

Horizontal Alignment (Tangents, Curves, & Superelevation)**Factors Affecting Design:**

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Type of terrain (level or rolling)
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history at curves
- Roadside conditions in curve vicinity – particularly on the outside of curves
- Available pavement friction

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply lower, curve design criteria consider the following:

- Design Justifications – Horizontal alignment, superelevation, and stopping sight distance are controlling criteria for roadways with a design speed of 50 mph or greater. Design values that are outside of the FDM design criteria require design justification.
- DSR documentation – Document any design justifications in the DSR.
- Traffic volumes - The risk is lower for lower volume highways and higher for higher volume highways.
- Number of unfamiliar drivers - The risk is higher on roads with a higher percentage of unfamiliar drivers (such as on long distance traveler and tourist route highways).
- Vehicle operating speeds - The risk may generally be acceptable if the effective or nominal speed on the proposed curve is within 5 to 10 mph of the project design speed.
- Amount of truck traffic - The risk increases as truck volumes increase due to trucks' propensity to overturn on curves (try to stay within 5 mph of project design speed when truck traffic is a factor).
- Length of curve - The longer the curve the higher the risk (short, flat curves are best).
- Vehicle entry speeds at curves - The risk varies as a function of the approach speed distribution.
- Cross section - The risk is reduced when wider lanes, shoulders and clear zone are provided along curves.
- Sight distance - The risk is reduced when sight distance is increased along curves.
- Presence of intersections and driveways - The risk increases when intersections and driveways are present on curves.
- Number of geometric elements - The overall risk of a sharp horizontal curve increases when the combination of other geometric elements in the vicinity of the curve are designed to lower design criteria values.
- Use full range of curvature to establish the best alignment - Rigid adherence to lower radius curvature is not recommended, instead use the full range of curvature to fit terrain, land use constraints and desired operating speeds.
- Mitigation measures - Use these when lower radius values are used to mitigate potential safety impacts.
- Reductions to vehicle speeds - Use transition curves to "step down" operating speeds prior to sharp curves.
- Provide adequate justification for lesser design criteria - Thoroughly document why FDM and AASHTO criteria are not being met and what analysis of crash history was performed to minimize safety concerns.

Possible Mitigation Measures If Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Widening the lanes or shoulders along curves
- Improving the roadside (clear zone/side slopes) on curves
- Relocating or closing intersections or driveways on curves
- Spot pavement resurfacing or "wedging" to increase friction
- Advanced warning signing prior to curves
- Delineation (signing or pavement marking) on curves
- Use of spiral curve transitions
- Increased super-elevation (up to a maximum) on curves
- Shoulder paving along curves

Vertical Alignment (Grades, Crest Vertical Curves & Sag Vertical Curves)

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Type of terrain (level or rolling)
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history on grades & curves
- Truck percentage data
- Roadside conditions in grade vicinity
- Drainage analysis

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply steeper, grade design criteria consider the following:

- Design Justifications – Grades, vertical clearance, and stopping sight distance are controlling criteria for roadways with a design speed of 50 MPH or greater. Design values that are less than or greater than the FDM design criteria require a design justification.
- DSR documentation - Document, justify, and solicit approval for design justifications in the DSR.
- Drainage needs - Flat grades may require steeper cross-slopes and other special drainage considerations in order to avoid "ponding" of water.
- Traffic volumes and percentage of trucks - The risk is reduced on roadways having lower traffic volumes, especially lower truck volumes.
- Length of grade - Longer, steeper grades affect vehicle deceleration and acceleration operations, especially trucks, whereas shorter steeper grades have very little effect.
- Type of terrain - Select the appropriate type of terrain for the project to determine the appropriate grade criteria to apply. See [FDM 11-10-5](#) and [FDM 11-15-1](#).
- Truck climbing lanes - Consider when the truck percentage is significant, and grades are long and steep
- Shoulders and clear zones - Consider using wider shoulders and clear zones at the bottom of steep grades to provide additional safety measures to compensate for higher vehicle operating speeds.
- Curves at the bottom of steep grades - Use higher curve radii and increase super-elevation to compensate for higher vehicle operating speeds.
- Provide adequate justification for lesser design criteria - Thoroughly document why FDM and AASHTO criteria are not being met and what analysis of crash history was performed to minimize safety concerns.

