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Department of Transportation

MEDIAN OPENINGS AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT

AUTHORITY:

Sections 20.23(3)(a) and 334.048(3), Florida Statutes (F.S.)

REFERENCES:

- Sections 335.18 - 335.188 F.S., State Highway System Access Management Act
- Section 335.199 F.S., Transportation Projects modifying access to adjacent property
- Rule Chapter 14-96, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) State Highway System Connection Permits
- Rule Chapter 14-97, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), State Highway System Access Control Classification System and Access Management Standards
- Strategic Intermodal System Highway Component Standards and Criteria, **Topic No. 525-030-260**
- FDOT Multimodal Access Management Guidebook
- FDOT Design Manual, **Topic No. 625-000-002**
- Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Manual, **Topic No. 650-000-001**
- Standard Plans for Road and Bridge Construction, **Topic No. 625-010-003**
- FDOT Manual on Intersection Control Evaluation, **Topic No. 750-010-003**

PURPOSE:

This procedure provides direction on applying the standards in **Rule 14-97.003, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)**. This procedure also addresses access management decisions beyond the project or staff level and is intended to promote the consistent application of access management engineering practice throughout the Florida Department of Transportation (Department).

SCOPE:

This procedure provides direction for District staff, including District Access Management Review Committee (AMRC) members, for making median opening and access management decisions.

DEFINITIONS:

Applicant:

The person submitting a connection permit application. An applicant may be a property owner or the owner's authorized agent. (**Rule 14-96.002, F.A.C.**)

PROCEDURE:

1. MEDIAN REVIEW

The essential factors to be evaluated when considering deviations from median opening and access management standards are:

- Traffic safety
- Traffic efficiency
- Functional integrity of the roadway
- Context and Access Classification of the surrounding development or use.

1.1 The primary goal is the safety of the entire transportation system for all users.

1.1.1 The evaluation of potential deviations from median access management standards include more than just the physical or engineering impacts. A comprehensive look at the decisions should include consideration of the implications for multimodal traffic, commercial businesses, and residential communities using the roadway. This will involve working with the appropriate local government and community stakeholders.

1.2 Fewer deviations from the standards should be allowed for roadways with higher access management classifications (as described in **Rule 14-97.003, F.A.C.**).

NOTE: Factors such as high speed, high volume, and high left turn demand will play an important role in the final decision-making to ensure safety of all road users.

1.3 Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) segments greater than 50mph shall adhere to the access management spacing standards and principles.

1.4 Deviations from access management standards shall be made under the direct supervision of a Department Professional Engineer knowledgeable in access management and traffic operations. The Department may grant deviations as

appropriate; however, their approval is subject to future modifications in the event of operational or safety concerns.

2 DISTRICT ACCESS MANAGEMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

2.1 Each District will establish an Access Management Review Committee (AMRC), which includes Department Professional Engineer members from multiple disciplines. The District Secretary will appoint the appropriate staff to serve on the AMRC.

2.1.1 Members of the AMRC will be at least at the Department head level position (such as, District Design Engineer, Intermodal Systems Development Manager, District Planning Manager, District Maintenance Engineer, District Safety Engineer and District Traffic Operations Engineer).

2.2 The AMRC will review proposed deviations from access management and median opening spacing standards.

2.2.1 At a minimum, the following issues must go to the AMRC:

- Access management, driveway, and full/directional median opening issues which do not meet minimum spacing standards and not resolved during the District's staff level review.
- Full movement median openings not meeting the spacing standards in **Rule Chapter 14-97, F.A.C.** by a threshold of more than 10%. Traffic signal spacing, installation, or design issues.

2.3 Each District will establish a fixed meeting schedule to accommodate requests for a meeting with the AMRC.

2.4 The public will be given notice of AMRC meetings. These notices will be posted on the Public Notice portion of the Department website. The schedule of the AMRC meetings will also be published, at least once a year in the Florida Administrative Register. Each District will designate a contact person for the AMRC who will be responsible for scheduling agenda items and making this information available to the public.

