



CITY OF HARRISONBURG PUBLIC WORKS

320 EAST MOSBY ROAD, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

OFFICE (540) 434-5928 • FAX (540) 434-2695

To: Ande Banks, Interim City Manager
From: Thomas Hartman, PE, PMP, LEED AP, Director of Public Works
Date: September 13, 2022
Re: Amendment to Design and Construction Standards Manual Sections 3.1.8 Access Management & 3.10.2 Entrances, Curb Cuts, and Intersections

Summary:

Consider adopting changes to the access management standard to ensure the safety of commercial and multifamily housing direct access to public streets, as well as the safety of the traveling public.

Background:

The sections of the City's Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) identified above set minimum standards for safety of direct access (also known as entrances or curb cuts) to public streets for commercial and multifamily housing. The standard is intended to ensure safety by minimizing and separating conflict points between vehicles, while balancing the priority and right of reasonable access to properties. The DCSM applies to new development and redevelopment, only, and is not applied retroactively to existing development.

Many of the City's standards in Chapter 3 of the DCSM (Public Street Facilities Design and Planning Standards) follow the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Road Design Manual standards, as it represents best practices for road design. The City adopted its current standard for access management on principal arterial roadways following VDOT's implementation of its standard, entitled "Access Management Design Standards for Entrances and Intersections: Principal Arterials," in 2008. The City incorporated VDOT's standard into the DCSM by reference, thereby regulating access on principal arterials in the City. Principal arterials in the city include route 42 and route 33, only. VDOT's implementation of the standards was a two-phase process in which the principal arterial standards were implemented in 2008, and standards for all other state maintained streets were implemented in 2009. The City did not follow suit in adopting access management standards for all other streets.

Through a variety of studies of City streets, staff have identified commercial entrances as one of the major causes of crashes on City streets. Specifically, the number of conflict points on streets that have experienced significant growth in traffic volumes over time, have an unacceptable number of conflict points within short distances, which have led to ever increasing crashes. Staff have made high-crash corridors a priority for pursuing state and federal funds for mitigating this problem. Tens of millions of dollars have been requested for capital projects to improve safety of arterial roadways. Many crashes occurring on City streets are preventable, and updating the

access management standard for new development is a measure that would prevent many future crashes.

VDOT's current access management standard is Appendix F of the Road Design Manual, entitled "Access Management Design Standards for Entrances and Intersections." Staff suggests adopting this standard for all arterial roadways, in order to regulate minor arterials, in addition to principal arterial roadways, to prevent future crash hot spots from developing on these high volume corridors. The minor arterial streets whose access regulations would be changed are Route 11, Port Republic Road, Martin Luther King Junior Way, Country Club Road, Vine Street, Reservoir Street, Stone Spring Road, and portions of Mount Clinton Pike, and Erickson Avenue, Gay Street, North Mason Street, and Maryland Avenue.

Staff is not recommending adoption of VDOT's access management standard for all city streets because the standards for lower class roadways are not achievable for a substantial amount of development that occurs in the city, and somewhat conflict with land use goals. This is because of the density and smaller lot sizes that exist in the city relative to much of the development and lots sizes available for development in jurisdictions with VDOT maintained roads, which are primarily counties outside of urban areas. Staff is working to develop access management standards that are more achievable in an urban environment. However, this is a much more involved process requiring a long time period to develop. Since regulation of minor arterials requires only a small change to the existing standard, and because the majority of crashes occur on minor arterials, staff recommends adopting the new standard as a first phase of improved access management regulation. New standards for the remaining city street classifications are forthcoming in the next year.

Finally, for developing/redeveloping properties that are unable to meet the new standard, regulations cannot legally prevent "reasonable access" to the public street network. The proposed changes to the regulation include a provision to allow an entrance onto any street, should reasonable access not be available through any other means.

Key Issues:

Safety

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

Leave existing standard in place.

Community Engagement:

A presentation by Public Works staff regarding access management was given to the Transportation Safety and Advisory Commission on at its May 2021 meeting. Additionally, staff have been discussing more stringent access management standards with developers and their engineers, who are considered the primary affected stakeholders, during the staff review period of rezoning requests for several years. The development community is very familiar with the recommended standards, as they are used in the jurisdictions surrounding the City of Harrisonburg and all other localities in the state with VDOT-maintained roads.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends City Council adopt the recommended changes to the standard.

Attachments:

1. Map of Arterial Roadways in the City
2. Revised sections of the DCSM

Review: