

INDIANAPOLIS MPO FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

Roadway Functional Classification System

Functional classification is the process by which the local, state and nation's street and highway network is ranked according to the role it plays in the overall system. It determines how travel is "directed" within the roadway system by defining the part that each road or street plays in serving the flow of traffic through a highway network. It is a hierarchal system of classification that helps to ensure a comprehensive roadway system that provides logical connectivity and continuity across the entire network.

Functional classification is used in transportation planning, roadway design, sometimes zoning and for the allocation of federal highway funds. Functional classification was introduced by the Federal Highway Administration in the 1960s, providing guidelines for local governments and planning organizations to use in developing and maintaining the roadway classification system in their jurisdiction.

It is the responsibility of the Indianapolis MPO to develop and maintain the functional classification system of roadways within the planning area. This involves coordination with city, town and county agencies, the state, and the Federal Highway Administration.

A more detailed description of the Highway Functional Classification System and guidelines can be found on the Federal Highway Administration's website at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/fctoc.htm>.

Proposing Roadway Functional Classification System Changes

As the metropolitan planning and urbanized areas continue to grow, changes in land use, population and roadway usage may alter the demand for, and the function of roadways. As a result, the functional classification system must go through a comprehensive evaluation after each decennial census to reflect the new urbanized area. In addition, there are times when the system should be modified to reflect changing conditions outside of the decennial evaluation.

In the Indianapolis MPA, any agency that proposes a change to the functional classification system must have approval by the Indianapolis MPO before the request is submitted to the Indiana Department of Transportation.

All requests must include the following:

- A cover letter addressed to Dan Dozier, INDOT-Division of Asset Management, 100 North Senate Avenue, Room N955, Indianapolis, IN 46204. This letter should list and briefly describe (facility name, to/from) the classification requests and include

signatures from appropriate LPA authorities indicating they have read, understand, agree and endorse the request. A signature line for the MPO should also be included.

- a completed INDOT Roadway Functional Classification System Application with detailed justification
- a color map of the existing functional classification for the subject area
- a color map of the proposed changes
- traffic count map
- other supporting documentation such as thoroughfare plans, land use plans, etc. may be included as necessary to further justify the requested change

These requests must first be signed by the appropriate local authority and submitted to the MPO. The request may be submitted as a hard copy or as a pdf e-mail attachment. The MPO staff will review the request and may request additional information, may recommend changes or denial, or may recommend approval and sign the application. Once the MPO has signed the application, it will be submitted to INDOT with a copy to the requesting agency.

MPO Staff Review

The MPO staff will review each request based on the following nine criteria:

1. Regional policy – the functional classification of a roadway must be consistent with the goals and objectives of the region’s long range transportation plan.
2. Connectivity – in the urban areas of the region, roadway segments that do not connect in the system (stubs) will only be accepted at the “local street” level. No stubs functionally classified as collector or above will be accepted. Stub ends in the rural areas will be accepted at the “local road” or “rural minor collector” levels and at the boundaries of the MPA. Roadways that change classification along their routing will change at the nearest cross street in single level increments.
3. Function – the definitions and standards of functional classification as described in the Federal Highway Administration’s Highway Functional Classification System and Guidelines will be followed as closely as possible to define the function of a roadway.
4. Land use – the level of accessibility to surrounding land uses is a critical element in determining the functional classification of a facility. An area where a high degree of access to abutting land use is required (residential, rural agriculture, etc...) will be primarily served by the collector system. Where access is restricted (commercial, industrial, etc...) the principal arterial system will serve the area. The minor arterial system serves in areas where there is a need for moderate levels of access.
5. Trip length – as functional classification moves up the hierarchy, from collector to principal arterial, they should accommodate more trips of greater length.

6. Spacing – the distance between identical classification types should increase as the level of classification increases (i.e. principal arterials should be spaced farther apart than collectors).
7. VMT (vehicle miles of travel) and mileage – a properly developed system should be balanced based on the percentage of mileage and VMT each classification carries in comparison to the entire system. The standards established by FHWA will be observed as closely as possible.
8. Traffic volume – traffic counts are considered, but are not the only determining factor in establishing classification.
9. Federal Aid – while functionally classifying a roadway makes it eligible for Federal Aid funds, the MPO will NOT consider requests whose sole intent is to make the roadway eligible for Federal Aid funds.

Consideration will be given to the effect a classification change may have on the larger system. As a result, there may be the need to change (downgrade or upgrade) a roadway or roadways in the area whether they are directly connected to the request or not. It should also be noted, that the process of functionally classifying non-existent (proposed) roadways will be handled the same as for existing roadways. However, additional consideration will be given to the proposed roadway's relationship to the long range transportation plan.

MPO Review Time

MPO staff will make every attempt to review and respond to all functional classification requests within four weeks of receipt. However, the actual approval of the request may take longer based on the MPO and INDOT staff work load and the size and complexity of the request.

Questions

All forms and information pertaining to the MPO's roadway functional classification process can be found on the MPO's website. Questions regarding functional classification in general and the MPO process in particular may be addressed to Steve Cunningham, Principal Planner at steve.cunningham@indy.gov or 327-5403.