Before deciding to apply flatter, grade design criteria consider the following:

- Use of flat grades - consider drainage needs. Steeper cross-slopes and other special drainage considerations may be needed to avoid "ponding" of water.
- Provide adequate justification for lesser design criteria - See above

Possible Mitigation Measures If Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Wider shoulders or climbing lanes
- Design of truck escape ramps
- Increased shoulder and clear zones at the bottom of grades
- Increased curve super-elevation at the bottom of grades
- Use flatter horizontal curves at the bottom of grades

When using flatter grades, consider the following mitigation measures:

- Increased cross slope and other special drainage designs
- Careful design of pavement edges at superelevation transitions

Sight Distance (Stopping Sight Distance (SSD))

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Type of terrain (level or rolling)
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history at vertical curves
- Roadside conditions in vicinity of vertical curves (intersections, driveways, etc.)

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on SSD Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply lower SSD design criteria consider the following:

- Design Justifications –Stopping sight distance is a controlling criterion for roadways with a design speed of 50 MPH or greater. Design values that are less than the FDM design criteria require a design justification.
- DSR documentation - Document, justify, and solicit approval for design justifications in the DSR.
- Traffic volumes - The risk of a sight restriction is related to the traffic volume exposed to it.
- Features within sight restrictions - The risk is greater where other features such as intersections, narrow bridges, high-volume driveways or sharp curvature occur within the sight restriction.
- No high-risk features in sight restriction - Nominal deficiencies as great as 5 to 10 mph may not create undue risk of increased crashes in sight restricted areas without high-risk features.
- Eye heights - Greater eye-heights associated with trucks, recreational vehicles and other similar vehicles provide a greater margin of safety for vertical sight restrictions.
- Horizontal sight restrictions - Horizontal sight restrictions such as large buildings, signs, tree lines, etc. affect all vehicle types equally.
- Shorter sag vertical curves - When faced with a choice, use shorter sag vertical curves in favor of providing the longest crest vertical curve possible.
- Modernization of existing highways - Study known crash history of the highway and the locations to determine the extent of actual safety risk.
- Provide adequate justification for lesser design criteria - Thoroughly document why FDM and AASHTO criteria are not being met and what analysis of crash history was performed to minimize safety concerns.

Possible Mitigation Measures If Lower, Design Criteria Are Used

- Relocate or remove features within sight-restriction
- Spot widening to increase room for collision avoidance
- Appropriate signing, lighting and delineation treatments

Sight Distance (Intersection Sight Distance (ISD))

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Intersection approach operating speeds
- Intersection crash history
- Roadside conditions at intersection
- Intersection design vehicle
- Intersection traffic control (signal, all-stop, etc.)

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply lower ISD design criteria consider the following:

- Design speed - Higher approach design speeds require more sight distance than approaches with lower design speeds.
- DSR documentation – ISD is not a controlling criterion and does not require a Design Justification if it is not provided where no crash problems exist. However, if ISD is needed, but cannot be provided where crash problems do exist, this must be documented, justified, and approved in a design justification in the DSR.
- Vehicle type - ISD computations should be based on the appropriate design vehicle type.
- Intersection control - Certain types of intersection control (i.e. signal, all stop) require less stringent sight lines.
- Sight restrictions - Strive to eliminate sight restrictions such as trees, vegetation, signs and movable obstacles.
- Vertical geometry sight restrictions – Removing sight restrictions may include alignment reconstruction, but also may include relocation of the intersection away from the sight restriction, closure of intersection, or turn restrictions that eliminate higher risk movements.
- Urban roadway sight restrictions - Viable solutions may include creative use of turn restrictions or focusing traffic on safer (perhaps signal-controlled) intersections.
- Advance signing – advance signing can be used on the unstopped approach to warn of the intersection.
- Traffic signal control - Where volumes are high, sight restrictions significant, and a pattern of crashes related to the sight restriction is evident, traffic signal control may be a solution.
- Provide documentation in a Design Justification in the DSR when ISD should be provided, but cannot be provided

Possible Mitigation Measures if lower, Design Criteria Are Used.

