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Department of Transportation

NEW OR MODIFIED INTERCHANGES

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this procedure is to provide project managers, analysts and reviewers with the information necessary to substantiate any proposed changes in access to limited access facilities on the State Highway System (SHS), including the Interstate System in Florida. The procedure includes information about the associated state and federal requirements and processes to pursue new or modified access. Each interchange access request decision will be based on current Department and FHWA policies.

AUTHORITY:

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

REFERENCES:

Sections 335.181 and 339.64, F.S.

Department Policy Statement 000-525-015, Approval of New or Modified Access to Limited Access Highways on the State Highway System (SHS)

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Policy on Access to the Interstate System
(<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/fraccess.cfm>)

Interchange Access Request User's Guide (IARUG) prepared by the Systems Implementation Office (SPO) and available on the Internet
(<http://www.fdot.gov/planning/systems/programs/sm/intjus/default.shtm>)

Transportation Site Impact Handbook: Estimating the Transportation Impacts of Growth prepared by the SIO and available on the Internet
(http://www.fdot.gov/planning/systems/programs/sm/siteimp/PDFs/TSIH_April_2014.pdf)

Department Manual, Topic No. 675-000-001, ***Project Development and Environment Manual*** (PD&E Manual), prepared by the Office of Environmental Management and available on the Internet (<http://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubs/pdeman/pdeman1.shtml>)

SCOPE:

This procedure is applicable to the preparation, review and consideration for approval of an interchange access request (IAR) of all new or modified access to existing limited access highways on the SHS.

GLOSSARY/ACRONYMS/DEFINITIONS:

REQUESTOR – An applicant who submits an IAR. The applicant may be a local government, transportation authority, or an office within the Department.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY – An applicable entity that approves an (IAR) document or Methodology Letter of Understanding (MLOU).

INTERCHANGE REVIEW COORDINATOR (IRC) – An advisory position established in each District responsible for coordinating interchange access requests on existing SHS highways within their Districts/Turnpike. For the purpose of this procedure the Turnpike Enterprise Interchange Review Coordinator is considered an IRC.

STATE INTERCHANGE REVIEW COORDINATOR (SIRC) – Responsible for the review of IAR documents at Central Office. The SIRC reviews documents and briefs the Central Office approval authorities on each project. The SIRC is responsible for revisions and updates to this Procedure as well as the ***IAR User's Guide***.

SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATOR (SMA) – Responsible for the approval of Interchange Access Requests after they have been reviewed by the SIRC. The SMA ensures the implementation of this Procedure.

ELECTRONIC REVIEW COMMENTS (ERC) – An enterprise application provided by the Department to track the entire review process (comments and responses) of the project documents.

INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUEST (IAR) – An Interchange Justification Report, Interchange Modification Report, Interchange Operational Analysis Report or related report.

INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUEST USER'S GUIDE (IARUG) – An accompanying Department document to this procedure providing guidance on the development and evaluation of new or modified interchange access requests.

INTERCHANGE JUSTIFICATION REPORT (IJR) – A document prepared by the requestor for a proposed action intending to provide a new interchange to a SHS limited access highway.

INTERCHANGE MODIFICATION REPORT (IMR) – A document prepared by the requestor for a proposed action intending to provide substantially modified access to an existing interchange on a SHS limited access highway as specified in the Interchange Access Request Users Guide.

INTERCHANGE OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT (IOAR) – A document prepared by the requestor for proposed minor safety and/or operational improvements mostly within the Department’s existing right of way; not requiring an IMR.

LIMITED ACCESS FACILITY – A street or highway, especially designed for through traffic and over, from, or to which owners or occupants of abutting land or other persons have no right or easement, or only a limited right of easement, of access, light, air, or view by reason of the fact that their property abuts upon such limited access facility or for any other reason.

SYSTEM INTERCHANGE – An interchange involving two Interstate facilities.

SYSTEMS INTERCHANGE MODIFICATION REPORT (SIMR) – A document by the Requestor prepared when an interchange proposal includes a series of closely spaced interchanges that are operationally interrelated.

