

Functional Classification of Highways

Functional Classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide.

There are three primary federal highway functional classifications: arterial, collector, and local roads. All streets and highways are grouped into one of these classes, depending on the character of the traffic (i.e., local or long distance) and the degree of land access that they allow. These classifications are described in Table 1.

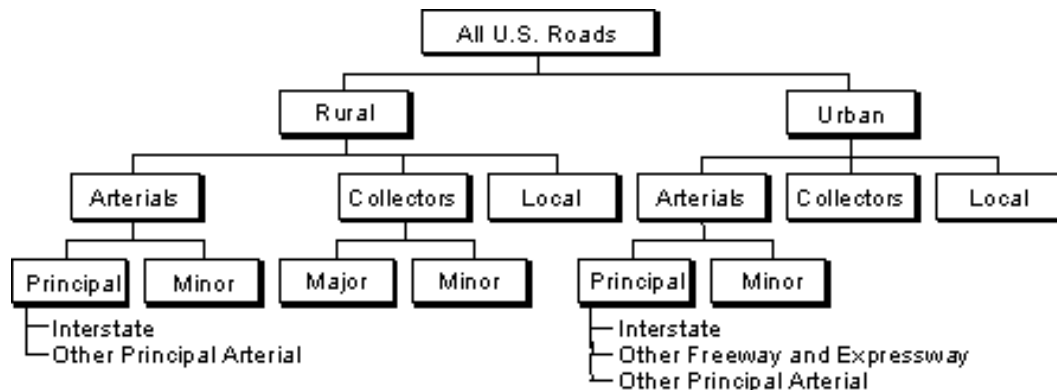
Functional System	Services Provided
Arterial	Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control.
Collector	Provides a less highly developed level of service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials.
Local	Consists of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors; primarily provides access to land with little or no through movement.

Table 1: Functional Classification Systems

Typically, travelers will use a combination of arterial, collector, and local roads for their trips. Each type of road has a specific purpose or function. Some provide land access to serve each end of the trip. Others provide travel mobility at varying levels, which is needed en route.

The Functional Classification system can be further broken down into “rural” and “urban” classifications, and there are sub-classifications within these groupings as well. (See Exhibit 1) For more detailed information, please see Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures. Rev. March 1989.

Exhibit 1



The Transportation Planning Branch of NCDOT is responsible for the Functional Classification updates for North Carolina. The NCDOT GIS Unit prepares digital mapping. In the 17 Urbanized Areas or Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) (population >50,000) the changes were mutually established between the MPOs and the NCDOT. Of the 90 Urban Clusters within the State (population between 2500-50000), 56 were processed as Urban Clusters and the remaining UCs with population less than 5000 were processed as rural areas.

Our 2005/ 2006 update was initiated due to the Decennial Census revision of Urban Area Boundary. In the May 1, 2002, Federal Register, the US Bureau of the Census issued the designations of Urbanized Areas (UZAs) and Urban Clusters (UCs) based on the 2000 Census. While the USDOT has no direct role in the designation of these areas, they are critical to the administration of the surface transportation program. Key FHWA/FTA program impacts for planning and environmental are: designation of MPOs and application of metropolitan planning requirements; designation of Transportation Management areas (TMA); application of Air Quality Conformity requirements; and, funding availability.

Note: much of the above information was taken from the *Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures*. Rev. March 1989.