Guidelines and Procedures for Processing Requests related to Farm Equipment on Fully Controlled Access Facilities and the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways

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I. Purpose

These guidelines and procedures exist to clarify the steps necessary to verify, review, evaluate, process, and approve/deny requests for authorization by farm equipment to use fully controlled access facilities or the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The movement of farm equipment on these facilities is covered by general statute §20-116.

II. Definitions

Authorized Route – A route approved for use by farm equipment not to exceed twenty-five (25) feet in width. These routes necessarily include portions of fully controlled access facilities and/or routes of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

Farm Equipment – Includes vehicles that are designed exclusively to transport compressed seed cotton from a farm to a gin and has a self-loading bed, combines, and other self-propelled vehicles used primarily or exclusively for agriculture.

Fully Controlled Access – A facility providing connections only via ramps at interchanges, and all cross-streets are grade-separated. No private driveway connections are allowed.

National System of Interstate and Defense Highways (NSIDH) – The interstate system.

Terminal - Any location where farm equipment either originates, terminates, or is handled in the farming process.

III. Requests for Authorization

A. Application Processing

Individuals requesting authorization for farm equipment to use fully controlled access facilities or the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways must submit a signed application to the State Traffic Engineer for each route being requested. Each application must indicate the width(s) of vehicles, the specific route and destination (road names, addresses, etc.), applicable maps, and contact information (names, emails, phone numbers, etc.) of the requestor. An application shall only be considered received when dated by the Farm Equipment Coordinator.

Application processing shall be completed within five (5) business days by the Farm Equipment Coordinator, beginning the first full business day following receipt of the application:

1. Indicate the date the application is received, and log it in to the STAA database (using "F" as the designator).

2. Review the application to make sure all required information has been provided. This includes origination and destination locations and addresses, map(s), requestor name and contact information, and signature. Incomplete applications shall be returned to the requestor.

3. Research the STAA database for prior requests, approvals, and/or denials, and search TEAAS for existing authorized route ordinances.

4. Create 2000 and 3000 series orders in the Work Management System (WMS).

5. Scan the entire application (including maps) into a color PDF document and email it to the appropriate Regional Traffic Engineer(s), along with the WMS order numbers, and carbon copy the regional support engineers, regional safety engineers, regional processing assistants, and the appropriate Mobility and Safety Field Operations Engineer. Be sure to request a return receipt.

B. Application Verification

A verification process is required to determine if an application contains all necessary information for an evaluation of the requested route. ***This step shall be completed within ten (10) business days, beginning the first business day following receipt of the email requesting verification of the route.*** This step is only to verify that a complete, accurate, and continuous route has been provided and understood, and that no investigation or response development is required at this point.

1. Review the application and the origination and destination points. Verify, using local knowledge and route familiarity, that the requested route is complete, accurate, and continuous between the origination and destination points.

2. Identify and inventory all state maintained roads and their associated local names between the origination point and the destination point.

3. If necessary, contact the requestor for additional information or to discuss potential alternate routes. Be sure to carbon copy the Farm Equipment Coordinator on any contacts.

   Note 1 – Minimal contact should be sufficient for additional information or clarification.

   Note 2 – Even though alternate routes (for whatever reason) may be identified, suggested, and discussed with the requestor, the originally requested route cannot be changed without approval by the requestor.

Note 3 – If, by the end of the ten (10) business day period, clarification has not been provided or the requestor has not returned attempted contacts, then email the Farm Equipment Coordinator with this information, and the application will be considered unverified and incomplete, and the Farm Equipment Coordinator shall notify the requestor that the request is incomplete and the reasons for the incompleteness.

4. Once the route has been verified, email the Farm Equipment Coordinator with the following:

   - Application number
   - A statement that the route description is complete, accurate, and continuous
   - Any additional statements regarding the requested route and/or comments/clarifications from the requestor (as needed and if applicable)
   - A list of counties and cities (if any) affected by the route
   - A map of the verified route
   - A description of the verified route, by county, using state maintained roads and their local names, as indicated by the following example:

     Surry County: NC 752 between I 77 and US 601, US 601 between NC 752 and NC 268, NC 268 between US 601 and SR 1003 (Siloam Road), SR 1003 (Siloam Road) between NC 268 and the Goose Creek farm entrance located at 2916 Siloam Road.

