

TEXAS FRONTAGE ROAD POLICY



Design Division
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Questions and Answers

Why is the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) changing the policy regarding frontage roads?

This new policy will make freeway travel safer and ensure Texas freeways operate more efficiently and effectively. It will prolong the useful life of the current freeway by maintaining or increasing the ability to carry traffic. In addition to achieving more efficient traffic flow, the construction and maintenance costs of freeways are reduced and therefore more can be built.

What are the disadvantages of the current policy?

Frontage roads often inhibit TxDOT's ability to expand main lanes or add specialty lanes (High Occupancy Vehicle, High Occupancy Toll, bus lanes, etc.). Vehicles entering the frontage road or freeway conflict with faster moving vehicles, thereby contributing to congestion and crash frequency. By limiting entrance and exit ramps and/or providing alternate access to the freeway, future expansion costs and the associated traffic disruptions will be reduced significantly.

Will existing frontage roads be removed as a result of this policy?

No. Under the proposed policy, existing frontage roads will remain in place unless they negatively impact the efficient movement of freeway traffic. In those cases an engineering study will be performed to evaluate the traffic safety concerns.

Will TxDOT continue to construct frontage roads?

Yes. TxDOT's revised policy is to design and construct new freeways without frontage roads whenever feasible. Each project will be studied individually and evaluated on its own merits. In cases where an engineering study indicates it is feasible to build frontage roads, TxDOT will plan, design and construct the frontage roads.

What information indicates frontage roads have a negative impact to the operations of a freeway?

Engineering experience in planning, designing and constructing freeways with continuous frontage roads has shown negative impacts to the efficient operations of the state highway system. Frontage roads often result in commercial and private development immediately adjacent to the freeway. This consistently leads to numerous access problems, main lane speed reductions, safety concerns and overall operational problems to the freeway. The result is the freeway reaches capacity much sooner. Limiting the construction of frontage roads along freeways will increase mobility by extending the operational use of the roadway.

Can someone pay for the construction of a frontage road in front of their property?

Yes, however providing the right of way and paying for the construction of a new frontage road by itself is not an acceptable justification for the project. Each location and segment of new frontage road will be individually evaluated. An engineering study must also be performed to ensure that all options have been reviewed, allowing the most feasible solution to be selected. This allows TxDOT to construct a safer and more efficient highway system.

Does a property owner have access rights to a frontage road in front of their property?

Ownership of property adjacent to a road does not guarantee access rights from the road into and out of the property. Access is a property right, and access to a road depends on what property interests are conveyed in the deed. Texas law does not give a property owner access to a roadway if the roadway was newly-constructed and not built on the same location where a public road previously existed. Access would also depend on safety and design considerations. By law, the state controls access locations to ensure both the safety of the traveling public and the design integrity of the freeway.

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Will the revised policy place additional burdens on cities or counties to handle traffic?

TxDOT will continue to assist cities or counties with local traffic needs. The Texas Transportation Commission has already taken action to allow and encourage TxDOT to design, purchase right of way and participate in the construction of backage roads when local traffic flow may be disrupted by the construction of a freeway without frontage roads.

What is a backage road?

A backage road is a local street or road that is generally parallel to a highway but is not generally adjacent to the highway right of way. Direct access to businesses or properties is provided from the backage road instead of the highway.

Under what circumstances would backage roads be built? Who would construct and maintain them?

Backage roads would be built when necessary, to provide local traffic circulation, resolve landlocked conditions, and to provide appropriate access to development. TxDOT will coordinate with the local entity (city and/or county) during the planning stage of a project to determine the best possible solution. If a backage road is needed, TxDOT may include the work in the construction contract. After the backage road is built, the local entity would be responsible for the operation and maintenance.

How will this policy affect economic development in Texas?

As other states have proven, economic development occurs without frontage roads. When planned properly, development occurs without local traffic depending on freeways as a primary source of access. This planning improves safety on the freeway while allowing a wider corridor for economic development. Congestion slows the delivery of goods and services, leading to increased costs for consumers, and diminishes our economic competitiveness. Freeways without frontage roads will decrease congestion and support economic development well into the future.

How would delays and congestion caused by major traffic accidents or hazardous material spills be handled on freeways without frontage roads?

Traffic will be re-routed on alternate roadways or street systems that are appropriate and may be available. The best way to prevent major traffic accidents or hazardous material spills from occurring is to design a freeway with fewer opportunities for vehicles to enter or exit. Designing freeways that provide an uninterrupted flow of traffic can decrease the probability for these types of incidents. Building freeways without frontage roads and limiting entrance and exit ramps will allow the safest and most efficient movement of people and goods.

If a property owner currently has a driveway off a frontage road would access be eliminated?

No, existing access to the frontage road will remain except in rare situations.

If TxDOT builds a frontage road where access is presently not allowed to the main lanes, will access to the frontage road be given?

No. Any requests for access will be evaluated by the Texas Transportation Commission to determine whether an exception exists.

Will TxDOT honor its prior commitments/agreements?

Commitments/agreements will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The frontage road will be evaluated to see how it will impact the whole transportation system.