- Remove objects to eliminate sight restrictions
- Relocate or close the intersection
- Impose turn restrictions to eliminate higher risk movements
- Place advance signing on the unstopped approach(es) to the intersection
- Install traffic signal control at high volume intersections

Sight Distance (Passing Sight Distance (PSD))

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history due to lack of PSD
- Existing % passing/no passing

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply PSD design criteria consider the following:

- DSR documentation – PSD is not a controlling criterion and does not require a Design Justification if it is not provided in situations where no crash problems exist. However, if PSD is needed but cannot be provided, this should be documented, justified, and approved in a design justification in the DSR.
- PSD is not a requirement in the FDM or 2018 GDHS
- Effects of Insufficient PSD– Insufficient PSD can degrade operations and increase risk taking by drivers. The effects of insufficient PSD may not be evident except where traffic volumes approach the capacity of a two-lane highway, or where the volume of heavy vehicles is usually great.
- DSR documentation - If PSD is needed, but cannot be provided, document why in the DSR.

If PSD cannot be provided, consider the following:

- Construction of passing lanes
- Construction of truck auxiliary lanes on long upgrades
- Construction of intermittent turn-outs for slower vehicles

Sight Distance (Decision Sight Distance (DSD))

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to use DSD design criteria consider the following:

- DSR documentation – DSD is not a controlling criterion and does not require a Design Justification if it is not provided where crash problems do not exist. However, if DSD is needed, but cannot be provided, it should be documented, justified, and approved in a design justification in the DSR.
- DSD is not a requirement of the FDM or 2018 GDHS
- Location and circumstances - Provide DSD where complex or instantaneous decision-making and unusual maneuvers are required, such as complex intersections, exit ramps, lane drops, etc.
- Three-dimensional design - Strive to provide three dimensional alignments that produce DSD as part of location planning and studies for new alignment and in considering proposals to add new intersections and interchanges to existing highways.

Where DSD should be available and is needed but cannot be provided consider the following:

- Traffic control devices
- Advance warning signs

Cross Section (Lane)

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Type of terrain (level or rolling)
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history due to lane width
- Roadside conditions

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply narrower, lane widths consider the following:

- Design Justifications – Lane width, pavement cross slope, and superelevation are controlling criteria for roadways with a design speed of 50 MPH or greater. Any lane widths that are outside of FDM width criteria require design justifications.
- DSR documentation - Document, justify, and solicit approval for lower design criteria in the DSR.
- Design speed - Wider lane widths are associated with higher speed roadways such as freeways, suburban arterials and two-lane arterial and collector highways.
- Traffic volumes - Wider lanes are desirable to accommodate variations in the lateral placement of vehicles within lanes.
- Vehicle type - Wider lanes better accommodate wider vehicles.
- Drainage – Flat cross slopes, particularly in conjunction with flat grades, may lead to ponding of water.
- Driveway Operation – Steep pavement cross slopes can contribute to vehicles “bottoming out” when entering and leaving driveways.
- Capacity - Wider lanes marginally increase the capacity of the roadway
- Horizontal curves - Adequate lane width is very important for vehicle “off-tracking” on horizontal curves.
- Vehicle separation - Narrow lanes reduce vehicle separation and separation from bicyclists.
- Urban cross section - Total cross sections that consider left turning vehicles, medians, and pedestrian and bicyclist needs should be considered.
- Narrow lane widths on urban streets - Lessen pedestrian crossing distances, enable provision for on-street parking and transit stops, enable development of left turn lanes for safety and can sometimes encourage lower operating speeds.

Possible Mitigation Measures If Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Wider shoulders
- Improved roadside (slopes & clear zones)
- Lane widening through sharp horizontal curves
- Special centerline and edge line delineation (pavement marking)
- Use of shoulder rumble strips
- Improved stopping sight distance
- Flush or raised medians on 4 or 6 lane urban roadways

Cross Section (Shoulder)

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Type of terrain (level or rolling)
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history due to shoulder width
- Roadside conditions

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply narrower, shoulder widths consider the following:

- Design Justifications - Shoulder width is a controlling criterion for roadways with a design speed of 50 MPH or greater. Shoulder widths outside of FDM shoulder width criteria require a Design Justification.
- DSR documentation - Document, justify, and solicit approval for lower design criteria in the DSR.
- Design Speed - Wider shoulder widths are associated with higher speed roadways such as freeways, suburban arterials and two-lane arterial and collector highways.
- Traffic Volumes and Vehicle Type - Wider shoulders are desirable to enable collision avoidance maneuvers and store disabled vehicles.
- Shoulder Side Slope - Side slopes that are steeper than 4:1 reduce the effective width of finished shoulder.
- Capacity - Wider shoulders marginally increase the capacity of the roadway
- Horizontal Curves - Adequate shoulder width is important for vehicle off-tracking on horizontal curves.
- Drainage - Wider, paved shoulders increase drainage runoff.
- Bicycles and Pedestrians - Give due consideration to wider, paved shoulders for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Possible Mitigation Measures if Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Provide a wider clear slope or roadside
- Use traversable ditch designs
- Provide adequate shy distance at safety barriers

