

## 520.01 General

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) controls access to the state’s highways (with a few exceptions) in order to preserve the safety and efficiency of these highways as well as the public investment. All Washington State highways are distinguished as being either *limited access* or *managed access* highways. Control of access is accomplished by either acquiring rights of access from abutting property owners (limited access control) or by regulating access connections to the highway (managed access control). Until limited access rights have been acquired from abutting property owners, the route is a managed access highway. Managed access permits are issued either by a local authority (city or town) or by WSDOT.

Numerous studies have shown that controlling and limiting access to highways is a cost-effective way to help maintain the safety, capacity, and functional integrity of a highway. Adding more lanes to an existing highway is expensive and frequently not possible. Controlling access to our state highways by promoting the use of frontage roads or other existing county or city roads, and advocating the internal shared circulation within adjacent developments, is a proactive and cost-effective way to accomplish this objective.

WSDOT has been purchasing access rights and implementing limited access control since 1951 ([RCW 47.52](#)). While this has been effective, it is an expensive way to control access to the state highway system. Adequate funding to accomplish the purchasing of access rights has not kept up with the state’s continual population growth and land use development over the years. As a result, state lawmakers introduced a bill in the early 1990s recognizing that controlling access to the state highway system by regulation was a cost-effective means to preserve the safety and capacity of our state highway system.

In 1991, the Legislature passed and the Governor approved [RCW 47.50](#), titled “Highway access management.” This new law directed WSDOT to develop new rules to be included in the Washington Administrative Code for those state highways not already limited access highways. The result was a new class of access control called *managed access*.

[Chapter 530](#) describes limited access highways in greater detail. [Chapter 540](#) describes managed access highways in greater detail.

The following references and definitions apply to Washington’s access control as presented in [Chapter 530](#) and [Chapter 540](#).

## 520.02 References

### 520.02(1) Federal/State Laws and Codes

[Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 18.43](#), Engineers and land surveyors

[RCW 35.78](#), Streets – Classification and design standards

[RCW 46.61](#), Rules of the road

[RCW 47.17](#), State highway routes

[RCW 47.24](#), City streets as part of state highways

[RCW 47.32](#), Obstructions on right-of-way

[RCW 47.50](#), Highway access management

[RCW 47.52](#), Limited access facilities

[Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 468-51](#), Highway access management access permits – Administrative process

[WAC 468-52](#), Highway access management – Access control classification system and standards

[WAC 468-54](#), Limited access hearings

[WAC 468-58](#), Limited access highways

### 520.02(2) Design Guidance

[Agreements Manual](#), M 22-99, WSDOT (Consultants: Please contact your WSDOT Project Manager for access to the Agreements Manual)

[Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways](#), USDOT, FHWA; as adopted and modified by Chapter 468-95 WAC “Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways” (MUTCD)

[Plans Preparation Manual](#), M 22-31, WSDOT

[Right of Way Manual](#), M 26-01, WSDOT

[Utilities Accommodation Policy](#), M 22-86, WSDOT

WSDOT Headquarters (HQ) Access and Hearings Section’s Internet page:

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/highway-access-requests-training>

### 520.02(3) Supporting Information

[Access Management Manual](#), Transportation Research Board (TRB), Washington DC, 2003

Highways Over National Forest Lands, MOU between WSDOT and USFS, M 22-50, 2002:

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m22-50.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/manuals/m22-50.htm)

## 520.03 Definitions

**Access:** A means of entering or leaving a public road, street, or highway with respect to abutting property or another public road, street, or highway.

**Access Control:** The limiting and regulating of public and private access to Washington State’s highways, as required by state law.

**Access Control Tracking System Limited Access and Managed Access Master Plan:** A database list, related to highway route numbers and mileposts, that identifies either the level of limited access or the class of managed access: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/highway-access-requests-training>

**Access Connection:** See *Approach and Access Connection*.

**Access Connection Permit:** A written authorization issued by the permitting authority for a specifically designed access connection to a managed access highway at a specific location; for a specific type and intensity of property use; and for a specific volume of traffic for the access connection based on the final stage of the development of the applicant’s property. The actual form used for this authorization is determined by the permitting authority.

