

OVERPASS BANNERING TIPS

By Evergreen Resistance Bannering Teams

Last updated: 7/23/2025



This guide is meant to assist new banner teams in locating suitable bridges for overpass bannering, packing the right gear, building an appropriate and safe banner, and thinking ahead for contingencies as they arise while overpass bannering.

Safety, both for bannering teams and for drivers, is your number one priority.

Bridge Factors and Safety Considerations

Bannering teams cannot legally block sidewalks, bike paths, or roads. **It is illegal to hang anything on the outside of bridge rails, and it also illegal to hang things onto bridges and leave.** Pedestrian bridges are safer for banner teams because there is less worry about what is happening behind them as they face the highway below. Shorter bridges allow for better visibility by drivers. All signage, including on the banners themselves, need to have BIG letters (17 to 20 inches tall). If you're bannering along a busy surface road overpass, you'll want to have additional team members on hand to watch your back and hold signs.

What to Bring

In order of priority, below is a list of things to bring to bannering.

1. Your banner
2. A plan! (rally point, parking, banner facing direction)
3. Zip ties
4. Scissors
5. First aid kit, N95 masks, sunscreen, umbrella(s), and weather appropriate clothing
6. Rolling cart

7. Cooler, ice, and beverages
8. Snacks
9. Flags and signs (with large high-contrast writing)
10. Flyers for your group or the next event (if applicable) to hand to passerbys

Banner Types and Safety

There are three main types of 'banners' that can be used on highway overpasses. They are not all equal! In order of quality, ease of use, and safety, below are the benefits, drawbacks, and safety of each type.

In all cases, it's safest when wind is less than 15 mph. Use a lot of caution when wind exceeds 20 mph. Expect gusts from passing trucks. You are responsible for anything dropped onto the highway and any damage that results.

Pole-Net-Tarp, ie. Backbone Style



Benefits: They are lightweight, don't hang over the roadway, they're wind-proof, highly visible, can attach via zip ties to most bridges. Messages can be changed to suit your purposes over time.

Drawbacks: There's an initial capital outlay and some effort to build them, and changing the message on your own can be tedious

Safety: They are very windproof, but there is a small risk of toppling onto or over bridge if not secured. If extended too high, the wind may exceed the strength of the poles.

How to Make: [Backbone Campaign](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/backbonecampaign/pages/75/attachments/original/1748637219/Making_and_Deploying_a_Banner_-_How_To_%283%29.pdf?1748637219) is the designer of these, and they have created a great how-to guide: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/backbonecampaign/pages/75/attachments/original/1748637219/Making_and_Deploying_a_Banner_-_How_To_%283%29.pdf?1748637219.

They also have regular banner workshops and a YouTube how to video. Check them out!

Smaller, Light-weight Pole Banners



Benefits: Cheaper to make, and can be made out of lots of different materials. Don't need to be suspended over roadways, can be engineered to withstand wind

Drawbacks: This type of banner needs to be overengineered to stay intact during wind (firmly attached to poles, grommets instead of punctures to prevent tearing, and wind slits to prevent the banner from becoming a sail). Some attention is needed to prevent sagging. They can look janky (see above).

Safety: There is a non-significant risk of taking flight during wind and falling onto roadway; mitigate by cutting holes in fabric, and securely zip-tying to bridge, if necessary.

How to Make: The world is your oyster. Extendable poles are a must. Bed sheets or PVC plastic sheeting professionally printed or painted are great. Make the text large, high-contrast, and check your spelling!

Scrabble Boards



Benefits: Messaging can be customized each time, provided you have enough letters. These messages are highly visible with big letters. They're hHands-free, and easy to make; it requires about 70 24 x 18 in. foam core boards, letter stencils (20 in) and spray paint.

Drawbacks: It can be a slightly fiddly process to set up with bungee cords in and out of fence slats to get the cord to hold each board individually, but you'll feel like McGyver once you've done it. These are ideal for pedestrian bridges with fencing, fastening on the inside facing out.

Safety: There is a minor risk of causing an accident if they fall onto traffic during set-up or take-down; bungee cords must be taut around each board.

How to Make: The Visibility Brigade has created a Toolkit for making these boards:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13DXyvaHWtYu4XCxvJGVm83wPWaQSkHxD/view>

Other Considerations

- One team member should drive the highway beneath the banner to get a high-resolution photo or video!
- You get a much better and more energized response from drivers if you wave, give thumbs up to people who give you the finger, wave flags/signs, smile, and maybe wear a costume. Note though, you still want to be considerate of driver safety, which is paramount. In times of dense traffic, be less conspicuous.
- Some bridges have a longer approach and no nearby bathroom. Know where your closest bathroom is.
- You need at least three people at each bannering, especially for large banners.
- Don't count on being able to attach your banner to the bridge. Be prepared to hold it the entire time.
- If police ask you to leave, you can: 1) comply; or 2) request a ticket to argue free speech in court
- Ensure banners don't sag.
- Make sure to clean up once you're done and pack out your trash