

**Questions and Answers**  
**Session #4: Design Exceptions**  
**December 13 & 15, 2016**

**Q. Explain the process for obtaining Design Exception approval for Division managed projects.**

*A. The Division Engineer has the authority to approve any and all design exceptions for Division managed projects. Division Engineers can choose to seek consultation with or route a particular exception request through Central Units based on complexities or other extenuating circumstances.*

**Q. Is cost a valid reason to consider a design exception?**

*A. In the past, engineers were directed to compare the cost of meeting the design standards against the cost of not meeting a particular design requirement. Presently it is more common to look at the overall project cost and note anything that would have appreciable negative cost impacts. In some cases, it is obvious that meeting the design criteria is just not practical. However, the decision should always be documented in the project file.*

**Q. Are you expecting changes to the checklist based on the new AASHTO guidance?**

*A. Yes, the checklist will likely be reduced to just those items that are required by FHWA, assuming that NCDOT decides to adopt the criteria that FHWA uses for the National Highway System. However, the State does have the option to have more stringent requirements.*

**Q. Is there concise guidance on when a Design Exception Letter is not required?**

*A. If the design deviation is not one of the 13 required items shown on the slides and discussed in the presentation, then a design exception is not required. However, the deviation should be documented by a note to file, etc., but a formal Design Exception is not required. Also, if an element that does not meet standards is located at the project tie-in, a formal design exception does not have to be documented.*

**Q. Is anyone tracking the mitigation measures, such as the Regional Traffic Engineer (RTE), or doing a follow-up after the project is complete?**

*A. For design exceptions handled through Roadway Design, the RTE will be made aware of the proposed exception before the exception is finalized. The desire is to have the RTE review the project when completed, so it is important to get their concurrence with the proposed exception before it is included in the mitigation measures for the project. Roadway Design Unit is not aware of any formal tracking process of the mitigation measures.*