When Fireline and Roads Overlap: How to Offset Feature Symbology

Quick Tip: Offset a feature like Completed Line (to the side where it actually is located), to ensure visibility of another line feature on the map (e.g., trail or road). The offset property can be found in the symbol property editor dialog for a specific symbol. Positive offsets draw a feature to the north and east of its actual position, while negative offsets move it south and west.

Example: The “completed line” feature on the southwest side of the fire follows roads and covers the road symbols, which makes the map confusing. Editing the completed line data to show the road compromises the accuracy of the fire geodatabase. Instead, the completed line symbology in ArcMap can be modified using a symbology “offset” without modifying the underlying data.

Step 1. Open the Symbol Selector dialog for the completed line symbol by left-clicking the selected line symbol in the table of contents (TOC).

Step 2. On the right side of the dialog, choose “Edit Symbol”. The Symbol Property editor dialog will open.
Step 3. The Type property should be set to “Cartographic Line”; this is the default setting. Choose the “Line Properties” tab.

Step 4. Adjust the offset to move your completed line symbol so that both the completed line and the road symbol are displayed. A positive offset draws a feature to the north and east of its actual position, while a negative offset move it south and west. In this example, we move the completed line symbol 3 pixels south and west of the road symbol by setting the offset to -3.

Step 5. Click OK on the symbol property editor and symbol selector dialogs to see the results of your offset. Experiment to get the desired results.