

# OFFICIAL MARC PROCEDURES FOR ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

*Updated July 2013*

## OUTLINE

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Background
- B. Purpose

### **II. CONCEPTS AND CRITERIA**

- A. Mobility vs. Access
- B. Urban vs. Rural
- C. Federal Highway Administration Guidelines and Criteria

### **III. URBAN AREA BOUNDARIES**

- A. U.S. Census Bureau Definition

### **IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **V. CHANGES TO THE FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

- A. Major System Reviews
- B. Semi-Annual Reviews
- C. Requests for Change
- D. Approval Process

### **APPENDIX A**

Annual Schedule for MARC Approval Process

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Background**

The highway functional classification system is essentially a network of roadways grouped into a hierarchical set of categories, or classes, each defined according to its general purpose with respect to transportation. This system of classifying our nation's vast network of roadway facilities (those public transportation facilities intended primarily for automobile usage) was introduced by the Federal Highway Administration (U.S. Department of Transportation) towards the end of the 1960s. The U.S. DOT developed a standard set of concepts and criteria for functional classification procedures, which are to be used as guidelines by local units of government, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) when developing and updating the functional classification system of roadways within their respective jurisdictional boundaries.

In cooperation with the Kansas and Missouri Departments of Transportation, the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) has developed a set of procedures related to modifications and general maintenance of the roadway functional classification system within the MARC metropolitan planning area. The goals of this effort are: (1) fairness in the overall classification process, and (2) more efficient and effective communication among the public agencies responsible for the designation and maintenance of the functional classification system.

### **B. Purpose**

The primary purpose of functional classification is, as the term explicitly states, the classification or categorization of roadways. The idea, as well as the process, describes a roadway facility in terms of the character of (transportation) service it provides or is intended to provide.

In addition to being a hierarchical system of classifying roadways based on their general function,

the functional classification of a given road facility also has implications for the eligibility of a transportation-related project (on that same facility) to receive and utilize Federal (and sometimes State) transportation funds. Functional classification is used to define the Federal Aid Highway System, which at the time of drafting this document, excludes roadway facilities classified as local or rural minor collector (i.e. minor collectors in a rural area) unless they are on the National Highway System. Several federal transportation funding programs are only eligible for projects on Federal Aid Highways. For a more comprehensive set of applicable regulations, please refer to the most recent Code of Federal Regulations.

## **II. Concepts and Criteria**

### **A. Mobility vs. Access**

In concept, the basic purpose of a given road or highway can be defined as a function of mobility and access, where the two are inversely related. For the purposes of this definition, the term *mobility* refers strictly to the movement, or transport, of persons and goods. It focuses on the portion of travel that occurs between the origins and destination of all trips. Conversely, the idea of *access*, or accessing various land uses and the opportunities they provide, deals primarily with trip ends, or the portion of travel typically associated with the beginning and the end of any travel event.

The highway functional classification system is a method of categorizing roads and highways based on where a given facility falls along this spectrum (or continuum) between mobility and access. Thus, high-level facilities such as interstates and major highways are typically characterized as experiencing greater travel speeds, as well as greater daily traffic volumes. On these roadways, the main travel purpose is mobility. Low-level facilities, on the other hand, generally tend to carry fewer vehicles traveling at lower speeds. The main function of these roadways is more related to access, which is more specifically defined, in this context, as access from

and to the origins and destinations of automobile trips.

B. Urban vs. Rural

The travel behaviors and patterns that are observed in an urban environment are noticeably different than those that occur in a rural environment. Since the nature and magnitude of travel varies widely between the two settings, a slightly different approach is taken to the designation of a roadway functional classification system for each. In essence, however, the same basic, hierarchical concept applies in either type of roadway system.

C. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Guidelines

The FHWA provides guidance on the methodology employed to define and maintain the functional classification system of a roadway network for a given place or region. The 1989 report, **Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures** (FHWA-ED-90-006), established some basic parameters and standards in terms of trip lengths and purposes, travel speeds, traffic volumes, etc. that should be taken into account when developing and maintaining the system.

In fall 2012, FHWA released a draft version of **Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures 2012 Edition**. Comments were collected in the early part of 2013, and at the time of drafting this document FHWA approval was pending.

For the purposes of developing and maintaining the functional classification system for roadways in the Kansas City metropolitan region, it is the policy of the Mid-America Regional Council to utilize and adhere to the most current and applicable FHWA criteria and guidelines, while still being reasonable and fair in its relevant decisions.

### **III. Urban Area Boundaries**

#### **A. U.S. Census Bureau Definition**

With the release of data collected during each decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau generally classifies every place within the country's borders as being either an urban or rural area. Larger metropolitan areas usually comprise one or more urbanized areas, which are defined and delineated according to a set of rules established by the same Federal agency. The geographical extent of every urbanized area (UZA) is officially designated and made available 2-3 years after each Census is taken (at the start of every decade).

According to the relevant Federal regulations, this urbanized area boundary may be adjusted according to an agreement among the appropriate MPO(s), State DOT, and State Governor for a given metropolitan area. Urbanized areas, as currently defined, will not extend across state boundaries. Therefore, the agreement among multiple State DOTs and governors is not required, and metropolitan areas that occupy a contiguous area that falls within the boundaries of more than one state will contain at least two urbanized areas. Any adjustments to an urbanized area boundary must ultimately be approved by the FHWA, and result in what is commonly known as the Federal Aid Boundary or Urban Functional Class Boundary. All roadway facilities within this adjusted boundary are classified as urban for the purposes of functional classification as well as the programming/allocation of Federal and State transportation funds for local projects on these roads.