   - A list of any alternate routes
   - A description of any alternate routes (see verified route example, above)

C. Application Completion

An application must be declared "complete" to initiate the mandatory 30-day response period as required by general statute §20-116 (j). An application shall be considered "complete" when the verification has been received, confirmed, and dated by the Farm Equipment Coordinator (Step B, above). ***This step should be completed within two (2) business days of receipt of verification, beginning the first business day following the verification date.***

1. Indicate the date the application is verified (the email received from the regional office will serve as confirmation of verification). At this point, the application is considered complete and a response is due in thirty (30) calendar days.

2. Indicate on the application and in the STAA database a required response date that is thirty (30) calendar days from the verification date, beginning the first day following the date of the verification. Also update the description in the database as needed.

3. Update the description of the 2000 and 3000 series orders in the Work Management System (WMS) as needed.

4. Initiate the review and evaluation process.

D. Review and Evaluation

The Transportation Mobility and Safety Division shall have thirty (30) calendar days, once an application is considered complete, to approve or deny a request for authorization and inform the requestor and appropriate law enforcement officials of the approval or denial. During the thirty calendar-day period, the following should occur in order to review and evaluate the request.

For steps 1-5 (notifications), the standard carbon copy (cc) distribution list is as follows…

- Board of Transportation member(s)
- Secretary of Transportation
- Chief Engineer
- Deputy Chief Engineer
- State Traffic Engineer
- Division Engineer(s)

…and the standard blind copy (bc) list is as follows…

- State Traffic Safety Engineer
- Mobility and Safety Field Operations Engineer(s)
- Regional Traffic Engineer(s)
- Division Operation Engineer(s)
- Division Traffic Engineer(s)
- Traffic Safety Systems Engineer
- Highway Safety Improvement Program Engineer

1. The requestor shall be notified by email (or letter if the requestor does not have email) that their application has been received, verified, and is considered complete by a date of ***no later than two (2) business days***, beginning the first business day following the date of verification. The correspondence shall be from the Farm Equipment Coordinator to the requestor with an approval/denial date indicated and copies being sent to the standard distribution list.

2. A notification shall be emailed by a date of ***no later than two (2) business days***, beginning the first business day following the date of verification, to the following individuals…

   - Director of SHP's Motor Carrier Enforcement and Special Operations
   - NCDA&CS's Agricultural Policy, Communication, and Legal Affairs section (current contact is David McLeod, david.mcleod@ncagr.gov)
   - NC Farm Bureau (current contact is Paul Sherman, paul.sherman@ncfb.org)
   - County Manager of each affected county
   - City/Town Manager of each affected municipality with a copy being sent to the Mayor (if the municipality does not have a City/Town Manager, then send it to the Chief of Police or, if no Chief of Police, then send it directly to the Mayor)

   …with copies or blind copies being sent to the standard distribution lists (top of Section D) as appropriate, and additional blind copies (bc) sent to the following individuals…

- Colonel of the State Highway Patrol (SHP)
- SHP's Motor Carrier Enforcement, Size and Weight Division
- Office Assistant, SHP (currently Susan Burt, susan.burt@ncdps.gov)
- Commissioner of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS)

Written comments shall be requested to be submitted by a date of no later than fifteen (15) calendar days of the first day of the thirty calendar-day period.

3. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall email the appropriate Regional Traffic Engineer(s) and the Highway Safety Improvement Program Engineer by a date of ***no later than two (2) business days***, beginning the first business day following the date of verification, that the review and evaluation process has begun and shall include the appropriate authorization request number, the WMS order numbers, and appropriate due dates.

4. On receiving the email from the Farm Equipment Coordinator, the Highway Safety Improvement Program Engineer shall initiate expedited crash, crash rate, and critical crash rate analyses of the requested route(s) and any identified alternate route(s), and send the information directly to the appropriate Mobility and Safety Field Operations Engineer(s) and the appropriate Regional Traffic Engineer(s) by a date of ***no later than eight (8) business days*** of the first day of the thirty calendar-day period.

