

Class 4b ~ Sponsored Road Traffic Projects

Background

This sign class consists of signs relating to the sponsoring of projects specifically intended for the road user and aimed at the provision of road services, the promotion of road safety or the management and conservation of roadside environments such as scenic roadways.

A Word of Caution

Class 4b is one of a very limited number of sign types that are allowed within road reserves. It is even allowed along freeways in rural and natural areas of maximum control. It is therefore needless to say that this sign class should be approached with caution and that care should be taken to harmonise advertising content and advertising structure with the surrounding environment and to contribute to sense of place and the aesthetic environment in general.

An Integrated Free-Form Approach

For roadside campaigns free-form boards or sculptures, consisting of specific characters or mascots and displaying a series of postures, may be considered. Apart from almost unlimited possibilities of creating artistic and visually pleasant designs such mascot figures will also be more effective in transferring campaign messages to the public. Copy or text should be limited, while all copy, sponsorship logos and brand names should be integrated into the free-form design in a seamless manner. In order to obtain this a mascot character may for instance carry a banner with a road safety message and may have a certain brand of soft drink in his other hand or wear a certain brand of clothing.

If a traditional geometric design is preferred, standardised sign structures should not be used. Custom-made structures and frames should be developed for each campaign.

Care should be taken that the reverse sides of especially free-form signs do not present an unattractive appearance. This may be prevented by repeating the same image on the reverse side of the sign.

Regional variations in free-form images or custom-made sign structures and sign content may be an important issue to look at in order to contribute to regional character and sense of place.

More Benefits for the Public

Sign sponsorships may include graphic design and the design of sign structures, the actual sign itself, landscaping of sign sites, campaign management and even roadside amenities such as picnic sites. The right to put certain logos and products on specific campaign signs might be put on *tender* to obtain the best sponsorship and benefits for the controlling authority and the public.

Play it Safe

The involvement of outdoor advertising contractors in roadside projects and campaigns should be approached with caution. Since the driving force behind outdoor advertising is often maximum profit, sign quality and campaign efficiency might be jeopardised in the process. Care should be taken that sponsored roadside campaigns do not serve as the thin end of the wedge whereby unacceptable advertising rights for the roadside environment is obtained by lobbying controlling authorities and politicians. This might lead to a proliferation of unsightly signs along roads and the destruction of the aesthetic environment. Ownership of all advertising structures together with the control of advertising contents by the relevant roads authorities may therefore be a prerequisite to prevent such as possibility.

Public Involvement

Public involvement, which may even include design review inputs by capable groups or individuals, may be another prerequisite. By applying the strategic environmental assessment ([SEA](#)) procedure, *Sponsored Sign Plans* might be developed for a whole campaign, route or road section with the necessary conditions, design and other specifications. This procedure will also ensure the necessary public involvement and design review inputs. However, owing to the scale of many of such projects public involvement and design review may become unmanageable by having to be too wide-ranging.

Traffic Safety Campaign

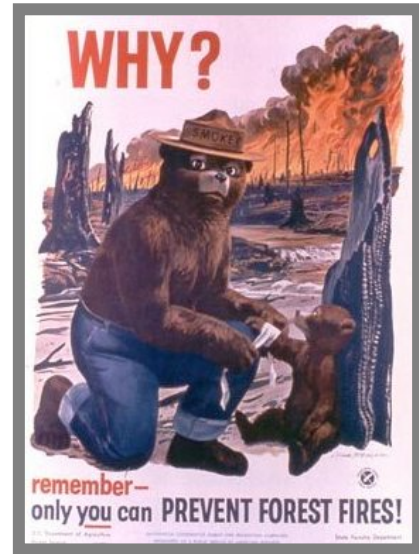


'Don't be a Tailgator' – Mascot used by Louisiana State Police in campaign to curb tailgating.

USA Forest Fire Prevention



The well-known *Smokey Bear* used on posters, as free-form boards and as a statue to bring home a forest fire prevention message



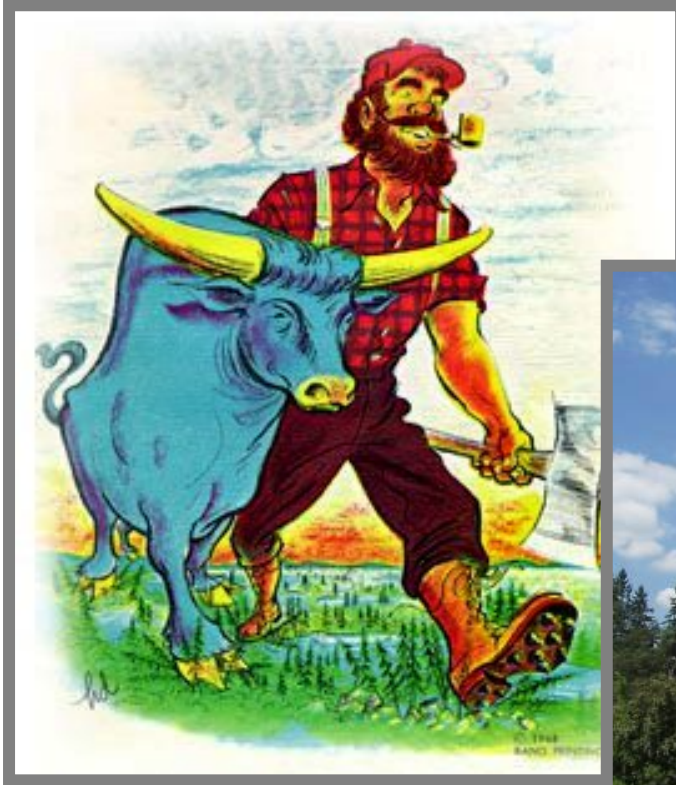


Examples of Well-known Roadside Sculptures



By using well-known characters from local history, folklore or tradition for roadside campaigns such campaigns may contribute to local sense of place and sculptures such as these may even become important tourist attractions. The examples indicated are not currently used for roadside campaigns, but only indicates what such sculptures may look like. *Hobo Joe* from Buckeye, Arizona (above left), one of a few remaining statues that once fronted a now defunct restaurant chain called *Hobo Joe's*. *Steve Canyon* (above right), a patriotic American cartoon character from the 1940s.

Paul Bunyan from the northern regions of the United States is a mythological lumberjack who appears in tall tales of American folklore.





Jock of the Bushveld from Mpumalanga Province – a good example of a well known character that may be used in regional roadside campaigns in South Africa.

Inappropriate Way of Handling a Roadside Campaign



A good example of how a roadside campaign should not be run! Ironically these huge billboards, which can be described as 'litter on a stick', are actually trying to convince road users not to litter.

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