



# GDOT Publications Policies & Procedures

**Policy:** 6755-9- Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements on GDOT Right of Way  
**Section:** Permits - Miscellaneous  
**Office/Department:** Office of Traffic Operations

**Reports To:** Division of Permits & Ops  
**Contact:** 404-635-8048

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### CHAPTER 2 – REQUIREMENTS

2.1 – Maintenance Agreement

2.2 – Access Notification

### CHAPTER 3 – LANDSCAPE REVIEWS

3.1 – Plan Requirements

### CHAPTER 4 – VEGETATION HORIZONTAL CLEARANCES

4.1 – Plants on Shoulders

4.2 – Plants in Median

4.3 – Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs

### CHAPTER 5 – INVASIVE PLANTS

5.1 – List of Non-Native Invasive Plants

### CHAPTER 6 – PLANT MATERIAL

6.1 – Specifications

6.2 – Planting Dates

6.3 – Spacing

## CHAPTER 7 – VEGETATION REMOVAL AND PRUNING

7.1 – Authorized Vegetation Removals and Daylighting

7.2 – Pruning and Daylighting

7.3 – Pruning Standards

## CHAPTER 8 – MITIGATION FOR AUTHORIZED VEGETATION REMOVAL

8.1 – Requirements

8.2 – Necessity to Prove a Benefit to the Department for Excess Grading

8.3 – Replacement Planting Requirements for Mitigation

## CHAPTER 9 – LIMITED LANDSCAPES

9.1 – Criteria for a Limited Landscape Permit

9.2 – Limited Landscape Plan Requirements

9.3 – Limited Landscape Work Restrictions

## CHAPTER 10 – LOCAL AND INTERSTATE MOWING

10.1 – Local Mowing

10.2 – Interstate Centerline Mowing

## CHAPTER 11 – DECORATIVE WELCOME SIGNS OR GATEWAY SIGNS

11.1 – City and County Line Signing

11.2 – Gateway/Monument/Custom Decorative Signing/Structures on Non-Limited Access Highways or Limited Access Highways

## CHAPTER 12 – NON-VEGETATIVE ENHANCEMENT FEATURES

12.1 – Permanent and Temporary Non-vegetative Enhancement Features

12.2 – Review Panel

12.3 – Review Criteria for Permanent Non-vegetative Enhancement Features

12.4 – Review Criteria for Temporary Non-vegetative Enhancement Features

## CHAPTER 13 – SPECIAL PAVING

13.1 – Stamped Concrete Alternative

13.2 – Architectural Asphalt

CHAPTER 14 – NON-STANDARD FENCING

CHAPTER 15 – IRRIGATION

15.1 – Procedure for a Special Approval Request (Irrigation Systems in Medians/Islands)

CHAPTER 16 – FEES AND PAYMENTS

16.1 – Typical Driveway Access Fees

16.2 – Excess Clearing Fees

16.3 – Payment Details

CHAPTER 17 – JUNKYARDS

17.1 – Screening

CHAPTER 18 – MITIGATION FOR UNAUTHORIZED VEGETATION REMOVAL

18.1 – Damage to the State Rights of Way

18.2 – Unauthorized Vegetation Removal

18.3 – Basic Tree Values Table

This policy is effective December 1, 2011.

Submit questions or comments specific to the Landscape and Enhancement Policy Manual to [landscape@gdot.ga.gov](mailto:landscape@gdot.ga.gov)

## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

Any enhancement activity which encroaches on State right of way requires a Special Encroachment Permit or Department contract authorization accompanied by a Maintenance Agreement to provide continuous maintenance of the proposed enhancement by means of GPAS AMPS (Refer to the [Access Management Permitting System Tutorials](#)). The applicant must indemnify the Department and provide a suitable bond or escrow and provide proof of liability insurance.

The purpose of this policy is to update and combine all existing enhancement policies of the Department into one document. Most of the basic rules, relative to issuing Special Encroachment Permits which allow applicants to perform landscaping or enhancements on State rights of way, are found in the current edition of [Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control](#), Chapter 7, Special Encroachment. This policy provides applicants with requirements to prepare plan proposals and permit submittals for the Department to evaluate their request and to help the Department clearly understand what the applicant proposes to do.

Requests to enhance the appearance of the State rights of way, such as landscaping, welcome signs, murals, bridge embellishments, or special features, will be reviewed by the local District Traffic Engineer/Manager. If recommended for approval, the request will be forwarded to the State Office of Traffic Operations for review and approval by means of GPAS AMPS. If the request includes removal of trees or significant vegetation, the planting of vegetation, or irrigation it will be sent to the State Office of Maintenance - Landscape Architecture Unit by means of GPAS AMPS Ad-Hoc Reviewer for their comments prior to formal approval. Review of enhancement requests may take up to 30 business days for review by District Traffic Operations and Landscape Design Office. Formal approval will be granted by the District Engineer unless it is located on a limited access, or Interstate facility or the proposal requires completion of the Plan Development Process (PDP). In that event, permit approval or contract authorization will be granted by the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee.

## **CHAPTER 2 - REQUIREMENTS**

### **2.1. - Maintenance Agreement**

Any landscape or enhancement feature requires a perpetual Maintenance Agreement for keeping the proposed feature in good repair and/or plant material healthy and attractive. A Special Encroachment Permit shall become part of a required Maintenance Agreement. The Maintenance Agreement shall become part of the contract documents for projects processed outside the Special Encroachment Permit process and must be signed before a project is let. A letter may be required to express concurrence/endorsement between local government and other property owners/agencies or organizations that are adjacent to the areas proposed for change. An approved, detailed, maintenance work plan shall be included as part of the Maintenance Agreement to ensure acceptable maintenance of the site.

The Maintenance Work Plan must address each element of the proposed landscape or enhancement feature and must clearly describe all activities required to keep the landscape or enhancement feature in a safe and acceptable state of repair or maintenance. Sample Work Plans can be provided upon request. Submit requests to [landscape@dot.ga.gov](mailto:landscape@dot.ga.gov) with "Sample Maintenance Work Plan Request" as part of the subject line.

