

# Official Mid-America Regional Council Procedures for Roadway Functional Classification

In order to be eligible for Federal (STP) funding, a roadway must be classified as a collector or higher. The approval process required for any change in functional classification involves a considerable amount of time and coordination across various levels of government. In the past, numerous changes to roadway functional classification have been ad hoc and inconsistent with Federal criteria and guidelines. Also, a breakdown in communication among the various agencies involved has led to uncertainty regarding the official classification of a particular facility.

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 for the Kansas City metropolitan region. 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.

## Outline

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## Introduction

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.

## Definitions and Standards

### 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 specifi-

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NOTE: 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 criteria and guidelines, as made available by the U.S. Department of Transportation, while still being reasonable and fair in its relevant decisions.

cally defined, in this context, as access from and to the origins and destinations of automobile trips.

## 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.

## Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Guidelines and Criteria for Functional Classification

The FHWA provides guidance on the methodology that should be used when developing the functional classification system of a roadway network for a given place or region. The report, *Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures (FHWA-ED-90-006)*, establishes 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. The document is made available in Appendix A of this report.

## Urban Area Boundaries

### United States 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.

## Designation of the Functional Classification System

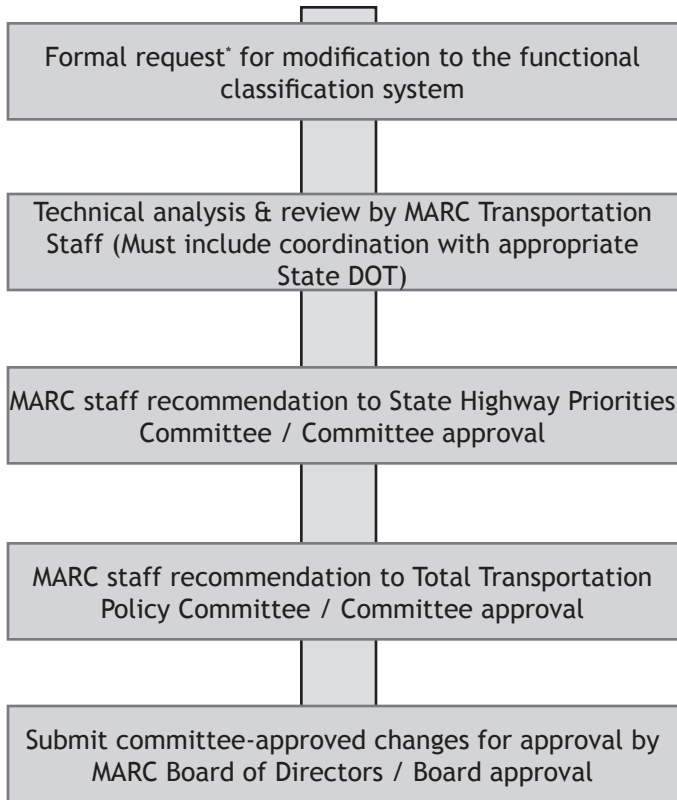
According to U.S. Code (23 CFR, Section 134), in urban areas having a population of 50,000 or greater inhabitants, it is the responsibility of the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to coordinate the development and maintenance of the functional classification system of roadways within 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.

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. At the time of drafting this document, a roadway project must take place on a facility classified as a rural major collector, or higher (see Appendix A for a listing of each functional classification), in order to be eligible to receive most categories of Federal transportation funding. For a more comprehensive set of applicable regulations, please refer to the most recent Federal Code of Regulations.

## Changes to the Functional Classification System

### Requests for Change

In an urbanized area, the typical process required for a roadway to be added to, modified, or deleted from 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:



## Expected Timeline/Duration for Each Step of the Approval Process for System Modifications

MARC (3-4 months) - Any system changes must be reviewed by MARC staff according to Federal guidelines prior to making recommendations to appropriate State Highway Priorities Committee; Approval required of Highway Priorities Committee, Total Transportation Policy Committee (TTPC), and MARC Board of Directors

State DOT (1-6 months) - The State approval process will vary in duration depending on the total number of changes being reviewed. Early coordination with State DOTs is conducted in an attempt to minimize potential delays at this level of review/approval.

FHWA (1-4 months) - Similar to the review performed by the State DOT, the period necessary for adequate review and ultimate approval is dependent upon the nature and magnitude of system changes.

\*Required for archival purposes; acceptable forms include printed letters and email messages.

## Approval Process for Change

Given the requirement of approval at multiple levels of government, and the obvious coordination that is necessary for such an approval process to be expedited in a timely and efficacious manner, the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) suggests the following general schedule to guide the necessary process of updating and maintaining the Kansas City Regional Roadway Functional Classification System:

### Major System Reviews

Conducted as a joint effort among staff from MARC and appropriate State DOT no less than every five years; Every other major system review is to be performed concurrently with the adjustments made to the urbanized area boundary (UAB) within a year following the adoption of the official urbanized area definition (and geographies) by the U.S. Congress.

### Minor System Reviews

Conducted biannually, according to the schedule provided in Appendix B of this report.

# Schedule

## Schedule for Functional Class Changes in the Kansas City Urbanized Area (MARC Approval Process)

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