SERVICE INTERCHANGE – An interchange providing access between a non-limited access local roadway network (arterial, collector, or local road) and the limited access facility.

METHODOLOGY LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING (MLOU) – A document providing agreements reached among the applicant, IRC, SMA and, if applicable, FHWA during study design development of an IAR.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) – The Act establishes national environmental policy and goals for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the environment and provides a process for implementing these goals within the federal agencies.

NON-PROGRAMMATIC INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUESTS – Those requests which are excluded from processing through the Programmatic Agreement between FHWA and FDOT.

PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT – Section 1505 of MAP-21 provided the Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary the option to allow state DOTs to review and approve IARs on the Interstate System. FHWA and FDOT have entered into the Programmatic Agreement to allow FDOT to review and approve certain types of IARs. The Programmatic Agreement will expedite the IAR review process and hence streamline the project delivery process. Projects that qualify for this delegation of authority must meet the same requirements for analysis and documentation as those that are not delegated.

PROGRAMMATIC INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUESTS – Those requests which are processed through the Programmatic Agreement between FHWA and FDOT.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT STUDY (PD&E) – An analysis prepared to obtain location and design concept approval for a project that includes Federal funding to comply with State and Federal environmental requirements.

TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT AREA (TMA) – Urbanized areas with population greater than 200,000 as determined by the 2010 census.

1. Interchange Access Requests (IAR) and Documentation

IARs are prepared to sufficiently substantiate proposed changes in access for the approval authority to independently evaluate and act on the request. The level of effort and documentation required for each type of access change should be reflective of the magnitude and significance of potential impacts associated with the proposed change in access.

Specific examples of common improvements that require IMRs and IOARs to be prepared, or which fall under the non-IAR category can be found in the IARUG. Coordination with FHWA and FDOT Central Office is required during the MLOU phase when determining the type of documentation required for a proposed improvement.

The IAR approval consists of two parts. First, the determination of safety, operational and engineering acceptability is obtained. Second, the NEPA document covering the environmental requirements for the proposed project is completed and approved. After completion of these two parts, District IRC submits a letter to FHWA notifying of the determination of safety, operational and engineering acceptability as well as all other transportation planning and environmental conformity requirements have been satisfied.

An affirmative determination of safety, operational and engineering acceptability should be reevaluated whenever a significant change in conditions occurs during this process. If the project has not progressed to construction within 3 years of receiving an affirmative determination, then an updated IAR report may be needed to receive either an affirmation determination, or final approval if all other requirements have been satisfied.

1.1 Methodology Letter of Understanding (MLOU)

The MLOU is prepared prior to initiation of an IAR to identify the parameters and primary areas of focus for preparing the IAR. The MLOU defines the level and type of documentation and the method and assumptions for analyses required to prepare an IAR.

An MLOU is required for IJR and IMR documents, and is optional for IOAR documents, in which cases, the determination for the need of an IOAR will be done in coordination between the DIRC, SIRC and FHWA.

1.2 Interchange Justification Report (IJR)

An IJR is required when the proposed action is intended to provide a new access to a limited-access facility. Such action requires the greatest level of analysis and documentation to substantiate the proposed access.

1.3 Interchange Modification Report (IMR)

An IMR is needed if the Requester proposes a modification to an existing interchange. The extent and complexity of the proposed modification will determine the level of analysis and documentation required.

When multiple interchanges are proposed to be modified in a closely spaced area, a Systems Interchange Modification Report (SIMR) should be prepared to include multiple interchanges in a single document.

1.4 Interchange Operational Analysis Report (IOAR)

An IOAR is prepared to document traffic operational and safety analysis of minor modifications to the existing access points that do not change existing interchange configuration or travel patterns. Refer to the IARUG for examples of interchange improvements that require an IOAR.