2.5 Decisions involving deviations on the SIS should include the appropriate District Planning Office staff.

2.6 AMRC decisions will be documented and a copy provided to the person(s) appearing before the AMRC.

3 ACCESS MANAGEMENT DECISIONS IN DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

- 3.1** Existing Features, such as medians, median openings, driveways, traffic signals, and adjacent highway features may be allowed to remain in place. A corridor analysis will be performed during the engineering and design phase of a Department project to determine if existing connections, median openings and signal spacings are in conformance or can be brought into conformance with Department standards.
- 3.1.1** On major improvement projects, traffic studies at median openings should be done early in planning.
- 3.2** The Department will provide notice and opportunity for an administrative hearing when a connection is modified as part of Department's project. There is no right to an administrative hearing for modifications to a median opening; however, interested persons may appear before the AMRC. For any modifications to a median, Section 335.199 F.S. must be followed.
- 3.3** When median modifications including closures and relocations are considered as part of the department projects, then traffic analysis including exiting conditions, proposed modifications, turning movement counts, and resulting impacts on the corridor, should be conducted to support these decisions.
- 3.4** Public Street Intersections - Median openings are not automatically provided where existing public streets intersect the SHS. Median openings at these locations will be analyzed in the same manner as all potential median opening locations.
- 3.5** Major transportation improvement projects, such as adding new through lanes, will require adherence to spacing standards.
- 3.6** The removal of large portions of restrictive medians is highly discouraged.
- 3.7** The extent to which efforts are made to bring a roadway into greater conformance with the standards on a resurfacing or safety project will depend on the scope of the project, existing roadway conditions, and context classification. These circumstances may include:
- Existing and potential safety and operational issues
 - Project life cycle

Guidance on this subject is available in ***FDM Chapter 114 Resurfacing, Restoration, and Rehabilitation (RRR)***

- 3.8** Safety and/or operational improvement justification, coordination with local government, and public involvement are important during resurfacing and safety projects.

4 MEDIAN RETROFIT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1** A change in design and access is considered a retrofit. A median retrofit must adhere to the median spacing standards. All department projects should include traffic studies at median openings consisting of decisions to close, relocate or modify existing median opening locations.

5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR REVIEW OF DEVIATIONS FROM MEDIAN OPENING STANDARDS

- 5.1** Approval of deviations shall be consistent with the purpose and intent of the SHS ***Access Management Act, Sections 335.18 - 335.188, F.S.*** and ***Rule Chapter 14-97, F.A.C.***, which aim to protect public safety, provide mobility, and preserve the functional integrity of the SHS.

- 5.2** Requests for deviation from median opening standards must:

- Provide documentation of unique conditions based upon established engineering principles that make adhering to the spacing standards impractical; and
- Provide documentation on how the deviation would affect the traffic efficiency and safety of the transportation facility; and
- Be signed and sealed by a Professional Engineer licensed in the State of Florida.

- 5.3** A deviation should not be approved in the following situations:

- The deviation would jeopardize safety.
- The proposed design would violate minimum design standards as stated in the current Standard Plans for Road and Bridge Construction, ***Topic No. 625-010-003*** and the FDOT Design Manual, ***Topic No. 625-000-002***.
- The location of the median opening could cause a safety hazard, such as queuing on freeways, railroad tracks, school pedestrian crossings, freeway ramps or the functional area of the intersection.
- The deviation would degrade the efficiency of the system.

5.4 RECOMMENDED QUEUE STORAGE LENGTH

5.4.1 Site or project specific projections of queue storage length should be used at all intersections. The queue length provided should be based on a traffic study. Due to the variable nature of left turn demand, the design should be conservative enough to handle some of the uncertainty in demand.

5.4.2 Where left turn volumes are expected to be minimal, the minimum suggested queue storage lengths are:

Urban/suburban minimum = 4 car lengths (100 ft)

Rural/small town minimum with expected low volumes = 2 car lengths (50 ft)

5.5 SOME DESIGN PROHIBITIONS AND CAUTIONS

5.5.1 Median openings that allow the following movements should be avoided even if the opening meets the spacing standards:

- Median openings across exclusive right turn lanes
- Median openings across recurring queues from neighboring intersections
- Median openings across left turn lanes will not be approved

5.5.2 Median openings should not be located in the functional area of a signalized intersection. The functional area consists of distance traveled during perception reaction time, deceleration distance, plus queue storage.

5.5.3 In considering a deviation from median spacing standards, the analysis should consider the following:

- Alternatives to safely reroute traffic including U-turns
- Adequacy of maneuvering distances
- Gap availability in the opposing traffic stream
- Adopted Department and local government plans to change the roadway design including adopted corridor plans, long range transportation plans, or access management classification
- Ability to accommodate future growth and increasing traffic volumes.
- The potential for either relieving traffic or increasing "cut through" traffic through established residential areas
- Ability to maintain traffic progression (cycle length, speed, and bandwidth)
- Safety of vulnerable road users.

6 MINOR DEVIATIONS FROM MEDIAN OPENING STANDARDS

6.1 Minor deviations are those that are 10% or less than the current spacing standards in **Rule 14-97.003(1), F.A.C.**, for full median openings.

6.2 AMRC review is not required for minor deviations. Minor deviations should have minimal effect on safety and operations. Approval or denial of minor deviations will be done by a Professional Engineer licensed in the state of Florida and employed by the Department.

