WHAT IS ACCESS MANAGEMENT?

Access Management is the use of different road and driveway design techniques to reduce traffic conflict, improve roadway safety and reduce congestion. While some people believe Access Management is simply a concern over the spacing of driveways and street intersections, it involves a range of techniques that in addition to driveway spacing include:

- Provisions of turn lanes
- Spacing of traffic signals
- Layout of supporting local road systems
- Provision of inter-parcel circulation
- Appropriate use and design of medians
- Appropriate management of access at interchanges

While property owners have a right to reasonably suitable and convenient access, roadway users also have the right to expect safe and reasonably efficient roadway operation supported by the efficient use of public funds. The safe and efficient operation of facilities requires that transportation officials effectively manage access on all facilities; however, the management may be to different levels or degrees.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF ACCESS MANAGEMENT?

Research has consistently shown that as the number of driveways increase, potential conflicts and the number of crashes rise. Fewer driveways spaced further apart allow for more orderly merging of traffic and present fewer challenges to motorists.
An examination of crash data in Minnesota as illustrated in the graphs at the right indicated a strong linear relationship between the number of crashes and the number of driveways in both urban as well as rural areas.

The congestion impact in urban areas from increasing numbers of driveways is also fairly clear. Research has found that roadway speeds are reduced an average of 2.5 miles per hour for every 10 access points per mile, up to a maximum of a 10 miles per hour reduction at > 40 access points per mile.

**WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR MANAGING ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS?**

The rationale for managing access in rural areas is somewhat different than in urbanized areas. Roads in rural areas usually serve low-density land uses and have lower volumes, and thus the disrupting impact of access to traffic is less significant. However, because of travel speeds, safety and operational concerns exist, and maintenance issues exist as well that access management can address. Managing rural access for safety includes considering sight distance, the number of conflict areas drivers must respond to, and the severity of crashes when vehicles run-off-the-road. Managing rural access for improved operations/maintenance includes consideration of the detrimental effect of access points on winter driving due to drifting, the increased difficulty access points pose for effective snow removal, the added costs for resurfacing projects, and the impacts of access drives on drainage.

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ACT EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER?**

The earlier in the land development process that access management is considered the easier it will be to locate access points so that safety and capacity are not seriously compromised. This is most effective when lots and streets are initially laid out and land is first subdivided for development.
Preferably, discussions regarding access should be concurrent with other approvals to improve the coordination of land use and transportation systems.

WHAT ARE THE ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF AN ACCESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM?

Access management is good business; it presents tremendous opportunities for financial savings in the form of reduced accident costs, long term preservation of roadway capacity and efficiency which may reduce the need for future investment in additional travel lanes, reduced need to purchase additional right-of-way, and improved economic conditions for businesses along busy corridors by reducing real and perceived congestion.

IS THERE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT?

In 1999 MNDOT conducted a series of meetings across the state on the issue of access management documented in the report PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF STATE HIGHWAY ACCESS MANAGEMENT ISSUES. Among the statements and opinions expressed by the general public at the focus groups included:

“In addition to the concerns about private driveways, participants were aware of problems associated with county highway and city street intersections, particularly when these intersections were skewed, were not visible, or were too frequent.”

“Participants indicated that they would be willing to drive a little farther to reduce frustration, improve convenience, and improve safety. Frontage roads were often cited as a good solution for providing the right balance between access and mobility.”

WHAT ARE THE BASICS OF THE PROPOSED COUNTY ACCESS MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE?

The proposed Olmsted County Access Management Ordinance will provide a basis for issuing driveway permits consistent with the legal requirements established in a recent State District Court decision. As in the past, property owners will be required to obtain a driveway permit when they wish to connect a driveway to a county road or highway. The proposed ordinance will establish basic spacing requirements for driveways as shown in the table below, and will establish other design criteria that will be considered in reviewing permit requests. The ordinance requires an Access Plan be developed for proposed subdivisions at the time of development review so that appropriate access locations can be defined as early in the development process as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Classification</th>
<th>Urban Local Street Spacing (ft)</th>
<th>Rural Local Street Spacing (ft)</th>
<th>DRIVeway SPACING Posted Speed Limit</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>&lt; 35 Mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Arterial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Collector</td>
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<td>660</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
BEST PRACTICES IN ACCESS MANAGEMENT

The proposed ordinance encourages the following “Best Practices” when considering the location of new access connections for any property:

1. Limit the number of curb cuts to one per parcel.

2. Avoid construction of new access onto major highways – orient access to secondary roads where possible

3. Provide adequate sight distance at all entrances to improve safety and reduce potential conflicts

4. Develop turn lanes or bypass lanes on higher speed roadways or higher volume access points to allow through traffic to keep moving while providing a storage area for turning traffic.

5. Align driveways on opposite sides of roadways. Avoid offset or “dogleg” intersections and entrances.

6. Interconnect adjacent development to reduce the need for local traffic to use major roadways.

7. Provide adequate corner clearance of driveways from public street intersections on corner lots and keep driveway connections away from turn lanes if possible.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Questions should be directed to the Olmsted County Public Works Department at 285-8231. Permit application forms and a copy of the Access Management Ordinance are available on the Olmsted County Public Works Department web site at:

http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/index.php?loc=112