



FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

Roadway Functional Classification System

Functional classification is the process by which the local, state and nation's street and highway network is ranked according to the role it plays in the overall system. It determines how travel is "directed" within the roadway system by defining the part that each road or street plays in serving the flow of traffic through a highway network. It is a hierarchal system of classification that helps to ensure a comprehensive roadway system that provides logical connectivity and continuity across the entire network.

Functional classification is used in transportation planning, roadway design, sometimes zoning and for the allocation of federal highway funds. Functional classification was introduced by the Federal Highway Administration in the 1960s, providing guidelines for local governments and planning organizations to use in developing and maintaining the roadway classification system in their jurisdiction.

It is the responsibility of the Indianapolis MPO to develop and maintain the functional classification system of roadways within the planning area. This involves coordination with city, town and county agencies, the state, and the Federal Highway Administration.

A more detailed description of the Highway Functional Classification System and guidelines can be found on the Federal Highway Administration's website at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/processes/statewide/related/hwy-functional-classification-2023.pdf>

Amending the Functional Classification System

There are three instances when the functional classification system is reviewed and modified: after the decennial census, the annual call, and as requested by LPAs. In all instances, the Indianapolis MPO must approve and sign off on any changes to the functional classification system within the Indianapolis MPA.

Decennial Census Review

As the metropolitan planning and urbanized areas continue to grow, changes in land use, population, and roadway usage may alter the demand for, and the function of, roadways. As a result, the functional classification system must go through a comprehensive evaluation after each decennial census to reflect the new urbanized area.

Annual FCS Call

The Indianapolis MPO will determine an appropriate timeline for a FCS call for amendments. All LPAs will submit proposed FCS amendments by the deadline outlined by MPO staff (See Appendix A for the 2025 schedule). Please ensure that the current state of the road meets the classification guidelines for the functional class that you are requesting (or if under construction will meet the guidelines within 3 years).

All requests should include the following:

- a completed INDOT Roadway Functional Classification System Application with detailed justification. Please submit a separate application for each individual change (if you have several interconnected changes it is acceptable to use one application). If the road passes through another LPA's jurisdiction you will need to include a signed letter of concurrence from that LPA. You can find the application on the MPO website here [INDOT Roadway Functional Classification System Application](#)
- a color map of the existing functional classification for the subject area
- a color map of the proposed changes which clearly shows the start and end of the proposed change (see Appendix C for map example)
- traffic counts
- other supporting documentation such as thoroughfare plans, land use plans, etc. may be included as necessary to further justify the requested change

** If you would like IMPO to also consider one or more segments for an amendment to the Regional Freight Network Map alongside the FCS update request, please provide truck-specific daily counts for the segments in question. Corridors that are a Major Collector or higher can be considered for Tier 3 on the Freight Network if they are carrying over 1,000 trucks/day and Tier 4 if they are carrying over 500 trucks/day.

The MPO staff will review the request and may request additional information, may recommend changes or denial, or may recommend approval and sign the application. **NOTE: Requests that propose five or more changes to the functional classification system may require a meeting with INDOT and/or MPO staff.** Once the LPA and MPO agree on a modified functional classification for the roadway, the LPA must update the documents submitted to the MPO and send those documents, plus:

- A cover letter addressed to Erik Larson – Functional Class Coordinator, INDOT-Roadway Inventory, 100 North Senate Avenue, Room N955, Indianapolis, IN 46204. This letter should list and briefly describe (facility name, to/from) the classification requests and include signatures from appropriate LPA authorities indicating they have read, understand, agree and endorse the request. **A signature line for the MPO (Anna**

Gremling) should also be included. A sample cover letter can be found on the MPO's website here [Sample INDOT Cover Letter](#).

The request may be submitted as a hard copy or as a .pdf e-mail attachment. Once the MPO has signed the application, the LPA will submit it to INDOT with a copy to the Indianapolis MPO.

LPA Requests

LPA's can request changes to the FCS at any point in the year, although the Indianapolis MPO encourages LPAs to submit any changes to the Annual Call for FCS Modifications.

The paperwork and process for an LPA request is similar to the Annual Call.

MPO Staff Review

The MPO staff will review each request based on the following nine criteria:

1. Regional policy – the functional classification of a roadway must be consistent with the goals and objectives of the region's long range transportation plan.
2. Connectivity –roadway segments that do not connect in the system (stubs) will only be accepted at the "local street" level. No stubs functionally classified as major collector or above will be accepted. Roadways that change classification along their routing will change at the nearest cross street and preferably in single level increments.
3. Function – the definitions and standards of functional classification as described in the Federal Highway Administration's Highway Functional Classification System and Guidelines (2023) will be followed as closely as possible to define the function of a roadway.
4. Land use – the level of accessibility to surrounding land uses is a critical element in determining the functional classification of a facility. An area where a high degree of access to abutting land use is required (residential, rural agriculture, etc...) will be primarily served by the collector system. Where access is restricted (commercial, industrial, etc.) the principal arterial system will serve the area. The minor arterial system serves in areas where there is a need for moderate levels of access.
5. Trip length – as functional classification moves up the hierarchy, from collector to principal arterial, they should accommodate more trips of greater length.
6. Spacing – the distance between identical classification types should increase as the level of classification increases (i.e. principal arterials should be spaced farther apart than collectors).
7. VMT (vehicle miles of travel) and mileage – a properly developed system should be balanced based on the percentage of mileage and VMT each classification carries in comparison to the entire system. The standards established by FHWA will be observed as closely as possible.

8. Traffic volume – traffic counts are considered, but are not the only determining factor in establishing classification.
9. Federal Aid – while functionally classifying a roadway makes it eligible for Federal Aid funds, the MPO will NOT consider requests whose sole intent is to make the roadway eligible for Federal Aid funds.

Consideration will be given to the effect a classification change may have on the larger system. As a result, there may be the need to change (downgrade or upgrade) a roadway or roadways in the area whether they are directly connected to the request or not. It should also be noted, that the process of functionally classifying non-existent (proposed) roadways will be handled the same as for existing roadways. However, additional consideration will be given to the proposed roadway's relationship to the long range transportation plan.

MPO Review Time

MPO staff will make every attempt to review and respond to all functional classification requests within eight weeks of receipt. However, the actual approval of the request may take longer based on the MPO staff work load and the size and complexity of the request. Those requests that necessitate a meeting with MPO and INDOT staff may require more than eight weeks.

Questions

All forms and information pertaining to the MPO's roadway functional classification process can be found on the MPO's website. Questions regarding functional classification in general and the MPO process in particular may be addressed to Jennifer Dunn at Jennifer.dunn@indympo.gov or 317-327-5495.

2026 Schedule

1. FCS annual call begins - April 13
2. FCS annual update submission due from LPAs - June 5
3. MPO staff reviews submissions - June 8 – June 26
4. MPO staff provides recommendations to LPAs - June 26
5. LPAs put together INDOT Submission Packet – June 29 – July 24
6. LPAs return INDOT Submission Packet to MPO - July 24
7. MPO reviews/ ED signs off/ Returns to LPA - July 27 – Aug 14
8. LPAs forward INDOT Submission Packet to INDOT – Aug 17 - Sept 4
9. INDOT reviews and approves submissions – Sept 8 - Oct 2

Annual FCS Process