Maintenance activity shall be performed in a manner that will not affect the safety and operation of the highway or pedestrian safety.

## 2.2 - Access Notification

A GDOT district representative must be made aware 48 hours in advance of all intentions to access the rights of way for any proposed enhancement, cutting, or mowing activity as well as any limited access fence replacement in writing or by email.

## CHAPTER 3 - LANDSCAPE REVIEWS

The Office of Maintenance Landscape Architecture Unit will review plans for vegetation or tree removal, sight distance requirements, clear zone requirements, horizontal clearance requirements, plant maintenance and watering needs, and for exclusion of invasive plant material. The current [Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control](#) include specific information about intersection sight distance and clear zone requirements based on AASHTO design guidelines.

### 3.1 - Plan Requirements

Provide two sets of preliminary site plans and supporting items with the following information to the District Traffic Engineer/Manager for an initial review. All existing features should be shown with dashed lines and all proposed features shown with solid lines. This should be clearly shown on the plan legend:

1. An overall site plan and location sketch map, with all features drawn to scale. The scale of the drawing should be 1" = 50' or larger. If a smaller scale is used for "overall plans", the enlarged details of the work on the rights of way must be furnished on 1" = 50' or larger scale. Site plan must include:
  - A. A title block showing the name of the property owner (and the permit applicant, if different from the property owner), the GDOT district number, and the county in which the project is located. The name of the engineer or individual who prepared the plans should also be included.
    - 1.
    - A.
      - B. A plan legend and north arrow.
      - C. The edge of existing roadway pavements, lane widths, lane lines, and direction of travel within the lanes.
      - D. Locations of all property lines and the names and types of businesses and/or property owners on either side of the property being developed. Indicate the length of the frontage being developed or impacted under the permit.
      - E. A dashed line indicating the location of the right of way boundary, properly labeled. A general statement such as "Right of Way Varies" is not acceptable.
      - F. A heavy dashed line indicating the clear zone boundary. This should be clearly labeled.
      - G. State Route Numbers, U.S. Route Numbers (if applicable), names of all highways and roads which appear on the plans. Designations such as "County Road", "Cross Road" or "City Street" are not specific enough and should not be used.
      - H. Existing and proposed contour lines or elevations sufficient to show the natural and proposed drainage features within the property to be developed. This should include all of the adjacent highway rights of way and any elevations needed to show how the water flows once it leaves this property.
      - I. Location and size of any existing and proposed side drain or cross drain culverts, pipes, catch basins, detention ponds, ditches, etc., and direction of flow within structure.
      - J. The GDOT milepost, estimated to the nearest tenth of a mile to some point on the property being developed.
      - K. The posted speed limit(s) along the state route(s).
      - L. All existing GDOT signs within the frontage being developed.
      - M. All existing permitted billboards within 500 feet of the site. Locations of permitted billboards and other information can be viewed in [GDOT's Public Permit Search Website](#).

- i Permits will not be issued for encroachments within 500 feet of outdoor advertising signs that enhance the visibility of the signs. [Policy 6170-1, Vegetation Management at Outdoor Advertising Signs](#) should be referred to for tree removal in the right of way that involves visibility for a permitted outdoor advertising sign.
  - ii If a billboard exists within 500 feet of the proposed landscape, plant material that will grow to obstruct the billboard within the 500-foot view zone of the sign face cannot be planted.
- N. A utility plan showing all utilities above and below ground that are within proximity of proposed enhancement or plantings.
- O. An erosion control plan in accordance with state law GDOT standards. Please note, if the disturbed area is over 1 acre, a NOI is required per O.C.G.A. Title 12, Ch. 7.
- P. Suitable photography in hard copy or electronic version of the site showing all existing features.
- Q. If an irrigation system is proposed, include an irrigation plan showing the location of water source, valves, controllers, pipes, sleeves, and sprinkler heads. Refer to Chapter 15 for details.

## **CHAPTER 4 – VEGETATION HORIZONTAL CLEARANCES**

The clear zone is the total roadside border area, starting at the edge of the traveled way, available for safe use by errant vehicles. It is an unobstructed, relatively flat area beyond the edge of the traveled way that allows a driver to stop safely or regain control of a vehicle that leaves the traveled way. Width of the clear zone is dependent upon traffic volumes, speeds and roadside geometry. Clear zone distances are found in the current issue of the AASHTO Roadside Design Guide or the current Regulation for Driveway and Encroachment Control.

Horizontal clearance is the lateral offset distance from the edge of the traveled way, shoulder, or other designated point to a vertical roadside element. These dimensional values are intended to provide a roadside environment that is not likely to have an adverse effect on motorists' using the roadway. The larger of the Posted Speed or Design Speed is used to determine horizontal clearance.

### **4.1 – Plants on Shoulders**

Trees cannot be planted within the horizontal clearance zone in medians and on shoulders. Street trees in pedestrian traffic areas are to be limbed up a minimum of 7 feet. Horizontal clearance minimums are listed in the [Table of Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs](#) in Section 4.3.

### **4.2 – Plants in Medians**

Shrubs which exceed 30 inches in height cannot be planted within the horizontal clearance in medians. Trees cannot be planted within the horizontal clearance in medians. Trees planted in medians must be limbed up to a minimum of 7 feet from the ground. Horizontal clearance minimums are listed in the Table of Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs in Section 4.3.

### 4.3 - Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs Table

#### Horizontal Clearances for Trees and Shrubs

Posted / Design Speed	Minimum Horizontal Clearance <sup>1</sup>
≤ 35 mph (Commercial Area <sup>2</sup> )	4-ft. 8-ft. in median
≤ 35mph	8-ft. 8-ft. in median
40 mph	10-ft. 16-ft. in median <sup>3</sup>
45 mph	14-ft. 22-ft. in median <sup>3</sup>
>45 mph	Outside the clear zone
Interstates	120% of the clear zone requirement

<sup>1</sup> From center of tree to face of curb.

<sup>2</sup>In a Central Business District and/or where commercial businesses are typically directly adjacent to the rights of way.

