

**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
DESIGN DIRECTIVE**

**DD-611
JUSTIFICATION FOR ADDITIONAL OR
REVISED ACCESS POINTS TO THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM**
March 17, 1998

Attached is the Division of Highways policy on Justification for Additional or Revised Access Points to the Interstate System.

This policy is based on the final policy statement issued by the Federal Highway Administration on February 11, 1998, Federal Register, Volume 63, Number 28.

Attachment

**JUSTIFICATION FOR ADDITIONAL OR
REVISED ACCESS POINTS TO THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM**

BACKGROUND

(Quoted from February 11, 1998, Federal Register, Volume 63, Number 28.)

Section 111 of the title 23, U.S.C., provides that all agreements between the Secretary and the State highway department for the construction of projects on the Interstate System shall contain a clause providing that the State will not add any points of access to, or exit from, the project in addition to those approved by the Secretary in the plans for such project, without the prior approval of the Secretary. The Secretary has delegated the authority to administer 23 U.S.C. 111 to the Federal Highway Administrator pursuant to 49 CFR 1.48(b)(10). A formal policy statement including guidance for justifying and documenting the need for additional access to the existing sections of the Interstate System was published in the Federal Register on October 22, 1990 (55-FR 42670).

The FHWA has adopted the AASHTO publication *A Policy on Design Standards—Interstate System* as its standard for projects on the Interstate System. This publication provides that access to the Interstate System shall be fully controlled by constructing grade separations at selected public crossroads and all railroad crossings. Where interchanges with selected public crossroads are constructed, access control must extend the full length of ramps and terminals on the crossroad.

ABBREVIATIONS

USC – US Code	C-D – Collector-Distributor
CFR – Code of Federal Regulations	LOS – Level of Service
HCM – Highway Capacity Manual	ADT – Average Daily Traffic
FHWA – Federal Highway Administration	HOV – High Occupancy Volume
ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act	

POLICY

It is in the national interest to maintain the Interstate System to provide the highest level of service in terms of safety and mobility. Adequate control of access is critical to providing such service. Therefore, new or revised access points to the existing Interstate System should meet the following requirements:

1. The existing interchanges and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the necessary access nor be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands while at the same time providing the access intended by the proposal.

2. All reasonable alternatives for design options, location and transportation system management type improvements (such as ramp metering, mass transit, and HOV facilities) have been assessed and provided for if currently justified, or provisions are included for accommodating such facilities if a future need is identified.
3. The proposed access point does not have a significant adverse impact on the safety and operation of the interstate facility based on an analysis of current and future traffic. The operational analysis for existing conditions shall, particularly in urbanized areas, include an analysis of sections of Interstate to and including at least the first adjacent existing or proposed interchange on either side. Crossroads and other roads and streets shall be included in the analysis to the extent necessary to assure their ability to collect and distribute traffic to and from the interchange with new or revised access points.
4. The proposed access connects to a public road only and will provide for all traffic movements. Less than “full interchanges” for special purpose access for transit vehicles, for HOV’s, or into park and ride lots may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The proposed access will be designed to meet or exceed current standards for Federal-aid projects on the Interstate System.
5. The proposal considers and is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation plans. Prior to final approval, all requests for new or revised access must be consistent with the metropolitan and/or statewide transportation plan, as appropriate, the applicable provisions of 23 CFR part 450 and the transportation conformity requirements of 40 CFR parts 51 and 93.
6. In areas where the potential exists for future multiple interchange additions, all requests for new or revised access are supported by a comprehensive Interstate network study with recommendations that address all proposed and desired access within the context of a long-term plan.
7. The request for a new or revised access generated by new or expanded development demonstrates appropriate coordination between the development and related or otherwise required transportation system improvements.
8. The request for new or revised access contains information relative to the planning requirements and the status of the environmental processing of the proposal.

With regard to the planning process, the implementation of ISTEA and 23 CFR 450 already ensures coordination of the access request process. This does not preclude FHWA from commenting on whether a proposed access point is acceptable from an engineering and operational standpoint prior to inclusion in a transportation plan or transportation improvement program.