5. On receiving the email from the Farm Equipment Coordinator, the appropriate Regional Traffic Engineer(s) shall initiate a field investigation of the requested route and any identified alternate route(s). If a requested route affects multiple regions, the region with the majority of the route shall be responsible for coordinating and/or conducting the entire field investigation. Field investigations shall be concluded by a date of ***no later than thirteen (13) business days*** of the first day of the thirty calendar-day period.

6. The Regional Traffic Engineer (or, if multiple regions are affected, the Regional Traffic Engineer with the majority of the requested route within their region) shall submit a written recommendation, with appropriate supporting documentation, to the State Traffic Safety Engineer with copies going to other affected Regional Traffic Engineer(s), if any, appropriate Mobility and Safety Field Operations Engineer(s), and the Farm Equipment Coordinator. Recommendations for approvals of requests may be conditional (use of flag vehicles, minimum/maximum speeds, maximum dimensions, and time of day). Recommendations shall be received by the Farm Equipment Coordinator by a date of ***no later than seventeen (17) business days*** of the first day of the thirty calendar-day period.

7. The State Traffic Safety Engineer shall, by signature and date, concur with, or change, recommendations made by the Regional Traffic Engineer by a date of ***no later than two (2) business days*** following receipt of the recommendations.

8. If the Regional Traffic Engineer and the State Traffic Safety Engineer both agree to approve the request, then go to "Approvals" (Section E, below).

9. If the Regional Traffic Engineer and the State Traffic Safety Engineer both agree to deny the request, then go to "Denials" (Section F, below).

10. If the Regional Traffic Engineer and the State Traffic Safety Engineer disagree as to whether or not the request should be approved or denied, then go to "Denials" (Section F, below).

E. Approvals

If the request is approved by both the Regional Traffic Engineer and the State Traffic Safety Engineer, or if a recommended denial has been reversed by the State Traffic Engineer…

1. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall contact the appropriate Regional Traffic Engineer(s) and have them enter draft ordinances, which the State Traffic Engineer shall review and approve. Note that if the affected Division(s) and/or Region(s) recommended denial of the requested route(s) but the denial was overturned by the State Traffic Engineer, then the State Traffic Engineer's agent shall click the ordinance approval buttons for those individuals recommending denial.

2. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall send by email (or letter if the requestor does not have email) a copy of the signed ordinance package to the requestor and state that the requested route(s) have been approved, that a copy of the ordinance package should be carried at all times when moving farm equipment on the authorized route(s), that any piece of equipment exceeding a height of 13'6" will need an oversized permit, and a link to TEPPL topic F-28 (Farm Equipment Authorization). Copies and blind copies, as appropriate, of this correspondence shall be sent to the standard distribution lists (see top of Section D) and the additional individuals listed in Section D, item 2. Also, additional blind copies shall be sent to the State Systems Operations Engineer, the Safety Planning Engineer, and the Safety Evaluation Engineer.

3. The appropriate Regional Traffic Engineer(s) shall coordinate with Division staff to have signs posted on the affected route(s).

4. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall ensure an updated list of routes authorized for farm equipment use are published on the internet.

5. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall technically complete (TECO) all related WMS orders no later than three (3) months following the final response.

F. Denials

If the request is denied by the State Traffic Safety Engineer…

1. The State Traffic Engineer shall review and concur with, or change, recommendations made by the Regional Traffic Engineer and the State Traffic Safety Engineer by a date of ***no later than two (2) business days*** following receipt of the recommendations.

2. If the State Traffic Engineer concurs with the recommended denial, skip step 3 and continue to step 4.

3. If the State Traffic Engineer reverses the recommended denial and approves the request, go to "Approvals" (Section E, above).

4. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall draft a response letter from the State Traffic Engineer to the requestor with copies or blind copies, as appropriate, being sent to the standard distribution list (see Section D) and the additional individuals listed in Section D, item 2. The denial letter shall have the following information:

    - Date
    - Authorization request number
    - Name of Company or Individual
    - Requested route
    - Reason(s) for denial
    - Signature of the State Traffic Engineer

5. The Farm Equipment Coordinator shall technically complete (TECO) all related WMS orders no later than three (3) months following the final response.