Frequently Asked Questions

(REVISED 11.29.2017)

1. **Why is FDOT introducing context classification?**
   "FDOT is advancing an initiative to fully implement its Complete Streets Policy (adopted in September 2014). The FDOT Complete Streets policy captures three core concepts in its approach to Complete Streets:

   - Complete Streets serve the transportation needs of transportation system users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, and freight handlers.
   - Complete Streets are context-sensitive, and the approach provides transportation system design that considers local land development patterns.
   - A transportation system based on Complete Streets principles can help to promote safety, quality of life, and economic development.

   Context classification informs the (FDOT) planners and designers who the users are for a roadway, what land uses need to be supported, and what role(s) a roadway needs to play. For instance, in a high-speed rural context, where higher truck traffic is anticipated and walking and bicycling are infrequent, wider travel lanes with paved shoulders or a shared use path may be appropriate. In urban contexts, where high volumes of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users are expected or desired, a roadway could include features such as wide sidewalks, bicycle facilities, transit stops, and frequent, safe pedestrian crossing opportunities."

2. **Is context classification applicable to limited access highways?**
   - Limited-access highways and interstates may incorporate elements of context-based design where they connect to the non-limited-access system, but context classification is not intended for use on the limited-access system itself. Limited access roadways are considered "complete" in terms of their role in providing vehicular travel.

3. **How is this approach different from what we are already doing?**
   - We at FDOT District 5 are already doing much of the context-based planning and design best practices, by considering the context when we plan and design roadways (e.g. various corridor planning studies following the multimodal corridor planning guidebook).

- The FDOT Complete Streets furthers this approach to ensure that all non-limited access state roadways are ***consistently*** planned and designed based on their context classification, as determined by FDOT to the maximum extent feasible.
- With the context classification system, FDOT and our partners will have a common vocabulary to evaluate and determine context and the corresponding needs and users of roadways.

4. **Will there be dedicated funding for Context Classification and Complete Streets projects?**
    - FDOT's Complete Streets approach to the planning and design of state roadway projects uses existing funding sources, and these funding practices will not change.
    - Most roadway projects are funded by strategically matching federal, state, and local funding sources to specific elements of the project.
    - Local partners can re-allocate their funding programs to prioritize certain projects as they do now.

5. **Do we expect more changes to happen in the future?**
    - The adoption of context based design approach is fully incorporated into the FDOT Design Manual (FDM). Other standards including the PD&E Manual and PM Handbook are also being reviewed and will be revised based on the need and timing of each FDOT office.
    - All of these documents will be based on a context-based approach to planning and designing our roadways, and reference the context classification system. (The LOS policy has recently been revised to prescribe targets instead of standards.)

6. **Can we ask for a context classification change if we intend for a different land use condition than what is existing? How much does future land use/zoning/land development regulation inform context classification?**
    - The FDOT Context Classification Document (pages 6-7) explains that primary measures will be evaluated based on existing conditions or ***updated with future context if needed***.
    - The future context should be clearly documented in a ***well-defined, community-supported, and implementation-focused plan or in policies*** such as the land use element of the local comprehensive plan, zoning overlays, form-based codes, community redevelopment plans, or permitted development plans. The future desired conditions should be consistently documented across all appropriate local policies and should be well-understood and accepted by local stakeholders. In short, the future conditions should be those that are ***predictable and that will occur over an anticipated timeframe rather than visionary plans or broad goals and ideas that do not have a clear timeline for actual implementation***. Use of a form-based code is one indicator that significant community discussion occurred

on a future vision, and that future development is more likely to result based on the adopted form-based code. The District Secretary will make the determination of future context classification in situations where the future context may be in doubt.

