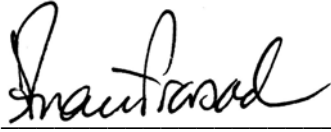


Approved:



Department of Transportation

Effective: February 20, 2013

Office: Systems Planning

Topic No.: 625-010-021-h

## **MEDIAN OPENINGS AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT**

### **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).

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

Florida Department of Transportation, Systems Planning Office, 605 Suwannee Street, Mail Station 19, Tallahassee, Florida 32399 or call the Forms and Procedures Office for the appropriate contact (850) 414-4450.

### **AUTHORITY:**

Sections 20.23(4)(a) and 334.048(3), Florida Statutes (F.S.)

### **SCOPE:**

This procedure guides District staff in making median opening and access management decisions. There is also guidance for staff as well as for the District Access Management Review Committees (AMRC).

### **REFERENCES:**

- Sections 335.18 -188 (F.S.), State Highway System Access Management Act
- Section 335.199, (F.S) .( Transportation Projects modifying access to adjacent properties)
- Rule Chapter 14-96, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) State Highway System Connection Permits
- Rule Chapter 14-97, F.A.C. State Highway System Access Control Classification System and Access Management Standards Median Handbook (Systems Planning Office)
- Driveway Information Guide (Systems Planning Office)

- Plans Preparation Manual (Manual Nos. 625-000-007 & 625-000-008)
- Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Manual (Chapter 11, Public Involvement)
- Design Standards (Procedure No. 625-010-003)

## 1. MEDIAN REVIEW

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

- Traffic safety,
- Traffic efficiency
- Functional integrity of the roadway

### 1.1 Safety of the overall transportation system (not just the State Highway System (SHS)) and its users is the primary design goal.

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 impacts to be considered are impacts to neighborhood traffic, impacts to businesses, and community impacts to those communities near roadways where our decisions are being implemented.

### 1.2 The higher the access management class of a roadway (as described in **Rule 14-97.003, F.A.C.**) the fewer deviations from standards should be allowed.

**NOTE:** The access management classification, though important, is only one of the factors considered in decisions. Special safety concerns of the corridor (such as high speed, high volume, and high left turn demand) will play a more important role in the final decision-making.

### 1.3 Decisions affecting the higher speed portions of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) shall maintain the strictest adherence to the access management spacing standards and principles. An example would be, when a freeway has an interchange with an at-grade arterial, the operations of the freeway and the interchange ramps will take precedence over the access on the at grade arterial cross street.

### 1.4 Deviations from general access management standards or practice shall be

made under the direct supervision of a Department Professional Engineer knowledgeable in access management and traffic operations.

- 1.5 The Department will grant deviations as appropriate, but any feature or deviation approved is subject to future modifications in the event of operational or safety concerns.

## 2. **FORMATION AND OPERATION OF DISTRICT ACCESS MANAGEMENT REVIEW COMMITTEES (AMRC)**

- 2.1 Each District will establish a multi-discipline Department team, called the Access Management Review Committee (AMRC). The AMRC will review certain proposed deviations from access management and median opening spacing standards.
- 2.2 The District Secretary will appoint the appropriate staff to serve on the AMRC.
- 2.3 Members of the AMRC will be at least a Department head level position (such as, but not limited to, District Design Engineer, Intermodal Systems Development Manager, District Planning Manager, District Maintenance Engineer, or District Traffic Operations Engineer)
- 2.4 At a minimum, the following issues must go to the AMRC:
  - Access management, driveway, and median opening issues not resolved in the District's staff level process.
  - Full movement median openings not meeting the spacing standards in **Rule Chapter 14-97, F.A.C.** by a threshold of 10% or more.
- 2.5 Each District will establish a fixed meeting schedule to accommodate requests for a meeting with the AMRC.
- 2.6 The public will be given notice of AMRC meetings. These notices should 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. The contact person will be responsible for scheduling agenda items and making this information available to the public
- 2.7 Decisions involving the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) should include the involvement of the appropriate staff person in the District Planning Office.
- 2.8 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 - Existing medians, median openings, driveways, traffic signals, and adjacent highway features play a role in the decision on locating median openings during a Department roadway improvement project. Generally, existing features are allowed to remain in place.

However, a corridor analysis will be performed during the engineering and design phase of a Department project to determine if existing connection, median opening and signal spacing are in conformance or can be brought into conformance with Department standards.

- 3.2** When a connection is modified as part of Department project, the Department will provide notice and opportunity for an administrative hearing. There is no right to an administrative hearing for modifications to a median opening, but interested persons may appear before the AMRC.
- 3.3** Median opening analysis, consisting of decisions to close, relocate or modify existing median opening locations, should be done on all projects.
- 3.4** On major improvement projects, median opening analysis should be done early in the process, preferably no later than Phase I plan.
- 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, like those adding new through lanes, will require stricter 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 might include:

- Existing and potential safety and operational issues
- Life of the project

Important guidance on this subject is in the Department Roadway Design publication, "List of Optional Items to Review on RRR Projects Date: 4/5/2012.

<http://cosharepoint.dot.state.fl.us/Sites/AccessMgmt/AccessCoordination/3R%20Review%20Items-Final.docx>

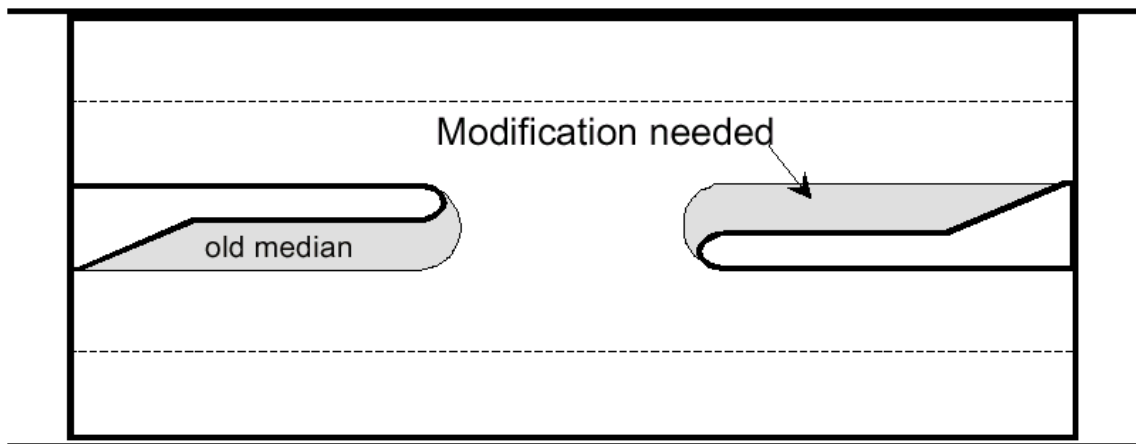
**3.9** Technical justification (safety and/or operational) and public involvement are important during resurfacing and safety projects.

#### **4. MEDIAN RETROFIT CONSIDERATIONS**

**4.1** Existing seven lane sections (six-lane roadways with a two-way center turn lane) will be given the highest priority for retrofit for restrictive medians.

**4.2** Existing five lane sections (four lane roadways with a two-way center turn lane) exceeding 28,000 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) or higher, will be given a high priority for retrofit consideration.

**4.3** Rural section (flush shoulder roadways) multi-lane highways, located anywhere on the SHS with "bullet-nose" median opening design, when possible, should be redesigned or modified to improve operation and safety.



Retrofit of Rural Multilane Median

## 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 State Highway System **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 The Department will facilitate resolution of access management and median opening issues by identifying solutions such as:

- Joint access for shared median openings or connections
- Cross access agreements for shared access
- Median locations to serve multiple parcels (even if not direct)

5.3 Requests for deviation from median opening standards must:

- Provide documentation of unique conditions based upon established engineering principles that make strict application of 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.

**NOTE:** These requirements should not prevent any person from voicing their concerns directly to the AMRC, during a scheduled AMRC meeting.

5.4 A deviation should not be approved in the following situations:

- The deviation would jeopardize safety.
- The proposed design would violate minimums as stated in the current **Design Standards, Topic No. 625-010-003** (also known as the "**Standard Index**") and the **Plans Preparation Manual, Topic No. 625-000-007**.
- 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.

## 5.5 Recommended Queue Storage Length

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.

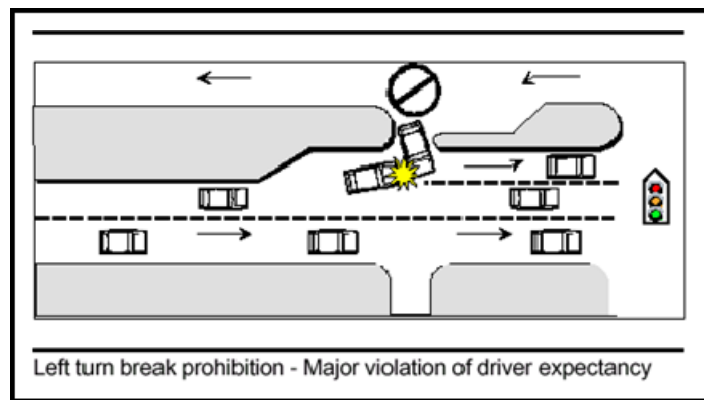
Where left turn volumes are unknown, and expected to be minimal, the minimum suggested queue lengths are

Urban/suburban minimum = 4 car lengths or 100 ft.

Rural/small town minimum with expected low volumes = 2 car lengths or 50 ft.