Close coordination with the environmental process requires that the final approval of access points cannot precede the completion of the environmental process. For maximum flexibility, however, an access point request can be submitted to FHWA for a determination of engineering and operational acceptability at any time during or after completion of the environmental process. Final approval of an access point request can only occur after a finding of acceptability and completion of the planning and environmental processes.

If an access request is found to be acceptable after an engineering and operational review, the suggested wording for the acceptability finding depends on when the request is submitted.

When the request is submitted after completion of the environmental process, the action document should contain a statement similar to: “Based on an engineering and operations review, the access request is considered acceptable. The access request has been reviewed under provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act and other pertinent environmental mandates, and the FHWA executed a record of decision or FONSI on (date). This determination is subject to reevaluation in accordance with 23 CFR 771.129. This includes determining whether a changed design concept and scope warrants application of the major investment study (MIS) provisions of 223 CFR 450.318 or other metropolitan planning requirements.” The reference to the MIS requirement should not be used where Federal funds are not involved or the proposed interchange is outside a metropolitan planning area. The finding of acceptability in this case constitutes final approval of the access request if the environmental document is determined to be satisfactory and the major investment study requirement does not apply. When the request is submitted during the environmental process, the action document should contain a statement similar to : “Based on an engineering and operations review, the access request is considered acceptable. If there are no major changes in the design of the proposal, final approval may be given upon completion of the environmental process.”

APPLICATION

This policy is applicable to new or revised access points to existing Interstate facilities regardless of the funding of the original construction or regardless of the funding for the new access points. This includes routes incorporated into the Interstate System under the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 139(a) or other legislation.

Routes approved as a future part of the Interstate System under 23 U.S.C. 139(b) represent a special case because they are not yet a part of the Interstate System and the policy contained herein does not apply. However, since the intention to add the route to the Interstate System has been formalized by agreement, any proposed access points, regardless of funding, must be coordinated with the FHWA Division Office. This policy is not applicable to toll roads incorporated into the Interstate System, except for segments where Federal funds have been

expended, or where the toll road section has been added to the Interstate System under the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 139(a).

For the purpose of applying this policy, each entrance or exit point, including “locked gate” access, to the mainline is considered to be an access point. For example, a diamond interchange configuration has four access points.

Generally, revised access is considered to be a change in the interchange configuration even though the number of actual points of access may not change. For example, replacing one of the direct ramps of a diamond interchange with a loop, or changing a cloverleaf interchange into a fully directional interchange would be considered revised access for the purpose of applying this policy.

All requests for new or revised access points on completed Interstate highways must be closely coordinated with the planning and environmental processes. The FHWA approval constitutes a Federal action, and as such, requires that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures are followed. The NEPA procedures will be accomplished as part of the normal project development process and as a condition of the access approval. This means the final approval of access cannot precede the completion of the NEPA process. To offer maximum flexibility, however, any proposed access points can be submitted in accordance with the delegation of authority for a determination of engineering and operational acceptability prior to completion of the NEPA process. In this manner, the State highway agency can determine if a proposal is acceptable for inclusion as an alternative in the environmental process. This policy in no way alters the current NEPA implementing procedures as contained in 23 CFR part 771.

Although the justification and documentation procedures described in this policy can be applied to access requests for non-Interstate freeways or other access controlled highways, they are not required. However, applicable Federal rules and regulations, including NEPA procedures, must be followed.

IMPLEMENTATION

The FHWA Division Office will ensure that all requests for new or revised access submitted by the State highway agency for FHWA consideration contain sufficient information to allow the FHWA to independently evaluate the request and ensure that all pertinent factors and alternatives have been appropriately considered. The extent and format of the required justification and documentation should be developed jointly by the State highway agency and the FHWA to accommodate the operations of both agencies, and should also be consistent with the complexity and expected impact of the proposals. For example, information in support of isolated rural interchanges may not need to be as extensive as for a complex or potentially controversial interchange in an urban area. No specific documentation format or content is prescribed by this policy.

