

## **Interstate Access Requests**

### **Contact**

**Jason Junge**

Metro District Traffic Engineering 651-234-7875

### **Purpose**

New or modified access to the Interstate system, regardless of funding source, requires Interstate access approval by FHWA. (See [Non-regulatory\(1\) Supplement 23 CFR 630C](#), item #3).

### **Definitions**

**Interstate Access Request (IAR):**

A letter from MnDOT to FHWA requesting approval of access change on the Interstate System.

**Engineering and Operational Analysis:**

A report attached to the IAR that demonstrates safety, operational, and engineering acceptability of the proposed access change.

### **Resources**

[Policy on Access to the Interstate System, May 22, 2017](#)

### **Procedure**

The process for Interstate Access Approval cannot be completed until an environmental decision (Categorical Exclusion determination, FONSI or ROD) has been completed.

**Metro District Only**

In the Minneapolis-St. Paul seven-county metropolitan area, the Metropolitan Council also has approval authority over new access to controlled access facilities. The [Interchange Planning Review](#) process must be completed for all proposals to add or modify interchanges on any Interstate or Trunk Highway in the Metro District.

### **All Districts (including Metro)**

When a request for access changes to the Interstate System is expected, the MnDOT project manager schedules an early coordination meeting with FHWA and the District Traffic Engineer (in Metro District include the Traffic Engineering Freeway Analyst). The project manager coordinates with this group throughout development of the project.

The agenda for this first meeting includes:

- The needs to be addressed;
- Where the proposal is in the project development process;
- Other site-specific considerations;
- Any concerns with the proposal;
- Ongoing coordination;
- Analysis methodologies anticipated;
- Expected project development timeline; and
- Decision: Proceed / Do not proceed.

This first meeting is the first test of the proposal's need and feasibility, and a decision is made to proceed or not to proceed. Some projects will be deemed unnecessary, either because existing interchanges meet needs or because local roads can be modified to meet needs. However, even a proposal that gets a "proceed" decision at this first meeting is not guaranteed to be approved at all the following steps.

If, after the first meeting, a project is still considered feasible and will require an IAR, the project's proposer prepares a draft Engineering and Operational Analysis (EAOA) and sends it to the project manager. This report allows FHWA to determine the safety, operational, and engineering acceptability of the proposal and to ensure that the requirements in the FHWA Policy on Access to the Interstate System are satisfied. The report describes technical analysis sufficient to show that the change in access will not have significant negative impact on the Interstate System.

The EAOA includes a conceptual layout. The State Geometrics Engineer reviews the layout as part of the Level 1 layout approval process but is not otherwise involved in the preparation nor review of the EAOA.

The project manager sends the draft EAOA for review to the District Traffic Engineer and FHWA, in that order. When significant changes are necessary after review by District staff, prepare a new draft before sending to FHWA for review.

When District staff and FHWA agree that the EAOA is ready for approval, it is considered final, and:

- The District Traffic Engineer prepares an Interstate Access Request letter (IAR) and signs it. The IAR consists of a cover letter with a brief description of the project and the EAOA.

- The District Traffic Engineer requests the District Engineer's signature recommending approval.
- After the District Engineer signs the IAR, the project manager sends it to FHWA after entering a copy into EDMS. Only the signed letter needs to be sent by mail; the EAOA and supporting appendix material can be submitted electronically.
- FHWA responds with a letter from the FHWA Division Administrator addressed to the Commissioner of Transportation approving the request.