.9.2 Wheelchair

According to the ADA Title V Section 507c and Forest Service Manual 2353.05, wheelchair is “a device designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area.”

The phrase “designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion” means that the original design and manufacture of the wheelchair were solely for use for mobility by a person with a disability. Thus, this term does not include after-market retrofit of a motorized unit to make it useable by a person with a disability. “Suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area” has been legally determined to mean useable inside a home, mall, courthouse, or other indoor pedestrian area.

Chapter 6 Travel Management Signing

A wheelchair or mobility device that meets this definition, including a battery-powered wheelchair or mobility device, is not categorized as a motorized vehicle, or a mechanical device. A device that meets this definition is categorized as comparable to foot travel.

A person whose disability requires use of a wheelchair or mobility device may use a wheelchair that meets this definition anywhere foot travel is permitted, in accordance with Title V Section 507c of the ADA and Forest Service Manual 2353.05.