The decision to prepare an IMR or an IOAR is made based on the type of improvement proposed and the level of anticipated impact of the improvement. Specific examples of improvements that typically require an IMR can be found in the Interchange Access Requests Users Guide.

1.5 Non-Interchange Access Request (IAR)

Minor changes to the configuration of an interchange, not expected to have significant operational effects, may not require the preparation of an IAR. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the Department to ensure that appropriate safety, operational and engineering analyses are conducted and appropriately documented. Refer to the IARUG for examples of improvements that do not require a formal access request.

2. PROGRAMMATIC INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUESTS

2.1 Qualifying Projects

Not all IARs are eligible to be delegated under the Programmatic Agreement. Professional judgment, project background, and the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) tool should all be used when determining if a project should be excluded from the delegation of authority based on FHWA policy, substantial controversy, and/or environmental issues.

The following types of change in access are excluded from the programmatic agreement:

- a. New Service interchange inside TMAs
- b. New system interchanges
- c. New partial interchanges
- d. Modifications to system interchange
- e. Closure of individual access points that result in partial interchanges or closure of entire interchanges
- f. Locked gate access

The following types of IARs are included in the programmatic agreement unless they are determined to have an issue related to FHWA Policy, involve substantial controversy, or will be evaluated as part of an EIS for the NEPA phase of the project.

- a. New service interchanges outside TMAs
- b. Modifications to service interchanges

3. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

3.1 Non-Programmatic Interchange Access Request Approvals

Approval authorities for Interstate Highway Systems and non-Interstate limited access facilities on the SHS are provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Non-Programmatic Interchange Access Request Approval Authorities

Approval Authority		MLOU			Interchange Access Request					
					Interstate			Non-Interstate		
		IJR	IMR	IOAR ¹	IJR	IMR	IOAR ¹	IJR	IMR	IOAR
Requestor		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
District	IRC	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	District Secretary							✓	✓	✓
Central Office	Systems Management Administrator	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
	Assistant Secretary Strategic Development				✓					
FHWA		✓	✓		✓	✓				

✓ Review and approve the document

1 All IOAR projects qualify for delegation under the Programmatic Agreement. The IRC will determine the need for an MLOU.

3.2 Programmatic Interchange Access Request Approvals

Under the Programmatic Agreement, the determination of safety, operational and engineering acceptability is delegated to the State Chief Engineer, with concurrence from the Florida Division of FHWA. After the State Chief Engineer has made the determination, the FHWA division office is formally notified of the determination and given 5 business days to object to the determination.

Where the IAR affects more than one District (including Turnpike), the MLOU shall be signed by all affected IRCs. All analysis, documentation and final reports shall be reviewed and approved by all affected IRCs.

Table 2 shows the acceptance authorities for projects when a project falls under the delegated approval process.

Table 2: Programmatic Interchange Access Request Approval Authorities

Approval Authority		MLOU			IAR		
		IJR	IMR	IOAR ¹	IJR	IMR	IOAR
Requestor		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
District IRC		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Central Office	Systems Management Administrator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	State Chief Engineer (or Delegate)				✓	✓	✓
	Assistant Secretary Strategic Development (or Delegate)				✓		
FHWA					•	•	•

- ✓ Review and approve the document
- ¹ For an IOAR, the IRC will determine the need for an MLOU
- Concurs with FDOT Chief Engineer's determination of safety, operational and engineering acceptability as agreed upon in the Programmatic Agreement. FHWA Transportation Engineers should be involved when developing MLOU

3.3 Tolling Authority Access Request Approvals

Approval authorities for non-Interstate toll facilities are provided in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Non-Interstate Toll Facility Interchange Access Request Approval Authorities

Approval Authority	Florida Turnpike			Other Expressway Authorities		
	IJR*	IMR*	IOAR	IJR*	IMR*	IOAR
Requestor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Turnpike IRC	✓	✓	✓			
District IRC	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Systems Management Administrator	✓			✓		

- ✓ Review and approve the document
- * District IRC acceptance will not be needed for IJR's, IMR's if cross road is off-system or IJR's, IMR's not impacting state highways. This determination will be made in coordination with District IRC and SIRC during the project.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Requestor

The Requestor is the entity responsible for developing the access request. The Requestor is responsible for preparing the document, and submitting the document to the IRC for review. The Requestor may be internal to the Department, or may be from an outside government agency requesting access.

