

**North Carolina Department of Transportation
Division of Highways
Transportation Mobility and Safety Division**

**STANDARD PRACTICE
For
Road Naming or Renaming**

A. TOPIC OWNER

Transportation Mobility and Safety Division- State Traffic Engineer

B. PURPOSE

C. OVERVIEW

Occasionally, the Department of Transportation is asked to change the name of a road or change an honorary designation. The reason for requests ranges from wanting to honor a local or regional person, to renaming because it will help give the corridor a better sense of community, and in some cases because the individual no longer deserves a place of honor. Over the past 100 years, various entities have named our state roadways for historical figures. Some transportation facilities were named by the Board of Transportation, others named by the local County or Municipality governing bodies, and in some cases they North Carolina Legislature named the facilities. As our communities and state continue to grow and evolve over time, new historical figures are discovered and recognized for their contribution to our Country, State or local community. In converse, some of the individuals were recognized by the respective bodies in the past may have had issues that were either overlooked, ignored, or were not aware. Historically, the Department of Transportation rarely initiates the naming of a road or an honorary designation. The Department's expertise is not judging what is or is not historically relevant to the various communities across our great State. Therefore, NCDOT works collaboratively with local communities on road naming and honorary designations. We follow our normal process for renaming a road.

D. CONSIDERATIONS

There are more items to consider than just the name of the road. There will be cost to consider that include public and private costs.

1. If you disagree with the naming of a road in your community, the best place to start is with the governing body of your community. The Department of Transportation can research our records to see what actions were taken to name the facility and determine what actions are necessary to rename the road or remove the honorary designation.
2. For example, if the State Legislature named the road through Legislative action, then only the Legislative action can reverse the naming.

3. If the local community named the road, and no action was completed by the Board of Transportation, then renaming would begin with the local community and after review by the Department, the official name is changed by the passing of a resolution naming the road by the local governing body.
4. If there were actions taken by the Board of Transportation, then the Board would need to vote to rename the road or remove the honorary designation.
5. Sign Changes- When a road name is changed, all the signs must be changed. The street name signs are the responsibility of the local community. The Department may ask the local community to participate in the cost to replace the highway signs as well. These costs can be considerable especially if the signs involve large shoulder mounted and overhead signs. If the new name of the road has more letters than the previous name, it could require replacement of the entire sign structure and these could be \$50,000 or more for each structure.
6. Address Changes- The homes and businesses may be required to change their addresses when a road name is changed. This is not a trivial task when you consider all the various personal and business relationships that must be informed. In addition, businesses that have printed or other hard made advertisement must consider the cost of changing letter heads, business cards, and other advertisements that have their address shown.
7. Navigational Devices and Companies- Many people depend on various navigational devices and applications to help guide them to locations. When a road name is changed, depending on the device, and company, it may take a while for these changes to be shown. The companies that use online applications such as Google, or Ways may update their maps and direction within a few days after they are made aware of the changes. Devices that require users to download (common onboard navigation systems in vehicles), and/or pay for mapping upgrades may take longer and some users will not pay the cost to update their devices.
8. Public Acceptance- Changing road names may become controversial for various reasons. It should be expected that the more residents and businesses that are affected, or the more personal connection to the existing road name, the more controversial the issue will be.

E. GUIDELINES

The Board of Transportation can unilaterally change names on state-maintained roadways that have not been named by the North Carolina Legislature. However, NCDOT does not have a history of making unilateral decisions on community issues. The Board of Transportation wishes to continue the collaborative work and make unilateral decision when other alternatives have been exhausted.

The Board of Transportation has asked staff to research the history of several road names for historical figures that may have less support today than when the road was named or designated. Examples include Jefferson Davis Highway, and Andrew Jackson highway.

1. If you wish to change the name or remove an honorary designation of a street in your community, you should start with the local government body.
2. You should contact the local county or municipality to initiate the change.
3. The local government body will determine, if they wish to remove a name, or rename the roadway all together.
4. If it is an honorary designation or bridge naming, the local community is also the place to start.
5. Questions about road naming, or the history of a specific road name on a state-maintained road, we can determine if the Board of Transportation has named the road. These questions can be directed to the State Traffic Engineer at 919-814-5000.