<sup>3</sup>Small trees and shrubs that mature at ≤ 4" in diameter may be planted a minimum of 8 feet from the face of the curb in medians adjacent to 40 to 45 mph speeds. Tree size is diameter of the tree at maturity, measured at dbh (4.5 feet above the ground).

Certain situations may require an increased horizontal clearance setback for additional safety considerations.

For rural shoulders, trees should be placed outside the clear zone.

Utilities and intersection sight distance requirements may also affect the location of proposed trees and other vegetation.

Additional requirements are provided in the Design Policy Manual.

### Chapter 5 – INVASIVE PLANTS

The Georgia Department of Transportation does not allow invasive plant species, listed in the table below, to be planted on the State's rights of way. Invasive species, also called Invasive Exotic Plant Pests, can limit land use, cause harm to the industries and resources of the state of Georgia, and decrease the public's ability to enjoy outdoor recreational activities. It is much harder and more expensive to eliminate an established invasive species than to prevent it getting a foothold. An "invasive species" is defined as a species that is:

1. Non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and
2. Whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. (Executive Order 13112 [Section 1. Definitions])

For more information about invasive species, visit the following websites:

- [USDA National Invasive Species Information Center](#)
- [The Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health](#)
- [The Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council](#)

#### 5.1 – List of Non Native Invasive Plants

##### Non-native Invasive Plants in Georgia

Scientific Name	Common Name
<u>Achyranthes japonica</u>	Japenese chaff flower
<u>Ailanthus altissima</u>	tree-of-heaven
<u>Albizia julibrissin</u>	himosa
<u>Alternanthera</u>	alligator weed

<u>philoxeroides</u>	coral ardisia
<u>Ardisia crenata</u>	small carpetgrass, joint head grass
<u>Arthraxon hispidus</u>	giant reed
<u>Arundo donax</u>	oriental bittersweet
<u>Celastrus orbiculatus</u>	camphortree
<u>Cinnamomum camphora</u>	Chinese yam
<u>Dioscorea polystachya</u>	Brazilian waterweed
<u>Egeria densa</u>	water hyacinth
<u>Eichhornia crassipes</u>	<b>thorny olive</b>
<b><u>Elaeagnus pungens</u></b>	<b>autumn-olive</b>
<b><u>Elaeagnus umbellata</u></b>	Japenese knotweed
<u>Fallopia japonica</u>	<b>English ivy</b>
<b><u>Hedera helix</u></b>	hydrilla
<u>Hydrilla verticillata</u>	cogongrass, <b>Japanese</b>
<u>Imperata cylindrica</u>	<b>bloodgrass</b>
<u>Lespedeza bicolor</u>	shrubby lespedeza

This is not a comprehensive list. New threats to Georgia’s resources and industries can develop over time, and will be taken into consideration during reviews. All cultivars of prohibited species are prohibited. Plants that are not problematic in one climate or soil can be invasive in others. Once you see a plant everywhere, it is too late. See [Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council](#) for details.



## 5.1 – List of Non Native Invasive Plants continued

<u>Lespedeza cuneata</u>	sericea lespedeza
<u>Leucanthemum vulgare</u>	oxeye daisy
<b><u>Ligustrum japonicum</u></b>	<b>Japanese privet</b>
<b><u>Ligustrum sinense</u></b>	<b>Chinese privet</b>
<u>Lonicera japonica</u>	Japanese honeysuckle
<u>Lonicera maackii</u>	Amur honeysuckle
<u>Lygodium japonicum</u>	Japanese climbing fern
<u>Melia azedarach</u>	chinaberry
<u>Microstegium vimineum</u>	Japanese stillgrass
<b><u>Miscanthus sinensis</u></b>	<b>Chinese silvergrass</b>
<u>Murdannia keisak</u>	marsh dayflower
<u>Myriophyllum aquaticum</u>	parrotfeather
<b><u>Nandina domestica</u></b>	<b>sacred bamboo</b>
<u>Nasturtium officinale</u>	watercress
<u>Paederia foetida</u>	skunk-vine
<u>Panicum repens</u>	torpedograss
<u>Paspalum urvillei</u>	vaseygrass
<u>Paulownia tomentosa</u>	princesstree
<u>Phragmites australis</u>	common reed
<u>Phyllostachys aurea</u>	golden bamboo
<u>Pueraria Montana var. lobata</u>	kudzu
<b><u>Pyrus calleryana</u></b>	<b>Callery Pear, Bradford Pear</b>
<u>Rosa multiflora</u>	multiflora rose
<u>Salvinia molesta</u>	giant salvinia
<u>Sesbania herbacea</u>	bigpod sesbania
<u>Sesbania punicea</u>	red sesbania
<u>Sorghum halepense</u>	johnsongrass
<b><u>Spiraea japonica</u></b>	<b>Japanese spiraea</b>
<u>Tamarix gallica</u>	French tamarisk
<u>Triadica sebifera</u>	Chinese tallowtree
<b><u>Vinca major</u></b>	<b>big periwinkle</b>
<b><u>Vinca minor</u></b>	<b>common periwinkle</b>
<b><u>Wisteria floribunda</u></b>	<b>Japanese wisteria</b>
<b><u>Wisteria sinensis</u></b>	<b>Chinese wisteria</b>

Plants in bold type are commonly available in the nursery trade. These are not allowed on GDOT Right of Way.

## CHAPTER 6 – PLANT MATERIAL

Georgia DOT requires the use of Georgia Grown trees, shrubs, and other nursery plants for Right of Way plantings. The Georgia Grown program is a marketing and economic development program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. For more information, refer to the [Georgia Grown](#) homepage.

**6.1 – Specifications**

All landscaping, roadside development, and maintenance should conform to the most current edition of GDOT Standard Specifications, particularly sections 700 and 702.

Every effort should be made to use plant material native to Georgia. Seventy-five percent of all trees planted on the right of way should be native, large-canopy shade trees. Understory trees planted on the right of way for mitigation must be intermixed with large canopy or shade trees.

Label the sizes, quantities, spacing and names of all proposed plant material on all plans. Both scientific and common names must be provided, and all cultivars must be specified. Sizes of all plants shall be according to the most current edition of the American Standard for Nursery Stock, ANSI Z60.1.

