

Functional Classification – Routine Changes

Transportation Planning Division		Approved: October 2022 Version 3
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Purpose

This procedure outlines the steps necessary to revise the functional classification (FC) of a roadway.

Background

Functional classification is a federally defined process by which streets and highways (roadways) are grouped into classes, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. All classifications and sub-categories exist in both urban and rural areas. The classification categories are as follows:

- **Principal Arterial** – The principal arterial system should serve the major centers of activity of a metropolitan area, the highest traffic volume corridors, and the longest trip desires; and should carry a high proportion of the total urban area travel on a minimum of mileage. Principal Arterials should be further divided into three subcategories: Interstates; Other Freeways and Expressways; and Other Principal Arterials.
- **Minor Arterial** – The minor arterial street system should interconnect with and augment the urban principal arterial system and provide service to trips of moderate length at a somewhat lower level of travel mobility than principal arterials.
- **Collector** – The collector street system provides land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas. It differs from the arterial system in that facilities on the collector system may penetrate residential neighborhoods, distributing trips from the arterials through the area to the ultimate destination. The collectors are further divided into major and minor collectors.
- **Local** – The local street system consists of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors and primarily provides access to land with little or no through movement.

Functional classification changes are required due to changes in transportation network and/or land use patterns. These changes can involve:

- Adding newly constructed or extended roadways to the network, which can in turn affect the functional classification of connecting or nearby roadways.
- Upgrading the functional classification of an existing roadway due to land use changes or an improvement made to the roadway.
- Downgrading the functional classification of an existing roadway due to land use changes, traffic controls that discourage through traffic, or other controls that limit the speed and capacity of a road.

Note: The Functional Classification Overhaul process is different from the Routine Change process in that the overhaul results from changes in the urban area boundaries from the Decennial Census. These boundary changes initiate the Boundary Revision procedure, which results in changes in Functional Classification. (See [“Administration of the Boundary Revision Program”](#).)

Responsibility

The Functional Classification Project Manager (FC Project Manager), the staff in the Statewide Initiatives Group of the Transportation Planning Division (TPD) who has the role of Functional Classification Project Manager, is responsible for managing this process. The MPO/RPO Planning Engineer in the Planning Groups will be responsible for coordinating with the MPO/RPO in the process.

Policy, Regulatory, and Legal Requirements

[FHWA Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures 2013 Edition](#)

Scheduling and Time Constraints

Begin the process as soon as the [NCDOT Functional Classification Change Request Form](#) is received from the Requestor.

Procedures

Follow the steps below to process the functional classification change request.

Step	Action
1	Requestor shall contact the MPO/RPO Planning Engineer at NCDOT Transportation Planning Division for their area to start the functional classification revision process. (The Requestor may be from the Program Development Division, the CTP Project Engineer, or an MPO/RPO.)
2	Upon the Planning Engineer receiving the request, the Planning Engineer will send the requestor the NCDOT Functional Classification Change Request Form and instruct that the form should be submitted to the FC Project Manager with the Planning Engineer and Planning Group Supervisor CC'ed.
3	Once the request form is received, the FC Project Manager will store the request form on S drive under Statewide Initiatives Group folder.
4	The FC Project Manager will review and evaluate the change request stated in the NCDOT Functional Classification Change Request Form from the requestor.

	Items which should be considered include reasons for the proposed change, FHWA guidelines for inclusion in a particular category, connectivity of the system, and the functional classification network system consistency with surrounding counties, urban areas, or MPO that will be affected by this proposal. The FC Project Manager will be responsible for coordination of all additional jurisdictional changes necessitated by the changes for the county, urban areas, MPO or RPO.
5	<p>The FC Project Manager will create the change request map, provide suggestions on the request to the TPD functional classification review team comprised of the Planning Engineer and Planning Group Supervisor for the area, and the FC Project Manager's supervisor for TPD internal review, discussion and decision making.</p> <p>The FC Project Manager will discuss/communicate with the local organization (i.e. MPO/RPO, etc.) about TPD's evaluation and analysis on the change request, before any final decision.</p> <p>The local organization (i.e. MPO/RPO, etc.), TPD Planning Group, and the FC Project Manager will work together during this process.</p>
6	<p>Upon NCDOT TPD's approval of the change request, the FC Project Manager will generate the functional classification system revision request transmittal letter including the maps for each change and send it to FHWA. The FC Project Manager will coordinate/discuss the request with FHWA as needed.</p> <p>The FC Project Manager will send the TPD's final decision to the requestor if the change request is not approved.</p>
7	Upon FHWA's approval of the change request, the FC Project Manager will generate functional classification system revision distribution memorandum and send it out to all parties involved.
8	The FC Project Manager will update the NCDOT Roads and Highways System with the changes and close out the project. The updated functional classification data will then be published with the quarterly NCDOT data publication.

Warnings and Precautions

The MPO needs to approve the changes before the change request can be submitted to NCDOT TPD, if the area is within the MPO boundary.

Resources and Tools

[FHWA Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures 2013 Edition](#)

Contacts

- Requestor needs to contact the Planning Engineer at NCDOT Transportation Planning Division for their area to start the functional classification revision process. (The Requestor may be the Program Development Division, the CTP Project Engineer, an MPO or an RPO.)

Glossary

Functional Classification (FC)

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Rural Planning Organization (RPO)

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Transportation Planning Division (TPD)

Urban Area Boundaries (UAB)

User Access

Restricted NCDOT, FHWA, MPO, RPO, Consultants, etc.

Flowchart

None

Record of Revision

Version	Section Affected	Description	Effective Date
3	Most sections	Updated most of the document to describe the current process and clarify	10/31/2022
2	Scheduling & Time Constraints Procedures Resources & Tools	Updated linked documents and added a new hyperlinked document	1/08/2009
1.1	Step 1 of Procedures & Contacts	Contact changed from Elisabeth Reddic to Rockne Bryant	7/21/2008