

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

LOCAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

The Metropolitan Council works cooperatively with Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to designate the functional classification of all streets in the metro area. MnDOT is responsible for such designations statewide as required by the Federal Highway Administration.

WHY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF HIGHWAYS

The functional classification of roadways defines the role each element of the roadway system plays in serving travel needs. All roads serve two main objectives to various degrees – mobility and land access.

Different uses of the functional classification of roads include:

- Eligibility for federal highway funds;
- Transportation agencies description of roadway system performance and targets;
- Access management;
- Prioritizing for investments in project selection; and
- Transit route planning and travel route designation.

Functional classification involves determining what function each roadway should perform before determining their widths, speed limits, intersection control or other design features. Functional classification ensures that non-transportation factors, such as land use and development, are considered when planning and designing streets and highways.

Within the seven-county metropolitan area the [functional classification system](#) consists of four classes of roads: principal arterials (including all freeways), minor arterials, collector streets (major and minor) and local streets.

Recently, planners and engineers have expanded roadway design options under the functional classification significantly, especially in areas where providing for non-motorized travel is a priority. Such classifications, while serving local needs, must either collapse or expand into the federal classification or be used as an overlay so that the federal classification can be applied for funding discussion.

PRINCIPAL ARTERIALS

The Metropolitan Highway System is composed of all the principal arterials in the region. Principal arterials consist primarily of Interstate highways and other freeways or expressways, mostly owned and operated by MnDOT, supplemented by a subgroup of minor arterials. Principal arterials play a unique role in providing a high degree of mobility and carry a high proportion of travel for the longest trips at the highest speeds.

MINOR ARTERIALS

The minor arterial system supplements the Metropolitan Highway System in several ways: minor arterials connect the cities and towns inside and outside the region. They interconnect the rural centers in the region to one another. In the urban area, the emphasis of minor arterials is on mobility, and only concentrations of commercial or industrial land uses should have direct access to them.

In the Twin Cities region, the minor arterials are separated into two parts. The A minors and “other” minor arterials. Working with the counties, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) identified the A minor arterials as the most important road type that supplement the principal arterials in the region. The region concluded there would never be sufficient funding to continue to build new or widen the existing principals to accommodate the growth in travel anticipated in the region. The TAB and the Metropolitan Council committed to fund these A minors with the federal funds that would be allocated by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.



The A minors were divided into four types that were to fulfill different functions in the region: Relievers, Augmentors, Expanders, and Connectors. Table 1 briefly describes the function these four types of A minor arterials are to provide.

Table 1: Criteria for A-Minor Arterials

Criterion	Relievers	Augmentors	Expanders	Connectors
Purpose	Provide supplementary capacity for congested, parallel principal arterial	Supplement the principal arterial system in more densely developed or redeveloping areas	Supplement the principal arterial system in less densely developed or redeveloping areas	Provide safe, direct connections between rural centers and to principal arterials in rural areas without adding continuous general purpose lane capacity
Location in <i>Thrive MSP 2040</i> Community Designation	Urban service area: Consists of urban center, urban, suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge community designations as defined in <i>Thrive MSP 2040</i>	Urban center and urban community designations	Urban, suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge community designations	Rural community designations. One end may be outside the seven county area or may be in the urban service area
Existing System	400 miles	200 miles	650 miles	680 miles

Source: 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, Metropolitan Council

COLLECTOR STREETS

The collector system provides connection between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to minor business concentrations. It also provides supplementary interconnections between major traffic generators and regional job concentrations within the metro area. Mobility and land access are equally important. Collectors serve a critical role in the roadway network by gathering traffic from local roads and funneling them to the arterial network.

Collectors are broken down into two categories: Major Collectors and Minor Collectors. How to determine whether a given collector is a major or minor collector is a challenge in functional classification of roadway system. [Appendix D](#) of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) describes the specific characteristics of major and minor collectors.

LOCAL STREETS

Local streets connect blocks and land parcels with the primary emphasis on land access. In most cases, local streets connect to other local streets and collectors. In some cases, they connect to minor arterials. Local streets serve short trips at lower speeds, as well as local travel for pedestrians and bicyclists.