The minimum size for proposed trees planted on the rights of way shall be 2 ½ inch caliper. Multi-stem trees and evergreens that do not meet the minimum 2 ½ inch caliper requirements shall be a minimum of 8 – 10 feet tall. The minimum acceptable container size for shrubs is #3, or 3-gallon. The minimum size ground cover container may be #1, or 1-gallon. Groundcovers may be planted at smaller sizes, depending on the individual plant species.

**6.2 – Planting Dates**

The GDOT Specifications limit the months in which landscape related work for trees and shrubs can occur. Plant installations are to be done between the dates of October 15 and March 15.

**6.3 – Spacing**

Large canopy or shade trees planted as mitigation shall be spaced a minimum of thirty (30) feet on center and a maximum of fifty (50) feet on center. Understory trees shall be spaced a minimum of ten (10) feet on center and a maximum of twenty-five (25) feet on center. Understory trees may be planted within fifteen (15) feet of large canopy or shade trees. Shrubs and/or ground cover used for mitigation are to be spaced for total coverage in two (2) years. To determine shrub quantities for a given area (X), use the factors given below:

Recommended Plant Spacing (On Center)	Divide Total Square Footage (X) by:
12"	1
18"	2.25
24"	4
36"	9
48"	16

## **CHAPTER 7 VEGETATION REMOVAL AND PRUNING**

### **7.1 – Authorized Vegetation Removal and Daylighting**

Authorized vegetation removal is allowed if the Department determines that there is a substantial safety or maintenance benefit to the Department. This includes:

1. Removal of invasive exotic pest plants (See Chapter 5 Invasive Plants)
2. Removal of trees in the clear zone.
3. Removal of trees and other vegetation encroaching upon or within 2 feet of limited access fence.
4. Removal of trees determined by GDOT to be dead, diseased, broken, or uprooted.
5. Removal of trees within utility easements which interfere with utility functioning, as determined by GDOT and by the utility.

Tree and vegetation removal for grading is also allowed if the grading provides a substantial safety or maintenance benefit to the Department. No tree removal, pruning, or ground disturbance shall take place within any stream buffer.

The Department may reject a permit application if the permit review determines the proposed vegetation removal will jeopardize the stability of the slope and erosion and sedimentation control.

Vegetation removal within the right of way View Zone of a permitted outdoor advertising sign must be done using a permit according to Policy 6170-1, Vegetation Management at Outdoor Advertising Signs.

### **7-2 – Pruning and Daylighting**

Pruning of existing vegetation is allowed as long as it is not being done for the sole purpose of daylighting.

Minor tree trimming (removal of low limbs up to a height of six (6) feet measured from the base) may be done as long as no more than 25 percent of the leaf-bearing crown is removed.

Daylighting is any vegetation removal whose primary purpose is to enhance the visibility of adjacent property. Vegetation removal for commercial driveway and Special Encroachment Permits is not allowed for the sole purpose of daylighting a sign or business. Daylighting is considered a gratuity, and as such is prohibited under the gratuity clause of the Georgia Constitution.

### **7.3 - Pruning Standards**

Pruning is to be done selectively and shall be in conformance with industry standards (current ANSI A300 Part 1 guidelines). Pruning shall take place at the appropriate time of year typically during the dormant season. No topping of trees is permitted. Trees shall not be pruned in an unbalanced manner, so that one side has many more branches than another.

## **CHAPTER 8 – MITIGATION FOR AUTHORIZED VEGETATION REMOVAL**

Mitigation is the process of minimizing or rectifying the impact of vegetation removed from the rights of way for commercial driveway and Special Encroachment Permits. Mitigation for vegetation removal must consist of revegetation or enhancement plantings on the right of way where vegetation was removed, and site restoration. If the Department determines that full mitigation cannot be accommodated onsite, payment of Contributory Value fees may be allowed. Payment of Contributory Value in lieu of replanting is not allowed.

### **8.1– Requirements**

Mitigation is required for:

1. The authorized removal or disturbance of trees or native understory vegetation from the rights of way.
2. Grading activities which are determined to be a benefit to the Department and which involve vegetation removal.

Mitigation is not required for:

- 2.

3. Removal of invasive plant species.
4. Vines, shrubs, and colonizing seedling trees removed within two (2) feet of limited access fence when visibility of the adjacent property is not enhanced. If removal of such vegetation would enhance the visibility of the adjacent property, a single row of evergreen shrubs or trees must be planted along the entire fence section cleared. These shall be spaced so that at least six (6) feet of clear space will be left along the fence line when the plants mature, and for total coverage in two (2) years.
5. Trees removed from the clear zone.
6. Driveway construction that does not result in removal of any trees four (4) inches in diameter or greater.

### **8.2 - Necessity to Prove a Benefit to the Department for Excess Grading**

Grading activity or vegetation removal on the rights of way, not directly related to commercial driveway access construction or for a Special Encroachment Permit, must demonstrate a substantial benefit to the Department. Provide a base map as outlined in the [Section 3-1 - Plan Requirements](#). When "vegetation control", "grading with tree removal", "driveway clearing", "landscape clearing", "landscape clean-up", "vegetation management", "tree trimming", or "vegetation removal" requests are made for work to be done on the rights of way, the following additional items must be included in the proposal:

1. Existing and proposed grading contours
2. The construction grading boundary reasonably required to create a new driveway access.
3. The boundary of the additional excess grading.
4. The beginning and ending points at the edge of the road that mark the boundaries of proposed tree removal for the new driveway access point. Measure the number of feet between these two points.
5. A tree inventory. When proposing tree removal beyond what is required for driveway construction, provide an inventory of the trees that are to be removed that are four (4) inches or greater, measured at diameter at breast height (dbh), which is 4 ½ feet above ground. Provide a total of the caliper inches of those trees. During review, if a substantial safety or maintenance benefit to the Department is verified for additional vegetation removal as a result of additional grading or clearing activities beyond what is necessary for driveway access construction, or as the result of grading for approved Special Encroachment Permits, the applicant must provide landscape enhancement, site restoration, and replacement plants as mitigation for any lost vegetation.

