

Interstate Access Requests

Contact

Jason Junge
Metro Traffic Engineering
651-234-7875

Objectives

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):

Request to FHWA for approval of access change on interstate system.

Engineering and Operational Analysis:

A report attached to the IAR that demonstrates operational and engineering acceptability.

Resources

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

Process / Interstate Access Approval

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

In the Minneapolis-St. Paul / seven-county metropolitan area, the Metropolitan Council also has approval authority over new access to controlled access facilities.

Metro District Only

The process for the Metro District is the same as for other Districts, with the following addition:

In the Metro District, for all proposals to change or add interchanges, consult the

[Interchange Planning Review](#) process: (Applies to any Interstate or Trunk Highway in the Metro District).

All Districts (including Metro)

When a request for changes to the Interstate is expected, the MnDOT project manager (PM) schedules an early coordination meeting, which includes the following participants:

- [FHWA Area Engineer](#);
- [State Geometrics Engineer](#); and
- District Traffic Engineer (in Metro District include the Traffic Engineering Freeway Analyst).

The PM 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 interchange(s) 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, the project's proposer prepares a draft Engineering and Operational Analysis (EAOA) and sends it to the PM. The EAOA includes a conceptual layout. This report allows FHWA to ensure that all pertinent factors and alternatives have been considered.

The PM:

- Sends the draft EAOA for review to:
 - District Traffic Engineer;
 - State Geometrics Engineer; and
 - FHWA Area Engineer.

These reviews are done in the order above. Where significant changes are necessary, prepare a new draft before proceeding to the next reviewer. The State Geometrics Engineer's review includes review by the State Design Engineer, with a focus on the conceptual layout.

When all parties 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 District Traffic Engineer sends it to the State Geometrics Engineer.

The State Geometrics Engineer requests a concurrence signature by the State Design Engineer.

The State Geometrics Engineer sends the IAR to the FHWA Area Engineer after entering a copy into EDMS.

The FHWA Area Engineer facilitates a response by the FHWA Division Administrator in the form of a letter addressed to the Commissioner of Transportation approving the request.