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# Access Management

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Roads are a critical public resource and constitute a major investment of the public's money. To reduce the need for new roads and road widening projects, greater emphasis is being placed on maximizing the performance of Virginia's existing highway network. The 2007 General Assembly added § 33.1-198.1 to the Code of Virginia authorizing VDOT to develop and adopt access management regulations and standards to apply to the state highway system.

Access management focuses on the location, spacing, design and operation of entrances, street intersections, median openings, and traffic signals. Each of these creates conflict points where vehicles have to stop or slow down, disrupting the flow of traffic. As the number of conflict points increase, so does traffic congestion and traffic crashes affecting the vehicular carrying capacity of the road. The benefits that can accrue from managing access include:

- Less traffic congestion.
- Lower fuel consumption and air pollution.
- Fewer and less severe traffic crashes.
- More efficient movement of people and goods that promotes economic development by expanding the market area and labor market for businesses.
- Preserving highway traffic carrying capacity to avoid having to widen them or build new ones.

Access management regulations and standards became effective July 1, 2008 for the network of state principal arterial highways and October 14, 2009 for minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. All roads have been classified according to their primary function: arterials for moving traffic and collectors and local streets for providing access to property. Maintaining the functional integrity of the highway network over time preserves its overall travel capacity and safety. This in turn maximizes the expenditure of highway related taxes.

The regulations and standards were designed to balance the right of property owners to reasonable access to the highway with the right of users of the roads to mobility, safety, and efficient expenditure of public funds. Key elements include: spacing standards for entrances, intersections, median openings, and traffic signals; shared entrances; vehicular/pedestrian connections to adjacent properties; locating entrances a safe distance from interchange ramps; and entrance design.

A number of exceptions are identified in the regulations to accommodate those cases where a requirement could cause a hardship or prevent a property owner from using the highway.

The enabling legislation, regulations and standards, public input process used in their development, guidance documents, and general information on access management is available on VDOT's web site at [www.virginiadot.org/projects/accessmgt](http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/accessmgt).