### **8.3 - Replacement Planting Requirements for Mitigation**

If a substantial safety or maintenance benefit to the Department is verified for additional vegetation removal as a result of additional grading or clearing activities beyond what is necessary for driveway access construction, or as the result of grading for approved Special Encroachment Permits, the applicant must provide replacement plants and site restoration as mitigation for any lost vegetation. The following items must be included in such proposals:

1. A landscape design proposal plan for replacement plants at a ratio of one-half (1/2) of the total caliper inches of trees removed and one-fourth (1/4) of the total square feet of existing native understory vegetation removed.
2. Thirty percent (30%) of the replacement shrubs and seventy-five percent (75%) of replacement trees shall be native species or cultivars of native species.
3. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all proposed trees shall be large-canopy, hardwood shade trees.
4. Grass all disturbed ground areas not planted in trees and shrubs according to GDOT Specifications.

If the Department determines that full landscape mitigation cannot be reasonably accommodated, then the remainder of the mitigation shall be fees according to [Section 16-2 - Excess Clearing Fees](#). Payment of Contributory Value fees in lieu of planting trees on the right of way for mitigation is not allowed.

## **CHAPTER 9 – LIMITED LANDSCAPES PERMITS**

Some requirements of a Special Encroachment Permit are waived or reduced for applicants that propose to enhance portions of the right of way adjacent to their property through landscaping. A Limited Landscape Special Encroachment Permit is allowed for

**Policy:** 6755-9 - Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements on GDOT Right of Way

**Date Last Reviewed:** 4/30/2024

Page 12 of 20

enhancement of small areas on non-interstate or non-limited access roads.

The applicant for a limited landscape permit must be the property owner or business owner whose property or business is adjacent

to GDOT right of way on a non-interstate or non-limited access roadway. Existing vegetation may not be removed for the purpose of

daylighting or improving visibility of private property or businesses.

Applicants who have defaulted on a GDOT permit, failed to comply with the requirements of a GDOT permit, or failed to follow the instructions of a GDOT permit inspector will not be granted limited landscape permits.

The Department will not be responsible for replanting, replacing, or restoring any enhancement planting installed under a Limited Landscape SEP, nor will property or business owners be reimbursed for any such enhancement if it is damaged due to necessary operations.

#### **8.1 – Criteria for a Limited Landscape Permit**

1. The work may only consist of preparation of planting beds for approved flowers, shrubs, and plants.
2. Plant beds must be located at the back of the right of way.
3. Plant beds must be less than ¼ acre in size.
4. Grading is not allowed, other than what is required for preparation of plant beds.
5. Plantings shall not block required sight distance for motorists or pedestrians upon or entering the state highway system and shall not block or reduce the existing sight distance to traffic control devices.
6. Plantings shall not impede pedestrian traffic or interfere with bus stops or shelters for transit buses or school buses.
7. Tree plantings on the right of way are not allowed within 500 feet of a permitted billboard.

#### **9.2 – Limited Landscape Plan Requirements**

**Policy:** 6755-9 - Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements on GDOT Right of Way

**Date Last Reviewed:** 4/30/2024

Page 14 of 20

Applicant must provide a legible, labeled, scaled site plan which shows:

1. The edge of pavement, lane delineations, and right of way line,
2. All signs, light poles,
3. Area and type of plantings, including botanical names,
4. The water cut-off for the irrigation system (if applicable) and
5. The direction that surface water will flow after work is complete.

### **9.3 – Limited Landscape Work Restrictions**

1. Applicant must locate all utilities prior to starting work, by calling or contacting 811.
2. No work shall be performed or staged in a travel lane, auxiliary lane, or shoulder.
3. No vehicle equipment, material or supplies shall be parked, loaded, or unloaded or placed within ten (10) feet of a travel lane.
4. Work activities shall not cause erosion: mulch, ground cover, silt fence or other approved erosion control must be utilized.
5. No motor-powered excavation equipment shall be used other than a walk behind tiller or hand carried auger.
6. No excavation deeper than seven (7) inches shall be made using mechanized equipment.
7. No activity shall be allowed that impedes or directs vehicular or pedestrian traffic from their normal path.
8. Applicant must furnish proof of liability insurance with at least \$100,000 coverage for property damage and at least \$300,000 for injury or death to individuals.

Upon notification by the Department, the Applicant shall be responsible for removing the ENCROACHMENT at their own expense and returning the area to its original condition or an acceptable substitute condition.

## **CHAPTER 10 – LOCAL/INTERSTATE MOWING**

If a group or business proposes to mow a limited section of the rights of way adjacent to their frontage, exclusive of any landscape enhancement, they may complete a Limited Landscape agreement.

### **10.1 – Local Mowing**

If a local government entity or group proposes to mow limited sections of the rights of way, exclusive of any landscape enhancement, they must complete a Maintenance Agreement through the local District Traffic Engineer/Manager. An extensive Special Encroachment Permit review is not needed.

### **10.2 – Interstate Centerline Mowing**

If a local government entity proposes to mow sections of the rights of way that include interstate centerline rights of way, exclusive of any landscape enhancement, they must complete a Maintenance Agreement that includes a work plan with special safety guidelines for large-scale mowing operations. An extensive Special Encroachment Permit review is not needed.

## **CHAPTER 11 – DECORATIVE WELCOME SIGNS OR GATEWAY SIGNS**

### **11.1 – City and County Line Signing**

Local Governments may erect a city limit or county line sign according to the Department's standards on State routes as long as they meet the following criteria. (no permit is required):

1. Maximum sign size to be no larger than 48" X 30".
2. Principal legend should be a minimum of 4" in height, preferable 6".
3. Colors: Background of any color except red, orange, yellow, or fluorescent yellow-green.
4. Sign is to be ground mounted on a maximum 3-pound u-channel steel post or a 4" X 4" wood post. The sign should be placed so the bottom of the sign is a minimum of 7' above the ground line. The post shall be embedded a minimum of 3' into the ground.
5. Sign shall be erected and maintained by governing authority.
6. Signs must be installed in accordance with Figure 2A-2, Examples of Heights and Lateral Locations of Sign

Installations, of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) most current edition.

