

Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St. SW  
Washington, DC 20590

July 29, 2003

Refer to: HOTO-1

Mr. R. Craig Reed  
Director, Bureau of Highway Safety & Traffic Engineering  
Department of Transportation  
400 North Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor – Commonwealth Keystone Building  
P.O. Box 2047  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2047

Dear Mr. Reed:

Thank you for your May 28 letter requesting permission to experiment with new DUI signs that show the photograph of persons killed in DUI crashes and which warn motorists of the consequences of driving while intoxicated. Your request to experiment has been assigned the following official ruling number: "Request No. 2-536(E)–DUI Signs with Photograph of Victim." Should you have any future correspondence, please refer to this number.

Although this request falls within the overall category of "safety messages" which are an allowable type of traffic control device, the inclusion of a photograph within the design of the sign fails two of the basic principles for any traffic control devices (Section 1A.02 of the MUTCD): to "convey a clear, simple meaning" and to "give adequate time for a proper response." Photographs are complex graphics that require a person viewing them to engage in more than a "simple glance" or visual search behavior associated with standard highway sign designs. The use of a photograph on a DUI sign could potentially cause driver inattention. Unfortunately, photographs on signs might also become a target for senseless vandalism and frequent maintenance is also a consideration that has to be factored in the decision to install a picture of a person on a sign.

A DUI message sign is classified as a regulatory sign because it gives notice of traffic laws. The colors for regulatory signs are black, white, and red. From the sample illustrations, it is not clear what colors are used in the photographs and whether or not the colors would be effective. It is also not apparent from the various colors and message shown in your proposed sign, whether this is a regulatory or warning sign.

Your request has been reviewed and is denied based on the above discussions. We do not believe including a photograph in the traffic sign design is appropriate. However, if you wish to resubmit this request without a photograph, FHWA will be glad to review it within the overall category of "safety message" signs.

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to call Mr. Fred Ranck, Safety/Design Engineer, Federal Highway Administration's Resource Center at Olympia Fields, Illinois. His telephone number is 708-283-3545.

Sincerely yours,

Vincent P. Pearce  
Acting Director, Office of Transportation  
Operations

FHWA:HOTO-1:FRanck

Revised:LBrown:7/29/03

cc: HOTO-1 HOTO-1(FRanck/LBrown)

Mr. Mike Castellanos, Harrisburg, PA FHWA HDA-PA

Mr. Bob Garrett, NCUTCD Mr. Roger Wentz, ATSSA

Mr. Jim Baron, ATSSA, All Resource Centers

Chron 3408 Reader 3408

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