



Illinois Department of Transportation

Departmental Policy

D&E-18: PRESERVATION AND REPLACEMENT OF TREES

Effective Date: October 7, 2019

Scheduled Review: October 7, 2021

Approved By: Paul Loete, Matt Magalis

1. POLICY

The department shall protect, preserve and replace roadside trees along state highways to the fullest extent possible consistent with standards of highway safety which assists the department's compliance with [605 ILCS 5/2-220](#) regarding forestation of certain department-controlled property. Where trees are removed, they will pursue opportunities for providing replacement trees, to the maximum extent practicable.

2. PERSONS AFFECTED

Office of Highways Project Implementation
Office of Planning and Programming

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to guide decision making regarding the management of trees during the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of state highways and state facilities, and local roads projects on state right-of-way.

4. GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- A. For the purpose of this policy, as defined in the Article 201.02 of the [Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction](#), the term "tree" shall mean a woody perennial plant having a single main stem or trunk, the diameter of which is 6 inches or more at a point 4.5 foot above the highest ground level at the base of the tree. The term "tree" also shall include woody perennial plants having a single main stem or trunk of less than 6 inches in diameter when such plants have been intentionally planted for landscaping, environmental mitigation, or habitat preservation/enhancement.
- B. For purposes of implementing this policy, clear zones for different highway types shall be defined in the [Bureau of Design and Environment Manual](#).
- C. This policy does not apply to undesirable, exotic or nuisances trees that may occur around headwalls, in front of abutments, growing up through guardrails, along drainage ways or as part of routine highway maintenance or vegetation that obstructs the visibility of conforming outdoor advertising signs (see Operations Policy 5-700 "Management of Trees and Plants By Others"). This policy also does not apply to the removal of dead, diseased (e.g., infested with Emerald Ash Borer), or dying trees or removal of trees severely damaged by storms.

- D.** This policy only applies to local agencies when they are working on state right-of-way or when required by a state or federal regulatory agency. In these cases, local agencies are required to replace trees (see section G).

E. Preservation of Trees

- 1) In the planning and design of new highways, consideration shall be given to preserving trees during the alignment selection process, the development of major design elements (e.g., median widths, drainage schemes), and in the determination of the extent of clearing required for construction.
- 2) Where specimen trees (e.g., state record trees, examples possessing exceptional size, form, etc.), trees that perform a special function (e.g. serves as a buffer between the highway and a natural area or nature preserve), trees within a local and/or National Register listed Historic District or located within the clear zone, guardrail or other shielding, these trees shall be preserved to the maximum extent practicable.
- 3) Healthy trees located outside of applicable clear zones should be preserved unless they require removal for appropriate management of the environmental qualities of the roadside (e.g., for selective thinning), cause a traffic sight-distance problem that cannot be corrected by selective pruning, have a documented, uncommon frequency of involvement in accidents, or must be removed due to necessary modifications of roadside ditches, other highway drainage facilities, or maintenance access.
- 4) Any commitments for preservation of specific trees shall be documented in the project plans and communicated to district operations.

F. Removal of Trees

- 1) Where projects involve large impacts to forests (i.e. bisect or fragment a block of trees greater than 20 acres or riparian corridors), coordination as described in the Memorandum of Understanding by and between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and IDOT shall apply.
- 2) Where isolated tree(s) or small groups of trees (i.e., not in forests or wooded riparian corridors) are considered for removal along existing highways, the accident history, location in relation to the applicable clear zone, health of the trees, and their functions and values shall be evaluated by the district to determine whether or not the trees should be removed. Where trees were planted as components of a formal landscaping plan, the effect of potential tree removal on the landscape also shall be evaluated. An on-site inspection by the district should be a part of this process as necessary to evaluate the factors to be considered. In identifying trees that may be subject to removal, consideration should be given to the potential for damage to root systems (e.g., from storm sewer construction) that could cause the loss of trees which would not otherwise require removal.

- 3) Where healthy trees outside of applicable clear zones are considered for removal for reasons other than those listed above, or where specimen trees or trees that perform a special function are considered for removal, an on-site inspection by the district shall be a part of the evaluation process.
- 4) District offices are expected to discuss sensitive tree preservation and removal issues at project coordination meetings.
- 5) In situations where proposed tree removal has generated controversy with the public, the district shall coordinate with the Bureau of Design and Environment and the Bureau of Operations to determine further action.

G. Replacement of Trees

- 1) A 1:1 ratio is recommended to calculate the number of trees to be replaced when using bare root, balled and burlapped trees, Root Production Method (RPM) while considering available right-of-way. If seedlings are used, a 3:1 ratio is recommended (See Section 1081 of [Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction](#)) and Chapter 59 of the [Bureau of Design and Environment Manual](#) for additional information.
- 2) The largest challenge to replacing trees is finding a suitable location where trees will not become a safety or maintenance concern. The district may consider replacing trees in multiple locations or forming agreements with other state or local partners for sites that would benefit from tree plantings.
- 3) Where trees must be removed for state highway projects in urban areas, special sensitivity shall be accorded to the concerns of the community and affected residents in determining appropriate replacement. District offices should consider opportunities for acquiring planting easements or for furnishing trees or seedlings to local jurisdictions for planting outside of the right-of-way where there is insufficient area to allow replacement within the right-of-way.
- 4) For trees removed from forested areas or from wooded riparian corridors, the intent of replacement plantings should be to provide comparable functional replacement. Where comparable functional replacement cannot be achieved through replacement plantings within the right-of-way, consideration should be given to providing replacement plantings off the right-of-way. Decisions on the location, nature, and extent of replacement plantings for trees removed from these areas should be guided by the results of any coordination and consultation conducted with state or federal regulatory and natural resource agencies pursuant to statutes, regulations, or agreements applicable to those resources

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The following outlines the individual and office responsibilities to ensure compliance with the provisions of this directive and its appendixes (if applicable):

- A. The **Bureau of Design and Environment** is responsible for maintaining this directive and the associated manual or procedures.

- B.** The **Bureau of Design and Environment and the Bureau of Operations** are responsible for providing appropriate technical guidance to assist tree evaluation teams in implementing this policy.
- C.** The **Bureau of Design and Environment, Bureau of Local Roads and Streets** and **Bureau of Operations** are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

6. REVISION HISTORY

This directive includes the following changes:

- Formatted policy into the new template;
- Updated Office/Bureau names;
- Overall clarification of policy

Archive versions of this and all directives are available by contacting the Document Services Unit in the Bureau of Business Services at DOT.Policy@illinois.gov.

7. CLOSING NOTICE

Supersedes: Departmental Policy D&E-18 Preservation and Replacement of Trees,
Effective: March 4, 2014

Attachment(s): [Bureau of Design and Environment Manual](#)
[Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction](#)