7. No more than one city limit sign per direction will be erected on each route.
8. No sign will be allowed to indicate when leaving the city or county.
9. Signs for Unincorporated areas will be reviewed for processing upon official request.
10. No additional signs may be added or attached to sign or post.

#### **11.2 – Gateway/Monument/Custom Decorative Signing/Structures on Non-Limited or Limited Access Highways**

Local governments may elect, instead, to erect a custom-designed decorative sign(s). Decorative signs that exceed the requirements of Department-fabricated city limit and county line signs described above require Special Encroachment Permit approval by means of GPAS AMPS. Signs will be reviewed and approved by the State Office of Traffic Operations after recommendations from the District Office.

Custom-designed decorative signs on non-limited or limited access highways must meet the following criteria:

1. The signs shall be erected and maintained by a local governing authority.
2. Locations considered should be coordinated with major tourism area/regions that create out of state and regional travel. Signs and associated text will only be considered for the appropriate local governing authority, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), or appropriate roadway name. Additionally, anything containing advertisement or logos for organizations, clubs and non-profit businesses will not be considered for gateway signing.
3. All signs not frangible and crashworthy must be located a minimum of 120% (typically 42 feet) outside the clear zone. In no circumstance will the sign be placed in an area where new roadside safety hardware would be required. The applicant may propose a location behind existing barrier. If signage is placed behind guardrail, it shall be at a minimum of 5 feet behind the guardrail.
4. The Maximum Height of the proposed gateway sign shall be limited to ensure adequate clear zone for all circumstances.
5. Signs installed without federal funds are to be processed as a Special Encroachment Permit by means of GPAS AMPS and will not require FHWA approval.
6. Lighting and landscaping issues must be addressed in the Special Encroachment Permit by means of GPAS AMPS via Adhoc Approver by the Office of Design Policy and Support.
7. A Maintenance Agreement will be established specifying who will maintain the decorative sign/structure. The Maintenance Agreement must ensure that maintenance activities will be performed in a manner that will not affect the safety and operation of the highway.
8. No more than one city limit sign per direction will be erected on each route.
9. No sign will be allowed to indicate when leaving the city or county.
10. No sign will be allowed in a median or traffic island.



11. Proposed sign text shall be reviewed by the State Review Panel for concurrence. Refer to [Section 12.2](#) of this policy.
12. Sign structures shall feather into the cut or fill slope rather than present a flat end wall facing the direction of traffic flow.
13. No more than one sign shall be allowed on each interchange quadrant/approach.
14. Aesthetic features of the sign must conform to the review criteria found in [Section 12.3](#).

If a decorative sign is proposed to include an LED panel it will need to meet the following additional criteria:

1. LED portion of the sign shall remain fixed for at least 2 minutes, and each transitional change shall occur within 2 seconds. (Sign shall be programmed to automatically freeze in a single display in the event of a malfunction or computer error)
2. LED portion of the sign shall not cause glare or impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle or otherwise interfere with the safe operation of a motor vehicle.
3. Sign shall not deploy any display which is flashing, intermittent, or moving when the sign is in a fixed position.
4. LED portion of the sign cannot display any form of advertising or logos.

## **CHAPTER 12 - AESTHETIC FEATURES, MURALS AND BRIDGE EMBELLISHMENTS**

All requests to enhance the State rights of way with non-vegetative enhancement features (art, aesthetic features, art murals, banners, or road structure embellishments) will be reviewed by the proper District Traffic Engineer/Manager, and forwarded on to the State Office of Traffic Operations, or forwarded directly to the Office of Maintenance – Landscape Architecture Unit for their comments and then on to Traffic Operations for comments prior to approval. Formal approval will be granted by the District Engineer unless, it is located on a limited access or Interstate facility.

The Department recognizes that art, by nature, is appreciated in a personal way and may not appeal to everyone equally. The Department encourages organizations or local governments to enhance the rights of way with natural vegetation rather than using murals, embellishments, or banners, etc.

Non-vegetative enhancement features that are proposed within state rights of way must be requested by a local government entity sponsor as a Special Encroachment Permit. The sponsor must sign a Maintenance Agreement to maintain regular upkeep of the feature and prevent it from falling into disrepair or structural unsoundness. The Maintenance Agreement will require the applicant to make provisions for removal of non-vegetative enhancement features if they are not maintained. The agreement will also convey unlimited rights to the Department for modification or removal of feature.

### **12.1 – Permanent and Temporary Non-vegetative Enhancement Features**

Some non-vegetative enhancement features are designed and intended to be long term or permanent. Such features may include murals, sculpture, road structure embellishments, and any other thing that is intended to remain in a right of way area for multiple years. Permanent non-vegetative enhancement features require a long term maintenance agreement, to be in effect perpetually or at a minimum, for the useful life of the feature; and provision for safe and legal removal of the feature at the end of useful life.

Non-vegetative enhancement features such as banners are considered temporary features. Temporary non-vegetative enhancement features require a maintenance agreement with a specific display period and date of removal. Display periods shall not exceed four (4) calendar weeks. Temporary features may be removed and disposed of by the Department within three (3) working days after the date of removal has passed.

Temporary features are only allowed beyond the clear zone on state route rights of way where the speed limit is less than 35 mph. Temporary features are prohibited within the horizontal clearance in medians to mitigate potential safety hazards and allow unobstructed views for the traveling public.

### **12.2 – Review Panel**

A review panel consisting of the Director of Operations, State Traffic Engineer, State Maintenance Engineer or their designees will review the conceptual drawings or final artistic design using the criteria described below. The Department reserves the right to refuse any and all proposals. Non-vegetative Enhancement Features must meet the criteria below.

### **11.3 – Review Criteria for Permanent Non-vegetative Enhancement Features**

1. The feature shall not create a new fixed object within the rights of way.
2. Clear sight line shall not be obstructed.
3. The feature shall be securely affixed and permanently attached to a substantial, existing structure.
4. The feature shall not contain multiple messages or moveable parts.
5. The feature shall not be made of materials that can come loose and fall into the rights of way or road. Any proposed veneer surface must include details of how the surface will be permanently affixed and how the mural can be

removed, and the structure restored to its original surface.