Cross Section (Medians)

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Posted speed
- Rural versus urban categories
- Crash history due to median or lack of
- Roadside conditions
- Alignment consistency
- Truck type and %
- Left turn movements
- Intersection traffic controls

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply lower median widths or no median at all, consider the following:

- DSR documentation - For all roadways, provide documentation and solicit approval in the DSR when median width criteria cannot be provided.
- Tradeoffs - Balance median widths with other elements of the total roadway cross section. Wider medians require more right-of-way and may result in greater environmental effects or increased construction costs.
- Intersection operation - Care should be taken in selecting a median width that provides for safe intersection operations. Special consideration should be given to whether room for truck storage in the median is needed.
- Safety benefits - Research strongly supports the safety benefits of four-lane divided urban streets versus undivided urban streets with no median.

Possible Mitigation Measures if Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Use of median safety barriers
- Where medians do not exist, or cannot be provided:
 - Consider left-turn restrictions
 - Consider access controls
- Where narrow medians exist in urban areas
 - Consider re-allocation of cross section width
 - Consider use of turn-arounds or jug-handles

Cross Section (Roadside)

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history due to clear zone
- Roadside conditions
- Roadside slopes
- Horizontal alignment

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply lower clear zones consider the following:

- DSR documentation – Clear zone and Lateral Clearance are not controlling criteria and do not require a Design Justification if they are not provided. However, if clear zone or lateral clearance is needed, but cannot be provided, they should be documented, justified, and approved in the DSR.
- Design Speed - High design speeds require larger clear zones, however avoid setting artificial design speeds.
- Traffic Volumes - The higher the traffic volume the greater the probability of a vehicle leaving the roadway and thus the greater the clear zone needed.
- Roadside Slope and Ditch Designs - The design of recoverable and traversable slopes and ditches reduces the size of the clear zone needed.
- Consistency - Apply a consistent roadside treatment approach for any project.
- Flexibility - Avoid the establishment of a uniform clear zone. Width does not necessarily need to be uniform. Adjust clear zone to match roadway needs.
- Removal or Relocation - Encourage the removal or relocation of objects in the clear zone to improve safety and aesthetics.
- Extreme hazard areas - Provide extra protection when the obstacle is a cliff, a deep body of water, a flammable liquids tank, or some other similar feature that is equally dangerous regardless of the travel speed.
- Grading - Modify objects by flattening embankment slopes, re-grading the surrounding ground to safely redirect an errant vehicle over or around a feature or back onto the road, or redesigning the feature to be traversable or re-directive.
- Barriers - Barriers should be crashworthy for speeds at which they will likely be struck, regardless of the project's overall design speed, since operating speeds may vary along a highway.
- Landscaping - Encourage safe landscaping, paying special attention to trees placed within the clear zone, sight triangles at intersections, and bushes or other treatments in medians.

Possible Mitigation Measures if Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Removal or relocation of severe hazards and as many other hazards as possible
- Modification of objects such as:
 - Flattening slopes
 - Re-grading to safely redirect errant vehicles
 - Redesigning features to be traversable or re-directive

If clear zone cannot be provided, then the following treatments should be considered for hazardous objects

- Removing objects
- Relocating objects
- Making objects break-away
- Shielding objects with safety barriers

Intersections**Factors Affecting Design**

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Crash history due to median or lack of
- Roadside conditions
- Design vehicle(s)
- Alignment consistency
- Truck type and %
- Turning movements
- Traffic control

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding on Intersection design criteria consider the following:

- DSR documentation - Document, justify, and solicit approval for Design Justifications in the DSR.
- Sight Distance - Provide sufficient sight distance in advance of the intersection and on all approaches to the intersection.
- Traffic Control - Use appropriate traffic control.
- Skew angle – Skew angles that are greater than 15 degrees off of 90 degrees may inhibit the ability of drivers on a side road to see traffic approaching on the mainline. This is particularly true for older drivers.
- Left Turns - Provide safe and efficient handling of left turning vehicles.
- Alignments - Avoid unusual or confounding alignments near intersections. Intersections located within a mainline horizontal curve appear to be more crash prone than intersections located on a tangent.
- Capacity - Provide sufficient capacity at intersections to reduce adverse operational effects on the adjacent street system.
- Design Vehicles - Select the appropriate design vehicle.
- Traffic Control Devices – The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices specifies practice regarding the design and placement of traffic control devices, including traffic signals, stop and other regulatory signs and warning signs.