6.3 A District may decide to have the AMRC review minor deviations.

6.4 Deviations for directional median openings will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

7 NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH INTERESTED AND POTENTIALLY AFFECTED PEOPLE

7.1 Local governments, property owners and occupants in the affected area will be notified whenever there is an access change proposed.

7.2 IMPLEMENTING SECTION 335.199, F.S.

7.2.1 Whenever the Department proposes any project on the SHS which will divide a state highway, erect median barriers modifying currently available vehicle turning movements, or have the effect of closing or modifying an existing access to an abutting property owner, the Department shall notify all affected property owners, municipalities, and counties at least 180 days before the design phase of the project is completed. The Department's notice shall provide a written explanation regarding the need for the project and indicate that all affected parties will be given an opportunity to provide comments to the Department regarding potential impacts of the change.

7.2.1.1 If the project is within the boundaries of a municipality, the notification shall be issued in writing to the chief elected official of the municipality. If the project is in the unincorporated area of a county, the notification shall be issued in writing to the chief elected official of the county.

7.2.1.2 The Department must also consult with the applicable local government on its final design proposal if the Department intends to divide a state highway, erect median barriers, or close or modify existing access to abutting commercial business properties. The local government may present the Department with alternatives that relieve impacts to such business properties.

7.2.1.3 The Department shall hold at least one public meeting before completing the design phase of the project in the jurisdiction where the project is located and receive public input to determine how the project will affect access to businesses and the potential economic impact of the project on the local business community.

- 7.2.1.4** The Department must review all comments from the public meeting and take the comments and any alternatives presented by a local government under subsection (2) into consideration in the final design of the highway project.
- 7.2.2** The local government may present the Department with alternatives. Recently reactivated projects (on-the-shelf projects) where public meetings have already been held should be evaluated. This evaluation should consider how the corridor businesses and residents have changed. If there have been significant changes in businesses or residences, Department staff will work with local government to fully inform them about the project. This will not necessarily cause the need for a new public meeting.
- 7.2.3** The Department's goal is to inform and involve the public and local governments in access management decisions (including those proposed during resurfacing). The appropriate people are not always defined exclusively as property owners located within 300 feet of the centerline. Sometimes they may include business operators, renters, neighbors from the surrounding areas, or the driving public.
- 7.3** For all proposed driveway connection applications that either request or are required by the Department to install, modify, or remove a Traffic Control Feature that will have the effect of closing or modifying left turns to or from an owner of property abutting the state highway system, the Applicant must provide the Department:
- (A.) A list of the names and mailing addresses of all real property owners whose property lies in whole or in part within 300 feet of either side of the centerline of the proposed facility including all neighboring connections as described in **Rule 14-96.005(4)(b)5, F.A.C.**, who have been provided a letter of notification. If the property is leased to a residential tenant with exclusive use of the parcel or commercial tenant(s), the list will also include the name and mailing address of the tenant(s).
 - (B.) A single copy of the letter of notification provided to the real property owners and listed tenants describing the proposed modification. The letter must include the name and address of the person to whom comments on the change can be sent and provide at least 30 days for receipt of the comments.
 - (C.) Proof of delivery of the notification letter to all previously listed persons by mail, email, or hand delivery.
 - (D.) A copy of all correspondence received in response to the letter and other correspondence related to the permit provided within 10 days of receipt by the Applicant.

8 CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY IN ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND MEDIAN OPENING DECISIONS

- 8.1** Regular meetings (at least once a year) will be coordinated by Central Office Systems Implementation Office (SIO) staff. The purpose of these meetings is to provide a forum for all District staff analyzing median opening and access management decisions to confer and develop consistent evaluation approaches.
- 8.2** Central Office SIO staff will also coordinate efforts with other Central Office staff involved in these issues.
- 8.3** Central Office SIO will coordinate the development of analytical tools to help District Offices provide consistent evaluation and application of access management standards.

9 Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) Applicability

- 9.1** An Intersection Control Evaluation is required when any of the following applies:
- 9.1.1** Major reconstruction of an existing signalized intersection.
- 9.1.2** The removal, installation, or modification of traffic signal.
- 9.1.3** Changing a directional or bi-directional median opening to a full median opening;
- 9.1.4** A single connection permit application generates 4,001 ADT or more under Driveway Connection permit applications for Category E, F, and G standard connection categories (defined by average daily trips thresholds in **Rule 14-96.003, F.A.C.**, or
- 9.1.5** District Design Engineer (DDE) and District Traffic Operations Engineer (DTOE) consider an ICE a good fit for the project.

TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

The SIO will provide technical assistance to the Districts as needed for implementation of this procedure.

FORMS

The Intersection Control Evaluation Form, 750-010-030, is available on the FDOT Policy and Process Management Website.