6. The feature shall not pose a distraction to the traveling public. Colors or patterns used in directional or regulatory signs or features as defined in MUTCD are prohibited.
7. The feature shall maintain a unified aesthetic character with the landscape and unmanaged woods along the roadway.
8. Advertising or business logos are prohibited. The feature must not be perceived to be advertising and may not incorporate school team mascots or logos.
9. Sign text is limited to the name of the appropriate governing authority, CID, or roadway name.
10. Offensive messages or images are prohibited.
11. The feature shall not include any content that could potentially divide a community.
12. The feature shall not contain recognition of sponsors.
13. No mural or embellishment shall not be painted on any natural feature.
14. The feature shall not emit sound.
15. The feature shall not be externally or internally illuminated.
16. The feature shall not include images of living people.
17. The feature shall not exceed 3000 sq. ft. and shall be no taller than thirty (30) feet in height measured from the edge of pavement of the closest traveled way. In no case shall any feature be so tall as to pose a hazard to the traveling public.
18. The feature shall be no taller than thirty (30) feet in height relative to the edge of pavement of the closest traveled way.
19. In no case shall any features be so tall as to pose a hazard to the travelling public.
20. The feature must be located outside the clear zone for the manifest speed limit.
21. The feature shall be no closer than 1000 feet from any other similar feature visible from the rights of way.
22. Local government entities must provide sound evidence that local community input was involved in choosing the content and design of the mural, including but not limited to minutes from any public meeting.
23. The feature shall not incorporate espaliered plant material.
24. The feature shall be made of long-lasting materials and be easy to maintain.

#### **12.4– Review Criteria for Temporary Non-vegetative Enhancement Features**

1. Temporary Non-vegetative Enhancement Features must meet all criteria of Permanent Non-vegetative Enhancement Features, in 12.3 above, with the following exceptions:
  - a. The feature shall NOT be permanently attached to an existing structure.
  - b. The feature may have text other than the name of the appropriate governing authority, CID, or roadway name.

- i. To minimize distractions to drivers, text on the feature is limited to eight (8) words (example: Welcome to the City of XX XX).
- c. The feature may be closer than 1000 feet from any other similar feature visible from the right of way.

## **CHAPTER 13 - SPECIAL PAVING**

### **13.1 – Stamped Concrete Alternative**

Concrete pavers are not allowed on State rights of way. The GDOT allows the use of stamped concrete for crosswalks if the following conditions are met:

1. The crossing is at a 90-degree angle with no curves to the roadway
2. The width of the treatment is less than 10 feet
3. Current ADT is 5,000 or less and truck volume is 10% or less

### **13.2 – Architectural Asphalt**

When architectural asphalt treatment is used, the Maintenance Agreement shall include the statement that the Department will replace the feature with standard pavement during any resurfacing activities unless the sponsor funds replacement of the architectural treatment.

## **CHAPTER 14 - NON-STANDARD FENCING**

Portions of the limited access fence may be removed for the purpose of cleaning the fence line of all vines and small brambles growing in the fence. If removed, the limited access fence must be replaced with GDOT standard fencing, in like kind, along the original location. The applicant must either replace the limited access fence at the end of each day of work or install a temporary construction fence. No gates or permanent access points will be allowed along the right of way fence.

If fencing other than the standard hog wire or chain link is approved by the Department, it must be installed one foot inside the applicant's property and the applicant must agree to maintain the fence. All access to the work area is to be from the abutting property, not from the traveled way.

## **CHAPTER 15 – IRRIGATION**

If the work includes installation of a sprinkler system within State rights of way, an **INDEMNITY AGREEMENT** must be signed by the applicant, approved by the GDOT Commissioner or designee and recorded by the applicant in the County Courthouse in which the site is located. No irrigation systems will be allowed within the median or traffic island unless approved by the GDOT Commissioner or designee.

- GDOT requires irrigation controllers be located outside the right of way.
- Valve boxes need to be locked or located outside the right of way.
- A shut-off valve at the meter connection will be required for emergency purposes.
- Include tracer wires on all mainline and lateral pipes.
- Sprinkler heads must be the "pop-up" type. Sprinkler heads should be at least ten (10) feet from Edge of Pavement or Back of Curb to avoid damage. Sprinkler heads closer to EOP/BOC may be considered, but in no case shall sprinkler heads be placed so that damage to sprinkler heads will cause water to enter the roadway.

Drip irrigation is typically not allowed within the GDOT rights of way. Sprinkler systems or some type of irrigation system are not permitted in medians except by written approval of the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee as a special approval. The procedure for a special approval request is stated in [Section 15.1](#).

### **15.1 – Procedure for a Special Approval Request (Irrigation Systems in Medians/Islands)**

**Policy:** 6755-9 - Policy for Landscaping and Enhancements on GDOT Right of Way

**Date Last Reviewed:** 4/30/2024

Page 20 of 20

Irrigation systems in a median or traffic island area require written approval from the GDOT Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee. **This is not a variance or design exception.**

1. When a permit applicant desires to install irrigation in a median or traffic island, the applicant (local municipality) must submit a letter titled "Request for Special Approval" and a separate letter from the Engineer of Record.
  - a. The applicant letter must include:
    - The tracking number of the Special Encroachment Permit being applied for, and a description of the project with the State Route and location.
    - The reason why additional watering will be needed after plant establishment.
  - a. The Engineer of Record letter must include:
    - The note "The plantings do not violate standard design criteria."
    - A signature line for recommendation by the Engineer of Record including a Georgia Professional Engineer licensure number.
    - A signature line for concurrence for the Director of Engineering.
    - A signature line for approval for the Chief Engineer.
  - b. The plans must CLEARLY and ACCURATELY show the Right of Way line, as well as all other items required for a plan review.
2. After the initial review by the district, the plans will be sent to the State Maintenance Office Landscape Architecture Unit for review and comment. The State Maintenance Office Landscape Architecture Unit will send the request to the State Utilities Office for review and comment. The plans and comments will be forwarded to the GDOT Office of Design Policy and Support Design Policy Unit (via e-mail [designexception@dot.ga.gov](mailto:designexception@dot.ga.gov)), who will route the request for signature or make additional comments and return for correction. **Drawings and other submittals must be corrected per comments from SMO LAU, State Utilities, and the Design Policy Unit before forwarding.**
3. The Director of Engineering will sign the request letter or comments will be returned to the applicant through the district for correction.
4. Once all comments have been addressed the request will be forwarded to the Chief Engineer for signature. The Chief Engineer will either approve the request, return the request for correction or deny approval.
5. After approval from the Chief Engineer, the request letter will be routed back to the district for distribution to the applicant.

