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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 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. This procedure is intended to promote the consistent application of access management engineering practice throughout the Florida Department of Transportation (Department).

## SCOPE:

This procedure provides guidance 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

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

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

**1.1** Safety, of the overall transportation system and its users, is the primary design goal.

**1.1.1** The evaluation of potential deviations from median access management standards includes more than just the physical or engineering impacts. Reviewers should take a comprehensive look at the decision. In many cases, this will involve working with the appropriate local government and community groups. Other factors to be considered are impacts to neighborhood traffic, businesses, and communities near roadways where our decisions are being implemented.

**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:** Safety concerns of the corridor (such as high speed, high volume, and high left turn demand) will play an important role in the final decision-making.

**1.3** The higher speed segments of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) 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 will 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 Engineers 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, and/or 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 median opening issues 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%.

**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 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.
- 3.2** The Department will provide notice and opportunity for an administrative hearing when a connection is modified as part of Department project. There is no right to an administrative hearing for modifications to a median opening; however, interested persons may appear before the AMRC.
- 3.3** All Department projects should include median opening analysis consisting of decisions to close, relocate or modify existing median opening locations.
- 3.4** On major improvement projects, median opening analysis should be done early in the planning process.
- 3.5** 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.
- 3.6** Major transportation improvement projects, such as adding new through lanes, will require adherence to spacing standards.
- 3.7** The removal of large portions of restrictive medians is highly discouraged.
- 3.8** 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 and existing roadway conditions. These circumstances may include:
- Existing and potential safety and operational issues
  - Project life cycle

Guidance on this subject is available in the Office of Design, **List of Optional Items to Review on RRR Projects:**

<https://www.fdot.gov/design/cpr/ProjectScopingfor3RWork.shtm>

- 3.9** Safety and/or operational improvement justification 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 median opening analysis 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 knowledgeable in traffic engineering.

- 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. 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 unknown, and expected to be minimal, the minimum suggested queue 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 traffic movement across left turn lanes will not be approved.

**5.5.2** Median openings that allow the following movements should be avoided:

- Across exclusive right turn lanes
- Across recurring queues from neighboring intersections

**5.5.3** 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, plus deceleration distance, plus queue storage.

**5.5.4** 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)
- Pedestrian and Bicycle safety

## **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 the Department registered Professional Engineer or staff supervised by a registered Professional Engineer.
- 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 will notify all affected property owners, municipalities, and counties at least 180 days before the design of the project is finalized. The Department's notice will 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.
- 7.2.2** 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.
- 7.2.3** The Department should 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.

- 7.2.4** The Department shall hold at least one public hearing 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.
- 7.2.5** The Department must review all comments from the public hearing 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.
- 7.2.6** The local government may present the Department with alternatives. Recently reactivated projects (on-the-shelf projects) where public hearings 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 these people to fully inform them about the project. This will not necessarily cause the need for a new public hearing.
- 7.2.7** 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 connections by an Applicant, such as permitting projects, that would erect or modify medians or have the effect of closing or modifying left turns to 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 property owners with neighboring connections as described in **Rule 14-96.005(4)(c)5, F.A.C.** 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 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:
- 9.1.1** Changing a directional or bi-directional median opening to a full median opening;
  - 9.1.2** Driveway Connection permit applications for Category E, F, and G standard connection categories (defined by average daily trips thresholds in Rule 14-96.004, F.A.C.) add, remove, or modify a traffic signal; or
  - 9.1.3** 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**

Form 750-010-003, Intersection Control Evaluation process is available on the FDOT Policy and Process Management Website.