POLICY STATEMENT IMPACT

The policy statement, first published in the Federal Register on October 22, 1990 (55 FR 42670), describes the justification and documentation needed for requests to add or revise access to the existing Interstate System. The revisions made by this publication of the policy statement reflect the planning requirements of the ISTEA as implemented in 23 CFR part 450, clarify coordination between the access request and environmental processes, and update language at various locations. The States will have to take these factors into consideration when making future requests for new or revised access points, but the overall effort necessary for developing the request will not be significantly increased.

CONTENTS OF REQUEST

The following information should be provided to support a request for the approval of new or revised points of access on completed sections of the Interstate System. The guidance is not intended to specify any particular format but only the content for the request. The extent and format of justification should also be consistent with the complexity and expected impact of the proposals; for example, information in support of isolated rural interchanges may not need to be as extensive as for a complex or potentially controversial interchange in an urban area.

1. Purpose – Summary of reason for new or revised access point including a discussion, supported by appropriate analysis, of why existing interchanges and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the necessary access nor be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands while at the same time providing the access intended by the proposal.
2. Relationship to other highway improvement plans and programs, including information to support that the proposal considers and is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation plans. In areas where the potential exists for further multiple interchange additions, all requests for new or revised access must be supported by a comprehensive Interstate network study with recommendations that address all proposed and desired access within the context of a long-term plan.
3. Distances to and size of communities or activities directly served.
4. Description of existing and proposed access.
 - A. Configuration of the existing and proposed interchange. This can be accomplished by an arrow diagram showing the number of lanes for all movements. (The proposed access must connect to a public road only and must provide for all traffic movements. Less than “full interchanges” for special purpose access for transit vehicles, for HOV’s or into park and ride lots may be considered on a case-by-case basis.)

- B. Distances to adjacent interchange. If there are less than 6,000' from the gore of a ramp of an adjacent interchange to the gore of a ramp in the subject interchange, this distance should be provided in feet (to nearest 100' if less than 3,000', to nearest 500' if greater than 3,000'), and the adjacent interchange should also be analyzed sufficiently to determine its acceptable operation under both build and no build situations.
 - C. Alternatives that have been considered. This should include an analysis which demonstrates that the existing interchanges and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the necessary access nor be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands while at the same time providing the access intended by the proposal.
 - D. Description of any substandard features. The proposed access should be designed to meet or exceed current standards for Federal-aid projects on the Interstate System. If this is not feasible, proposed substandard design features should be identified and justified (to the extent possible) so that conceptual approval can be obtained at the earliest possible opportunity.
 - E. Interstate mainline and crossroad traffic volumes (ADT) including turning movements, for current year, implementation year, and design year (usually 20 years).
 - F. Number of mainline and crossroad lanes; including any auxiliary lanes or C-D roads.
5. The proposal must demonstrate that the new or revised access point does not have a significant adverse impact on the safety and operation of the Interstate facility based on an analysis of current and future traffic. Traffic and operational analysis must be performed (using the HCM) for existing and proposed conditions, including crossroads and other roads and streets to the extent necessary to assure the ability of them to effectively collect and distribute traffic from the new access.
- A. General
 - 1) Lane widths and offset distance to side obstruction if less than 6'.
 - 2) (Rounded) distances between gore points.
 - 3) Peak Hour Factor (PHF).
 - 4) Terrain type: Either qualitative (level, rolling, mountainous) or quantitative (percent grade and length).
 - 5) Percent of trucks for each movement and any special situations as to truck type/power.
 - 6) Design speed of the freeway.
 - 7) Driver population factor (Refer to the HCM , 1994 edition).