If the irrigation system and plantings to be installed under the Special Encroachment Permit are not associated with an adjacent property owner, the meter, backflow, controller, and valves may be located on the Right of Way. HOWEVER, these must be located at the back of the right of way and are not to be located in a median or traffic island.

## **CHAPTER 16 - FEES & PAYMENT**

### **16.1 - Typical Driveway Access Fees**

A Contributory Value Fee of ten dollars (\$10.00) per one (1) foot of road frontage affected by tree removal is required to compensate for all proposed removal of vegetation necessary for driveway access construction.

### **16.2 - Excess Clearing Fees**

A Contributory Value fee is assessed to compensate for any remaining replacement plants to complete the mitigation for additional grading or clearing activities beyond what is necessary for driveway access construction where the Department determines that the required landscape replacement plants cannot reasonably be installed to compensate for the total amount of lost vegetation. The corresponding Contributory Value fees in this case can be calculated by multiplying the remaining caliper inches that cannot be replaced on the site by seven dollars (\$7.00). Refer to [Sections 3-1 - Plan Requirements](#) and [8.4 - Necessity to Prove a Benefit to the Department for Excess Grading](#).

### 16.3 - Payment Details

After Department review and approval, submit a check to the made payable to the Georgia Department of Transportation to the following address:

**Georgia Department of Transportation**

**P.O. Box 931718**

**Atlanta, GA 31193-1718**

**Include the permit number on the check and note that the payment is a Contributory Value Fee.**

Contributory Value Fees will be deposited in the Roadside Enhancement and Beautification Fund to mitigate for the necessary vegetation removal that takes place during Special Encroachment and Driveway Permit construction.

All costs related to a Special Encroachment Permit project are the responsibility of the permit applicant.

## CHAPTER 17 – JUNKYARDS

### 17.1 - Screening

Screening, vegetative buffer planting, ornamental walls, architectural treatment, earthen embankments, or a combination of any of these may be used to effectively hide from view any deposit of junk from the main traveled way. Refer to GDOT Rule 672-8 for specific requirements and definitions for Junkyards. The screening shall be located on the owner's land and **not on any part of the highway right of way**. Plant material should be predominantly evergreen. The minimum size of plant material at the time of planting is:

- 1 – 1 ½" caliper for large canopy shade trees
- 4 – 5' tall for small flowering trees
- 4 – 5' tall for evergreen trees
- 2 ½ - 3' tall for evergreen shrubs

## CHAPTER 18 – MITIGATION FOR UNAUTHORIZED VEGETATION REMOVAL

### 18.1 - Damage to the State Rights of Way

Mitigation of value changes to the State rights of way or other costs for landscaping plans, traffic control, material handling, landscaping, vegetation replacement, subsequent maintenance, or other costs incurred by the Department as a result of damage to the rights of way will be the responsibility of the individual or company accountable for the value change. Mitigation includes a Maintenance Agreement for the rights of way affected, reimbursement for the materials and/or vegetation removed from the rights of way, and/or the replacement of the vegetation removed from the rights of way.

### 18.2 - Unauthorized Vegetation Removal

Unauthorized vegetation removal or tree damage that effectively destroys existing trees will be grounds for sanctions provided for in [GDOT Rule 672-14.08](#) and the Georgia Outdoor Advertising Control Act, [Official Code of Georgia Annotated \(OCGA\) Section 32-6-70](#) et.seq., and [OCGA Section 32-6-95](#). Procedures will apply the same as in cases wherein the Department believes that an illegal tree trimming has taken place. Any person engaged in unauthorized pruning, trimming, or removal of vegetation is subject to a penalty of \$10,000 to \$20,000 per incident and restitution in an amount equal to the appraised value of the trees or vegetation, or both. Reimbursement amounts for affected vegetation 4 inches in diameter or greater will be calculated by the Department using the BASIC TREE VALUE table in [Section 18.3](#). Reimbursement of \$500 per 500 feet parallel to the traveled way will be charged in addition to the Basic Tree Value for unauthorized removal of any plant material less than 4 inches in diameter.

### 18.3 – Basic Tree Values Table

<b>Diameter of Effectively Destroyed Tree (dbh in inches)</b>	<b>Class (Size)</b>	<b>Hardwood Basic Value</b>	<b>Non-Hardwood Basic Value</b>
4 to 4.9	4	\$ 246.00	\$ 147.00
5 to 6.9	6	\$ 341.00	\$ 205.00
7 to 8.9	8	\$ 596.00	\$ 358.00
9 to 10.9	10	\$ 936.00	\$ 562.00
11 to 12.9	12	\$1,138.00	\$ 683.00
13 to 14.9	14	\$1,605.00	\$ 963.00
15 to 16.9	16	\$2,158.00	\$1,295.00
17 to 18.9	18	\$2,795.00	\$1,677.00
19 to 20.9	20	\$3,518.00	\$2,111.00
21 to 22.9	22	\$4,325.00	\$2,595.00
23 to 24.9	24	\$5,218.00	\$3,131.00
25 to 26.9	26	\$6,195.00	\$3,717.00
27 to 28.9	28	\$7,258.00	\$4,355.00
29 to 30.9	30	\$8,405.00	\$5,043.00

## **References:**

Policy 6755-11,  
Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) most current edition,  
GDOT Specification Section 700 and 702,  
AASHTO Roadside Design Guide most current edition,  
GDOT Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control most current edition

## **History:**

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