#### **IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

According to U.S. Code (*23 CFR, Section 134*), in urban areas having a population of 50,000 or greater inhabitants, it is the responsibility of the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to coordinate the development and maintenance of the functional classification system of roadways within its official planning boundary. As part of this responsibility, the duties of an MPO include communication and cooperation with local units of government and the corresponding State Department(s) of Transportation. In the Kansas City metropolitan region, this responsibility is given to the Mid-America Regional Council.

## **V. Changes to the Functional Classification System**

### **A. Major System Reviews**

A major review of the functional classification system for the MARC region should be conducted at least every 10 years. The major system review is to be performed concurrently with the adjustments made to the urbanized area boundary (UAB), as described in section III-A of this document. The process shall involve appropriate coordination among the State DOTs, MARC, and local jurisdictions. All recommended changes will be processed according to the schedule in Appendix A.

### **B. Semi-Annual Reviews**

Incremental changes to the functional classification system will be made on a semi-annual basis. While a change request can be submitted at any time, approval by MARC will take place according to the schedule outlined in Appendix A of this document. Like major reviews, this process shall involve appropriate coordination among the State DOTs, MARC, and local jurisdictions.

### **C. Requests for Change**

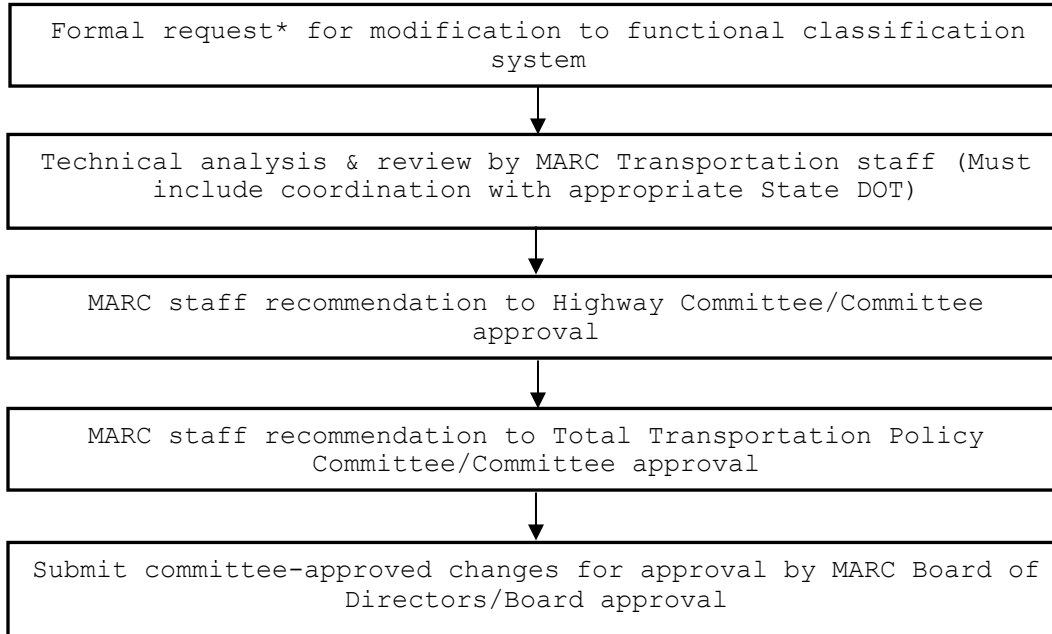
A change to the functional classification system may be requested at any time by a local jurisdiction, MARC, or the appropriate State DOT. The agency submitting a request shall provide adequate data and information in support of the requested change. MARC will maintain a functional classification change request form to assist local jurisdictions with the process of requesting a change. The form may be submitted in hardcopy or electronic format, or online at

[http://www.marc2.org/transportation/functional\\_class\\_intro.htm](http://www.marc2.org/transportation/functional_class_intro.htm).

### **D. Approval Process**

In an urbanized area, the typical process required for modifying the adopted FHWA functional classification map involves the coordination and approval of the appropriate decision-makers of the corresponding local jurisdiction(s), MPO, State Department of

Transportation, and, ultimately, the FHWA. Internal to MARC, the process of approval for changes to the functional classification of a roadway facility should generally occur as follows:



*\*Required for archival purposes; acceptable forms include printed letters, email messages, and online requests submitted on the MARC website.*

After the MARC Board has approved changes to the functional classification system, they must subsequently be sent to the appropriate State DOT for recommendation to FHWA for approval. This process can take between 1-6 months depending on the number of changes and administrative workload. Proper coordination with State and Federal agencies during the MARC approval process is critical to the final approval process.

Upon receiving notice of approval by FHWA, MARC and the appropriate State DOT will update internal networks and databases as needed.



## APPENDIX A

Schedule for MARC approval process for functional class changes in the MARC metropolitan planning area

- January - Call for Changes: Request form distributed following formal announcement during regularly scheduled TTPC meeting
- April 1 - Deadline for submittal of requests (to MARC)
- May - MARC staff recommendations brought to Highway Committee for approval \*(committee approval will allow recommended changes to go before TTPC in the month to follow)
- June - Changes approved by Highway Committee recommended to TTPC for approval; Recommendations brought to Board for approval; Board-approved changes submitted for approval to State DOT/FHWA
- August - 2nd Call for Changes: Request form distributed following formal announcement during regularly scheduled TTPC meeting
- September 15 - Deadline for submittal of requests (to MARC)
- October - MARC staff recommendations brought to Highway Committee for approval \*(committee approval will allow recommended changes to go before TTPC in the month to follow)
- November - Changes approved by Highway Committee recommended to TTPC for approval; Recommendations brought to Board for approval; Board-approved changes submitted for approval to State DOT/FHWA