- B. Weave Analysis
 - 1) Any special weave type if not obvious from the configuration.
 - 2) Weave length (see Page 4-2 HCM, 1994 edition).
 - C. A summary of the operational analysis should be provided, showing the LOS of each element (basic freeway, all ramp gores, weaving sections) by a.m./p.m. and build/no build conditions of both the year of opening and the design year.
 - D. Additional “access points should not be looked at as isolated actions”. Sufficient study/analysis needs to be done to evaluate its effect on the whole Interstate facility. As a minimum, particularly in urbanized areas, the analysis must extend to at least the first adjacent existing or proposed interchange on either side.
6. A request for a new or revised access generated by new or expanded development should demonstrate appropriate coordination between the development and related or otherwise required transportation system improvements.
 7. It should be demonstrated that all reasonable alternatives for design options, location and transportation system management type improvements (such as ramp metering, mass transit, and HOV facilities) have been assessed and provided for if currently justified, or provisions are included for accommodating such facilities if a future need is identified.
 8. FHWA approval of a new or revised access point constitutes a Federal action, and as such, requires that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures are followed. Compliance with the NEPA procedures need not precede the request for approval of a new or revised access point. However, the request should indicate how the NEPA requirements are anticipated to be satisfied. FHWA approval of requests is conditioned upon the State complying with all applicable Federal rules and regulations. NEPA requirements must be satisfied prior to the start of construction for the new or revised point of access.
 9. Any other information that might help explain and/or support the proposal, e.g., cost-effectiveness analysis, source of funding, implementation schedule, preliminary signing plan, etc.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

1. The approval authority for engineering and operational acceptability is:
 - A. The Federal Highway Administrator retains the authority to determine acceptability of access requests for: new interchanges in transportation management areas, new or major modification of freeway-to-freeway

interchanges, and new partial interchanges. Transportation management areas are defined in 23 U.S.C. 134(i) and, for purposes of this delegation of authority, include only the urbanized portion as determined by the Bureau of the Census.

- B. Regional Administrators are delegated authority to determine acceptability of all other access requests. This includes access requests for: new interchanges outside of transportation management areas (except new freeway-to-freeway interchanges and new partial interchanges), modification of existing interchanges (except major modification of freeway-to-freeway interchanges), completion of partial interchanges, locked gate access, and closing of individual access points or entire interchanges. This authority may be redelegated to Division Administrators. Transportation management areas are defined in 23 U.S.C. 134(i) and, for purposes of this delegation of authority, include only the urbanized portion as determined by the Bureau of the Census.
2. Regional Administrators are delegated authority for final approval of changes in points of ingress or egress with Interstate through traffic lanes and with interchange ramps on completed sections of the Interstate System only after a finding of acceptability and completion of the planning and environmental processes. This authority may be redelegated in accordance with Part I, Chapter 5, Paragraph 22b.

The delegation of authority for a determination of engineering and operational acceptability as described in Item 1 above is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Delegation of Authority – Acceptability of Access Requests on Interstate Highways				
Type of New Access	TMA	HQ/Federal Highway Administrator	Regional Administrator	Division Administrator
New Freeway-to-Freeway Interchange	Yes	X		
	No	X		
Major Modification Of Freeway-to-Freeway Interchange	Yes	X		
	No	X		
New Partial Interchange or New Ramps to/from Continuous Frontage Roads That Create a Partial Interchange	Yes	X		
	No	X		
New Freeway-to-Crossroad Interchange	Yes	X		
	No		Y	Z
Modification of Existing Freeway-to-Crossroad Interchange	Yes		Y	Z
	No		Y	Z
Completion of Basic Movements At Partial Interchange	Yes		Y	Z
	No		Y	Z
Locked Gate Access	Yes		Y	Z
	No		Y	Z
Abandonment of Ramps Or Interchanges	Yes		Y	Z
	No		Y	Z

X = Determination of acceptability not redelegated to field offices.

Y = Determination of acceptability delegated to Regional Administrators.

Z = Determination of acceptability that may be redelegated to Division Administrators.

TMA = Transportation management area as defined in 23 USC 134(i). For purposes of this delegation of authority, TMA includes only the urbanized portion as defined by the Bureau of the Census.