- For most non-qualifying projects (projects that do not go through ETDM screening, including RRR, traffic operations, safety projects) with shorter time frames, existing conditions will likely suffice.
- In most cases, primary measures are sufficient to determine context classification. Secondary measures can be used to further understand the context when there is no clear consensus on the context classification based on the primary measures. ***Secondary measures are also useful in cases where local municipalities have adopted a future vision for a place that is not consistent with the existing context classification.***
- Qualifying projects (projects that qualify for ETDM screening, per the ETDM Manual Section 2.3.1 including: additional through lanes to an existing road, a new roadway, a reconstruction, etc.) in all phases for existing roadways and new roadways will be evaluated using the ***future contexts of the primary measures***.

7. Is the District planning to map context classification districtwide?

- The FDOT plans to map the "provisional" context classification districtwide. These "provisional" context classifications will be re-evaluated as projects occur, on a project-by-project basis.

8. What informs context classification if existing infrastructure and network patterns are not aligned with land use criteria?

- Generally, a roadway segment should meet a majority of the primary measures of a context classification.
- There are places in the State where land uses have changed from urban to more suburban and a roadway infrastructure of connected grid system still exists. In this case, the land use development intent documented in local policies (set-backs, parking location, uses, and development density, etc.) and as evaluated using both primary and secondary measures will determine the context classification.

9. Can we redesign roads to lower posted speeds if the context classification allows for it? How does design speed relate to posted speed?

- Determination of posted speeds and design speeds should follow FDOT's Speed Zoning Manual and other FDOT design standards. Context classification by itself does not determine posted speed.
- For new roadways and reconstruction, design speeds can be determined using the design speed ranges based on context classification, as detailed in ***FDM Table 201.4.1 Design Speed***.

- The District Design Engineer (DDE) and the District Traffic Operations Engineer (DTOE) jointly approve the selected design and posted speeds for new roadways.
- Posted speeds will still be determined based on FDOT's practice of conducting a traffic engineering study to determine appropriate and safe posted speed limits.
- FDOT is developing additional guidance on roadway design elements to encourage appropriate speeds. Future versions of the FDM will include guidance on low-speed roadways.

10. How do we accommodate freight in urban environments? What design features need to be considered?

- Context classification is one element we would consider when planning and designing roadways. Other best practices that we do today to understand transportation needs should still continue. Page 15 of the Context Classification Document discusses how transportation characteristics define the role of a roadway in the transportation system, including the type of access the roadway provides, the types of trips served, and the users served. The transportation characteristics take into consideration regional travel patterns, freight movement, and SIS designation.
- Together with context classification, they can provide information about who the users are along the roadway, the regional and local travel demand of the roadway, and the challenges and opportunities of each roadway user.
- Some example questions to better understand freight needs of a roadway are included in the document (page 16): What is the percentage and volume of heavy trucks using the roadway? Are there destinations that require regular access by heavy trucks or other large vehicles? Is the roadway part of a designated freight corridor? Where does loading and unloading occur along the roadway?

11. Do we assume that we will accommodate pedestrians in C4/C5/C6 or do we build to the current data/counts?

- We should assume high levels of pedestrian and bicycle activity in these contexts. Evidence of lack of such activity is needed, rather than proof of the activity.
- Sidewalks should be provided based on latest FDM standards. Provide sidewalk on high speed curbed and flush shoulder roadways within C2T, C3R, C4, C5, or C6 context classification; and within C1, C2 or C3C where the demand for use is demonstrated.

12. Does context classification apply to RRR projects?

- Yes, context classification will be applied to all non-limited access state roadway projects.

- However, for RRR Projects, other than meeting detectable warning and curb ramp requirements, unaltered sidewalks that are not in compliance with Standard Plans or ADA requirements are not required to be reconstructed.
- Under the FDM, elements that do not meet criteria will now need a variation, not just a letter in the project file. Existing sidewalks could remain, but sidewalk gaps would require a variation.

13. What is the minimum length of a context classification?

- Where a block structure is present, a context classification segment may be as short as two blocks in length.
- Where there is no defined block structure, a context classification segment may be as short as a quarter-mile in length.

