

7-8 Banners

WSDOT receives requests from public agencies, civic organizations, the event sponsors, to install banners for a variety of informational purposes on state highway right of way.

Most installation requests are for horizontal suspension over the roadway, using span wire, and are the focus of this section. The occasional requests for vertically mounted banners, such as on luminaire poles, are processed case-by-case.

Some installations may require wind load analysis prior to approval (see [Section 7-8.D](#)).

- A. **Statutory and Regulatory Overview** – The term “banners” means the signs, banners, and decorations described in state law ([RCW 47.36.030](#)) and the Washington Administrative Code ([WAC 468-95-148](#)). [WAC 468-95-148](#) establishes approval criteria (see [Section 7-8.C](#)) that allow the department to permit banners visible to state highways. [RCW 47.42.020\(10\)](#) exempts banners from the Highway Advertising Control regulations, if the banners do not display commercial advertising.

On city streets that are also part of the state highway system under [RCW 47.24](#), the cities are responsible for approving banner installations that are more than 20 feet above the roadway surface. WSDOT allows banners 20 feet above the roadway surface ([WAC 468-95-148](#)).

- Thus, requests for banners on city streets that are also part of the state highway system are referred to the city for approval.
- On state highways in unincorporated areas, the department has the authority to regulate banners.
- WSDOT maintains authority on limited access roadways, in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Banners may not be visible from limited access highways.

- B. **Permit Administration in Unincorporated Areas** – Banners permits are administered through the region Traffic Office, using a Banner Placement Permit ([Figure 7-1](#)) issued by the regional signing authority. This permit may be modified to accommodate request for vertically installed banners.

The region Maintenance Office having jurisdiction over the proposed banner location receives a copy of the completed permit, for their information when processing over-height vehicle permits.

The region Traffic Office also coordinates any required wind load review or analysis with the headquarters Bridge and Structures Office.

For a banner attached to utility company-owned poles, the sponsor must provide the region with a copy of the utility company’s permitting correspondence. This practice assures WSDOT that the utility company’s wind load and banner attachment considerations have been addressed.

Temporary poles may be installed in department right of way outside the clear zone, after the sponsor secures a department-issued General Permit. This practice assures WSDOT that the installation won’t interfere with department operations or underground utilities, and that traffic control considerations are addressed. A Banner Placement Permit is also required.

As a matter of practice, WSDOT does not allow horizontally suspended banners to be attached to WSDOT-owned traffic signal poles or luminaire poles. Adding banners to signal poles may interfere with or obstruct the view of traffic control devices, in conflict with [RCW 47.36.030](#) and [WAC 468-95-148](#). Regarding luminaire poles, it's likely that significant debris on the roadway would result from a knock-down. Banners should not be attached to crossing structures because a disconnection could cause a banner to fall onto the roadway.

Some cities have installed permanent banner poles on city-owned property outside the clear zone.

- C. **Approval Criteria** – WSDOT may approve banner installations in unincorporated areas that promote a community sponsored event in accordance with the following criteria:
1. Banner messages are limited to name, date, and event sponsor. Commercial advertising is not allowed ([RCW 47.42.020](#) and [WAC 468-95-148](#)).
 2. At least 20 feet of vertical clearance must be maintained from the roadway surface to the bottom of the banner ([RCW 47.36.030](#) and [WAC 468-95-148](#)).
 3. Banners are not permitted to be visible from Interstate highways, or any other state highways having a posted speed limit of 50 mph or greater ([WAC 468-95-148](#)).
 4. Banners shall not interfere with or obstruct the view of any traffic control device, or impair the operation of transportation management systems or illumination ([RCW 46.36.030](#) and [WAC 468-95-148](#)).
 5. For temporary events, banners may be installed not more than 30 days before the event and shall be removed not more than three days after the event ([WAC 468-95-148](#)). The duration of informational banners is determined case by case.
 6. WSDOT will not permit a sign, banner, or decoration to be mounted over any multi-lane (four or more lanes) highway. Vertical mounting on luminaire posts is permitted, provided such installations meet wind load requirements specified by WSDOT ([WAC 468-95-148](#)).
 7. WSDOT does not allow banners to be illuminated in any manner. ([RCW 47.36.180](#)).
- D. **Wind Load Analysis for Banners Placed on Vertical Poles** – Standard size banner installations do not require a wind load analysis. Standard banner sizes range from two to four feet vertically by 20 to 24 feet horizontally, with three feet by 20 feet about average. Banner manufacturing incorporates wind slits or wind ports to minimize wind stress.

For larger banners consult with the Headquarters Traffic office to determine if the proposed installation warrants a wind load analysis. The Bridge and Structures Office will need 120-150 days for the wind load review if an analysis is necessary and may charge the event sponsor.

As an alternative, the event sponsor may submit wind load calculations, performed and stamped by an engineer licensed in Washington State, to verify the compatibility of the installation.