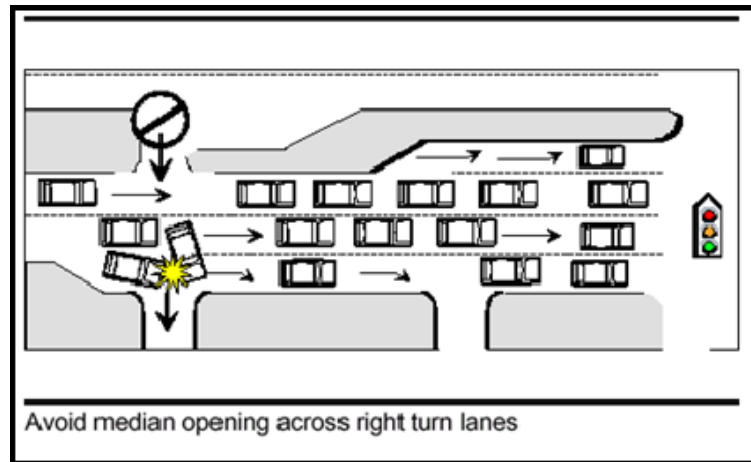
## 5.6 Some Design Prohibitions and Cautions

**5.6.1** Median openings that allow traffic movement across left turn lanes shall not be approved (see exhibit below)

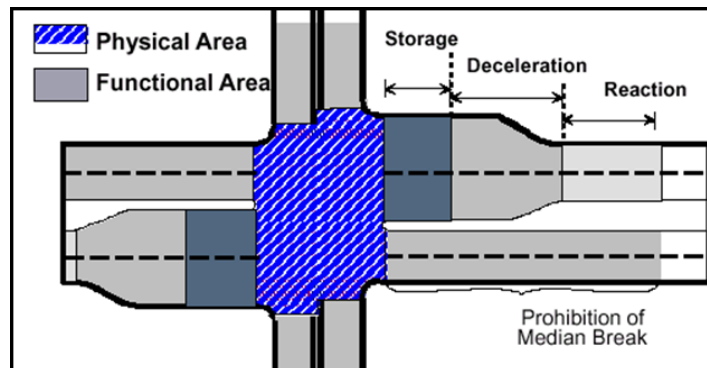


**5.6.2** Median openings that allow the following movements should be avoided:

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



**5.6.3** 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.



Reaction time for the design speeds may be used as follows:

### Some Recommended Reaction Times

Areas	Sec.	35 mph	45 mph	55 mph
Rural	2.5	130 ft.	165 ft.	200 ft.
Suburban	2	100 ft.	130 ft.	160 ft.
Urban	1.5	75 ft.	100 ft.	120 ft.

**5.7** 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 safety

## **6. MINOR DEVIATIONS FROM MEDIAN OPENING STANDARDS**

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.

- 6.1** AMRC review is not required for minor deviations. Minor deviations which are under 10% of the access management standards found in **Rule Chapter 14-97, F.A.C.** These minor deviations should also have minimal effect on safety and operations. Authority to approve or deny minor deviations shall be by a registered Professional Engineer or supervised by a registered Professional Engineer.

**NOTE:** The 10% deviation figure is a customary figure for measuring significance and does not necessarily replace an appropriate safety analysis.

- 6.2** A District may decide to have the AMRC review minor deviations.
- 6.3** Deviations for directional median openings do not need to be reviewed by the AMRC.

## **7. NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH INTERESTED AND POTENTIALLY AFFECTED PEOPLE**

- 7.1** Any time there is an access change proposed, regardless of when the change is proposed in the process, local governments, property owners and occupants in the affected area will be notified in a clear and easy to understand way.

## 7.2 Implementing Section 335.199, F.S.

**Section 335.199, F.S.**, applies to any proposed Department work program project beginning design on or after November 17, 2010. This statute does not apply to permit applications. However, for permit applications that affect medians and median openings, potentially affected people and businesses should be informed and involved by the permittee as soon as possible.

**Section 335.199, F.S.**, directs the Department to notify all affected property owners, municipalities, and counties of a Department proposed project on the SHS that will divide a state highway, erect median barriers, or close/modify an existing access to an abutting property owner at least 180 days before the design is finalized.

The Department's notice shall provide a written explanation regarding the need for the project and indicate that affected parties will be given an opportunity to provide comments to the Department regarding potential impacts of the change.

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.

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.

**Note:** This public hearing may be satisfied in conjunction with hearings required by other state and federal process requirements.

The Department must consult with the applicable local government on its final design proposal. 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

## 7.3 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.

## **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 Planning 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 Planning Office staff will also coordinate efforts with other Central Office staff involved in these issues.
- 8.3** Central Office Planning will coordinate the development of analytical tools to help District Offices provide consistent evaluation and application of access management standards.

## **9. TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE FROM CENTRAL OFFICE**

Access management training and guidance is available from the Systems Planning Office.

**NOTE:** Contact the Systems Planning Office for details, training schedules, or to request training for your District.

## **10. FORMS**

None required