Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Outdoor Advertising Vegetation Removal Process
Lean Summary Report

Project Summary

The Bureau of Highway Maintenance (BHM) administers the outdoor advertising (OA) program, which regulates off right-of-way (roadway) signs throughout the state. In addition to this, the OA program is responsible for processing requests to remove vegetation from the highway right of way to provide visibility to signs. Vegetation requests involve many participants including BHM staff, landscape architect consultants, regional OA coordinators and sign owners.

The goals of this project were to reduce the lead time from the start of the application review process to permit issuance for work on highway right of way, reduce the number of hours spent by participants at sign site visits, and reduce costs related to coordination and transportation of multiple site visits.

Improvements

- Decreased total number of independent sign site visits from three to one
- Eliminated initial site review and site plan requirement of sign owners, saving four hours of process time per application
- Eliminated initial sign review by regional OA coordinator, saving eight hours of process time per application
- Standardized work with application form and checklists

MAPSS Core Goal Area

- Accountability
- Service

Statewide Goal Area

- Cost of government
- Customer satisfaction

Issue

The Division of Transportation System Development (DTSD), Bureau of Highway Maintenance (BHM) currently receives 40 to 50 applications annually for the removal of vegetation on the highway right of way, as required by s.84.305, Wis. Stats. The current vegetation removal process requires multiple visits to the sign site by various participants, has multiple handoffs between central office, the regions and consultants, and utilizes multiple systems throughout the entire process. These inefficiencies have resulted in high costs to the program, both in time and money. The goal of this project was to create a revised statewide process that eliminates duplicative duties and refines the inefficient parts of the vegetation application and removal process, thereby reducing the time to carry out vegetation removal applications, reducing overall costs, and improving statewide consistency.

Lean Six Sigma Process

The DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control) methodology was used to:

- Define the needs and wants of both BHM and other customers
- Map the process and define stakeholder participation
- Measure prior year lead time spent on each part of the vegetation removal request process
- Use root cause analysis and metrics to identify causes of duplication and lengthy lead time from site visits
- Develop an improvement plan to overcome causes by improving timeliness and quality of information, establishing shared expectations of roles and responsibilities, and creating mutually agreed upon parameters and process steps
- Draft an application form and checklists that will control the new process and ensure it stays in place

The process was implemented for an initial test run in fall 2016. In the coming months, BHM and other participants will review the implemented improvements and identify any additional process improvements needed before implementing the process changes statewide.

Results

Cost of Government: The team eliminated the initial sign review process step for OA coordinators. Statewide implementation is expected to see a 400 hour (8 hours x 50 applications) savings in staff time that will be repurposed into other critical assignments as well as reduced transportation and administrative costs related to site visits.

Customer satisfaction: Eliminating the initial site review process for sign owners reduced their process time from four to zero hours. Statewide implementation is expected to see a 200 hour (4 hours x 50 applications) reduction in customer time, as well as reduced transportation and administrative costs related to site visits.