14. Will there be recommendations for transit amenities in different contexts?

- There are no recommendations from FDOT. FDOT will work with partner transit agencies and municipalities in accommodating transit amenities on state roadways.
- FDOT Central Office will continue to work on future refinements of the FDM and possibly an addendum to the Accessing Transit Handbook to make sure transit is adequately accommodated.

15. How does this relate to access management classification?

- Interim access management guidance is included in the FDM.
- FDOT is working on updating the access management standards to incorporate context classification.

16. Can you speak to transit access, mid-block crossings, and on-street parking and how these are addressed with context classification?

- Context classification is one element we would consider when planning and designing roadways. Other best practices that we do today to understand transportation needs should still continue. Page 15 of the Context Classification document discusses how transportation characteristics define the role of a roadway in the transportation system, including the type of access the roadway provides, the types of trips served, and the users served. Page 16 includes some example questions to better understand the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.
- Refer to the FDOT Traffic Engineering Manual (TEM) for the latest guidance on mid-block crossings. Future editions of the TEM will be reviewed to potentially incorporate context classification.
- FDM 212 and 210 discuss on-street parking standards on state roadways. "On-street parking is a key element of urban contexts C6, C5, and C4, but may also be found in C2T. It provides necessary parking supply in these locations, helps

manage traffic speeds, and provides separation between the sidewalk and the travel lanes. In these context classifications, leave existing on-street parking in place unless local plans call for its removal. Where on street parking is not present in C6, C5, or C4, determine whether it should be added per local plan, for speed management or to increase available parking."

17. What is the latest FDOT direction on bicycle facilities?

- Bicycle facility design standards can be found in FDM Section 223. Page 15 of the Context Classification document discusses how transportation characteristics define the role of a roadway in the transportation system, including the type of access the roadway provides, the types of trips served, and the users served. Page 16 includes some example questions to better understand the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

18. What is the latest FDOT direction on roundabouts?

- FDM section 116 includes the latest design guidance on roundabouts. FDOT requires all intersections being evaluated for signal control to go through roundabout screenings.
- The roundabout screening guidance will be incorporated into the FDOT Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) process in a couple of years.

19. Will lighting and other amenities be addressed in certain context classifications?

- No. The FDM contains the latest standards related to lighting and other amenities. Future editions of FDM may include context-specific standards.

20. How will functional classification be considered as part of context classification?

- Complete Streets continue to recognize functional classification but also consider the context classification of the street as part of the total picture. Context classification provides an important layer of information that complements functional classification in determining the transportation demand characteristics along a roadway, including typical users, trip length, and vehicular travel speeds.

21. How would the process work to get a special district?

- Special Districts (SD) are areas that, due to their unique characteristics and function, do not adhere to standard measures identified in the Context Classification Matrix.
- Examples of SDs include military bases, university campuses, airports, seaports, rail yards, theme parks and tourist districts, sports complexes, hospitals, and freight distribution centers. Due to their size, function, or configuration, Special Districts will attract a unique mix of users and create unique travel patterns.

- Planning and engineering judgment must be used to understand users and travel patterns and to determine the appropriate design controls and criteria for streets serving a Special District on a case-by-case basis.
- The district will coordinate with the State Complete Streets Program Manager to evaluate the need for a Special District designation. Special Districts will still receive a context classification for design purposes, but it may not match the normal criteria for that classification.

22. If a municipality has adopted form based codes, will the transect designations be automatically applied/translate to context classification?

- FDOT's context classifications generally align with the SmartCode™, with some critical distinctions. The SmartCode™ was developed to describe and codify desired future visions of development form by local jurisdictions. FDOT's context classifications are descriptive, rather than visionary, and therefore include all land areas and types found within the State of Florida, with less local specificity.
- The general relationship between the zones used by the transect system and FDOT's context classification is outlined in Table 4 of the Context Classification document.
- Context classification will still be evaluated based on FDOT's process even with a form-based code. However, the use of a form-based code is one indicator that significant community discussion occurred on a future vision, and that future development is more likely to result based on the adopted form-based code. A form-based code will help inform context classification, especially when current conditions do not match a future vision.