Possible Mitigation Measures if Lower Design Criteria Are Used

- Placement of roadside objects farther from pavement edge
- Use of mountable or painted end treatments on raised barriers
- Use of different traffic control schemes where turn lanes cannot be provided:
 - Turn prohibitions
 - Special signal phasing
 - Rumble strips
 - Other measures

Access Control

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway type & functional class.
- Existing and projected traffic volumes
- Selected design speed
- Operating speeds

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Access management is the key to a highway's two primary functions: 1) mobility and 2) access to adjacent lands.

Before deciding on access control criteria consider the following:

- WisDOT policy and guidance - Follow WisDOT policy and guidance for access control - see [FDM Chapter 7](#).
- Existing and Proposed Controls – Consult with the Region Access Administrator and review records, plans, plats, and the State Access Management System Plan for existing and proposed access controls such as: §83.027 - County Administrative Access Control, §84.09 – Purchased Access Control, §84.25 - Administrative Access Control, §84.295 – Freeway or Expressway Designation, TRANS 233 – Land Division Review, driveway permits.
- Local requirements - Work with communities when deciding on the appropriate access control measures to provide. Work with communities to develop a highway system in which access needs are provided within the context of each road's function.
- Limit the number of conflict points - This includes using non-traversable medians to manage left-turn and crossover movements. Judicious use of median treatments, driveway permits, and driveway geometry can improve the operation of the road without undue burden on landowners accessing their property.
- Separate conflict points - This includes preserving the functional area of intersections and interchanges.
- Separate turning movements from through movements.
- Locate traffic control signals to facilitate traffic movement.
- Maintain a hierarchy of roadways by current and planned function - An important part of this is to provide an adequate supporting street and circulation system.
- Limit access to state highways and other major roads when there is an opportunity for alternative access to lower-functioning roads.
- DSR documentation - If access control should be provided and is needed (based on crash history etc.), but cannot be provided, document why in the DSR
- Access control is among the most useful tools available to maintain safe and efficient operations

Pedestrian/Bicycle Accommodations

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway type & functional class.
- Existing and projected traffic volumes
- Bicycle and pedestrian counts
- Selected design speed
- Operating speeds
- Bicycle/pedestrian related crash history
- Drainage grate types

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding on pedestrian and bicycle design criteria consider the following:

- DSR documentation - Give Due Consideration to Pedestrian or Bicycle Accommodations except where prohibited (i.e. freeways), or where it isn't feasible. Document in the DSR whenever they are not provided.
- Location – Ideally, construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities outside the clear zone of high speed, high-volume highways.
- Curbing - Curbing has little, if any, re-directive capacity at medium and high speeds and consequently affords little, if any, protection for pedestrians.
- Designated routes
- Pedestrian/Bicycle volumes
- Shared versus exclusive facilities
- Existence of parking
- Regular versus integral curb and gutter
- Accommodations on bridges

Bridges

Factors Affecting Design

- Improvement type (Modernization, Rehabilitation, Perpetuation)
- Roadway functional classification
- Existing/projected traffic volumes
- Selection of design speed
- Operating speeds
- Bridge crash history
- Roadside conditions
- Bicycle/pedestrian accommodations

Things to Consider When Making Decisions on Design Criteria

Before deciding to apply Lower SSD design criteria consider the following:

- Design Justifications - Lane width and vertical clearance are controlling criteria for roadways with a design speed of 50 MPH or greater, and Structural Capacity is controlling criteria on all roadway regardless of the design speed. Note that Bridge Width is now covered by Lane Width in the ten controlling criteria. Design values that are outside of FDM Design Criteria require a design justification.
- DSR documentation - Document, justify, and solicit approval for design justifications in the DSR.
- Historic or very low volume bridges - Replacement or retention of bridges having historic or aesthetic value or design of bridges on very low volume roads may justify widths less than the indicated minimum AASHTO values (although this may still require a design justification).
- Pedestrian and bicycle needs.