4.2 Interchange Review Coordinator (IRC)

Each District and the Turnpike Enterprise shall designate an IRC (IRC). The IRC is the primary point of contact for all access requests, both inside and outside the Department, requesting new or modified interchanges on the existing SHS limited access facilities within their Districts. The IRC may advise and make recommendations to the Requestor on the access request process. The IRC is responsible for coordinating with Central Office and FHWA on interchange access request matters. The IRC is responsible for transmittal of draft IAR Report and MLOU documents for review by FHWA upon concurrence by SIRC.

4.3 State Interchange Review Coordinator (SIRC)

The SIRC is responsible for review of access requests at Central Office. The SIRC reviews documents and briefs the Central Office approval authorities on each project. The SIRC is responsible for transmittal of final IARs to FHWA after signed by the required Central Office approval authorities under the Programmatic Agreement. (See **Tables 1 – 3**.)

4.4 Systems Management Administrator (SMA)

The SMA serves as the SPO approval authority at Central Office, per the approval authority tables. (See **Tables 1 – 3**.) In addition, the SMA ensures the implementation of this Procedure by performing Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR).

5. THE INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUEST PROCESS

5.1 Project Concept and Initialization

Determine if the project qualifies for Programmatic Agreement process and what type of IAR is required. Central Office and FHWA should be consulted at this stage if additional information is needed to determine the type of documentation required. More information on the IAR process can be found in the IARUG.

5.2 Methodology Letter of Understanding (MLOU)

5.2.1 Develop a Methodology Letter of Understanding

The MLOU is a document that establishes what is known about the project, what the goal of the project is, and what kind of analyses and documentation will be required to justify the change in access. The purpose and need of the project drives what kind of analyses and documentation will be appropriate.

5.2.2 Electronic Review Comments (ERC) Application

All MLOU documents will be processed through the ERC. The District is responsible for submitting the document and assigning reviewers.

5.2.3 Department and FHWA Review of MLOU

The IRC and SIRC will review the MLOU and provide comments and suggestions for changes. When all comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the MLOU may be transmitted to FHWA, by the SIRC, for FHWA review.

5.2.4 FHWA Review – non-Programmatic IARs

FHWA will review the MLOU and provide comments. When all comments have been addressed, and FHWA has indicated that the document is ready for signature, the SMA will sign the final document and the SIRC will transmit to FHWA.

5.3 Interchange Access Request

5.3.1 Develop IAR

After the MLOU has been signed, the IAR will be developed in accordance with the agreed upon methodology.

5.3.2 Electronic Review Comments (ERC) Application

All IAR documents will be processed through the ERC. The District is responsible for submitting the document and assigning reviewers.

5.3.3 Department Review of IAR

The IRC and SIRC review the IAR and provide comments and suggestions for changes. When all comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the IAR may be transmitted to FHWA by the SIRC for FHWA review, or prepared for the Chief Engineer's Signature for Programmatic IAR documents.

5.3.4 FHWA Review – Non-Programmatic IARs

FHWA will review the IAR and provide comments. When all comments have been addressed, and FHWA has indicated that they are prepared to sign the document, the SMA will sign the final document and the SIRC will transmit to FHWA.

5.3.5 FHWA Concurrence – Programmatic IARs

After the Chief Engineer has made a determination of safety, operational and engineering acceptability of an IAR, FHWA is notified that the determination has been made and is given 5 business days to object.

6. INTERCHANGE ACCESS REQUEST TRAINING

Training on the administrative and technical process is available upon request to the SPO. Detailed technical training traffic operational and safety analysis tools is also available in cooperation with FHWA on an as requested basis.

7. FORMS

No forms are required as part of this procedure.