

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATE OF GEORGIA**

INTERDEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: June 1, 2016

FROM:  Hiral Patel, P.E., Director of Engineering

TO: Divisions of Engineering, Operations, Construction, and Field Districts, Engineering Services, OPD, IPD, TIA, & ACEC/Georgia

SUBJECT: Update to FHWA Controlling Criteria

On May 5th, 2016 FHWA sent an Information Memorandum to all state DOT's titled "Revisions to the Controlling Criteria for Design and Documentation for Design Exceptions." In the memo they discuss the background and process used to modify the existing controlling criteria. Below is a summary of those changes:

*"The following 10 criteria are considered controlling for the design of projects on the NHS: Design Speed, Lane Width, Shoulder Width, Horizontal Curve Radius, Superelevation Rate, Stopping Sight Distance, Maximum Grade, Cross Slope, Vertical Clearance, and Design Loading Structural Capacity. Stopping sight distance (SSD) applies to horizontal alignments and vertical alignments except for sag vertical curves. Of the 10 controlling criteria, only design loading structural capacity and design speed apply to all NHS facility types. The remaining eight criteria are applicable only to "high-speed" NHS roadways, defined as Interstate highways, other freeways, and roadways with a design speed greater than or equal to 50 mph."*¹

Since the Georgia Tort Claims Act of 1992 waives the State's Sovereign Immunity in certain cases, it has been the policy of the Georgia Department of Transportation to require the approval of a Design Exception or Design Variance when deviating from minimum design standards published by GDOT, FHWA, or AASHTO, regardless of the design speed. Therefore, until the Department has had time to adequately evaluate the risks of this decision by FHWA, GDOT adopts the updated controlling criteria as "standard" for roadways with lower design speeds (<50 mph) as well as for higher design speeds (≥50 mph). For low speed roadways, a Design Variance will be required to document any decision regarding the updated FHWA Controlling Criteria that does not meet AASHTO minimum values.

Moving forward, the GDOT Design Policy Manual will be updated to reflect the required changes as described above and notifications will be released via the ROADS notification-process. As GDOT assesses the risks associated with the new criteria on low speed roadways the design variance requirement may change.

If you have any questions, please email designexception@dot.ga.gov. Or you may contact Walter Taylor, P.E., at (404) 631-1922 or Michelle Pate, P.E., at (404) 631-1771.

HP:BAS:WDT:GMP

¹ FHWA Memo: Revisions to the Controlling Criteria and Documentation for Design Exceptions.
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/design/standards/160505.cfm>