**Access Design Analysis:** A design analysis (see [Chapter 300](#)) that authorizes deferring or staging acquisition of limited access control, falling short of a 300-foot requirement, or allowing an existing access point to stay within 130 feet of an intersection on a limited access highway. Approval by the Director & State Design Engineer, Development Division, is required (see [Chapter 530](#)).

**Access Hearing Plan:** A limited access plan prepared for presentation at an access hearing.

**Access Point:** Any point that allows private or public entrance to or exit from the traveled way of a state highway, including “locked gate” access and maintenance access points.

**Access Point Spacing:** On a managed access highway, the distance between two adjacent access points on one side of the highway, measured along the edge of the traveled way from one access point to the next (see also *corner clearance*).

**Access Report Plan:** A limited access plan prepared for presentation to local governmental officials at preliminary meetings before preparation of the access hearing plan.

**Access Rights:** Property rights that allow an abutting property owner to enter and leave the public roadway system.

**Allowed:** Authorized.

**Application for an Access Connection:** An application provided by the permitting authority to be completed by the applicant for access to a managed access highway.

**Approach and Access Connection:** These terms are listed under the specific access section to which they apply. The first section below is for limited access highways and uses the term *approach*. The second section below is for managed access highways and uses the term *access connection*. Approaches and access connections include any ability to leave or enter a highway right of way other than at an intersection with another road or street.

- (a) **Limited Access Highways: Approach:** An access point, other than a public road/street, that allows access to or from a limited access highway on the state highway system. There are five types of approaches to limited access highways that are allowed:

- **Type A** An off and on approach in a legal manner, not to exceed 30 feet in width, for the sole purpose of serving a single-family residence. It may be reserved by the abutting owner for specified use at a point satisfactory to the state at or between designated highway stations. This approach type is allowed on partial and modified control limited access highways.
  - **Type B** An off and on approach in a legal manner, not to exceed 50 feet in width, for use necessary to the normal operation of a farm, but not for retail marketing. It may be reserved by the abutting owner for specified use at a point satisfactory to the state at or between designated highway stations. This approach type is allowed on partial and modified control limited access highways. This approach type may be used for wind farms when use of the approach is limited to those vehicles necessary to construct and maintain the farm for use in harvesting wind energy.
  - **Type C** An off and on approach in a legal manner, for a special purpose and width to be agreed upon. It may be specified at a point satisfactory to the state at or between designated highway stations. This approach type is allowed on partial and modified control limited access highways and on full control limited access highways where no other reasonable means of access exists, as solely determined by the department.
  - **Type D** An off and on approach in a legal manner, not to exceed 50 feet in width, for use necessary to the normal operation of a commercial establishment. It may be specified at a point satisfactory to the state at or between designated highway stations. This approach type is allowed only on modified control limited access highways.
  - **Type E** This type is no longer allowed to be constructed because of the requirements that there be only one access point per parcel on a limited access state highway.
  - **Type F** An off and on approach in a legal manner, not to exceed 30 feet in width, for the sole purpose of serving a wireless communication site. It may be specified at a point satisfactory to the state at or between designated highway stations. This approach type is allowed only on partial control limited access highways. (See WAC 468-58-080(vi) for further restrictions.)
- (b) **Managed Access Highways: Access Connection:** An access point, other than a public road/ street, that permits access to or from a managed access highway on the state highway system. There are five types of access connection permits:
- **Conforming Access Connection:** A connection to a managed access highway that meets current WAC and WSDOT location, spacing, and design criteria.
  - **Grandfathered Access Connection:** Any connection to the state highway system that was in existence and in active use on July 1, 1990, and has not had a significant change in use.
  - **Joint-use Access Connection:** A single connection to a managed access highway that serves two or more properties.
  - **Nonconforming Access Connection:** A connection to a managed access highway that does not meet current WSDOT location, spacing, or design criteria, pending availability of a future conforming access connection.
  - **Variance Access Connection:** A connection to a managed access highway at a location not normally allowed by current WSDOT criteria.
- (c) **Managed Access Connection Category:** There are four access connection permit categories for managed access connections to state highways: Category I, Category II, Category III, and Category IV (see [Chapter 540](#)).

**Annual Daily Traffic (ADT):** The volume of traffic passing a point or segment of a highway, in both directions, during a period of time, divided by the number of days in the period, and factored to represent an estimate of traffic volume for an average day of the year.

**Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT):** The average volume of traffic passing a point or segment of a highway, in both directions, during a year.

**Average Weekday Vehicle Trip Ends (AWDVTE):** The estimated total of all trips entering plus all trips leaving the applicant's site based on the final stage of proposed development.

**Connection:** See *approach and access connection*.

**Contiguous Parcels:** Two or more pieces of real property, under the same ownership, with one or more boundaries that touch and have similarity of use.

**Corner Clearance:** On a managed access highway, the distance from an intersection of a public road or street to the nearest access connection along the same side of the highway. The minimum corner clearance distance (see [Chapter 540, Exhibit 540-2](#)) is measured from the closest edge of the intersecting road or street to the closest edge of the traveled way of the access connection, measured along one side of the traveled way (through lanes) (see also *access point spacing*).

**DHV:** Design hourly volume.

**E&EP:** WSDOT's Environmental and Engineering Programs Division.

**Easement:** A documented right, as a right of way, to use the property of another for designated purposes.

**Findings and Order (F&O):** A legal package containing information based on the hearing record from a limited access hearing (see [Chapter 210](#) and [Chapter 530](#)).

**Findings and Order (F&O) Plan:** A limited access plan, prepared after a limited access hearing, which is based on the hearing record.

**HQ:** WSDOT's Headquarters in Olympia.

**Intersection:** An at-grade access point connecting a state highway with a road or street duly established as a public road or public street by the local governmental entity.

**Limited Access:** Full, partial, or modified access control is planned and established for each corridor and then acquired as the right to limit access to each individual parcel.

- **Planned Limited Access Control:** Limited access control is planned for some time in the future; however, no access hearing has been held.
- **Established Limited Access Control:** An access hearing has been held and the Assistant Secretary, Environmental and Engineering & Regional Operations Programs Director, has adopted the findings and order, which *establishes* the limits and level of control.
- **Acquired Limited Access Control:** Access rights have been purchased.

**Limited Access Highway:** All highways listed as “Established L/A” on the Limited Access and Managed Access Master Plan (see below) and where the rights of direct access to or from abutting lands have been acquired from the abutting landowners.

- **Full Access Control:** This most restrictive level of limited access provides access, using interchanges, for selected public roads/streets only, and prohibits highway intersections at grade.
- **Partial Access Control:** The second most restrictive level of limited access. At grade intersections with selected public roads are allowed, and there may be some crossings and some driveway approaches at grade. Direct commercial access is not allowed.
- **Modified Access Control:** The least restrictive level of limited access. Characteristics are the same as for partial access control except that direct commercial access is allowed.

**Limited Access and Managed Access Master Plan:** A map of Washington State that shows established and planned limited access highways: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/highway-access-requests-training>

**Managed Access Highway:** Any highway not listed as “Established L/A” on the Limited Access and Managed Access Master Plan and any highway or portion of a highway designated on the plan as “Established L/A” until such time as the limited access rights are acquired. Under managed access legislation, the property owner’s access rights are regulated through an access connection permitting process.

**Median:** The portion of a divided highway separating vehicular traffic traveling in opposite directions.

**Median Opening:** An opening in a continuous median for the specific purpose of allowing vehicle movement.

**MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding. There is one MOU (*Highways Over National Forest Lands*) between the United States Forest Service (USFS) and WSDOT that requires the USFS to obtain a road approach permit for new access to a state highway that is crossing Forest Service land.

**Permit Holder:** The abutting property owner or other legally authorized person to whom an access connection permit is issued by the permitting authority.

**Permitted Access Connection:** A connection for which an access connection permit has been issued by a permitting authority.

**Permitting Authority:** The agency that has legal authority to issue managed access connection permits. For access connections in unincorporated areas, the permitting authority is WSDOT; for access connections within corporate limits, the permitting authority is a city or town.

**Right of Way (R/W):** A general term denoting land or interest therein, acquired for or designated for transportation purposes. More specifically, lands that have been dedicated for public transportation purposes or land in which WSDOT, a county, or a municipality owns the fee simple title, has an easement devoted to or required for use as a public road/street and appurtenant facilities, or has established ownership by prescriptive right.

**Right of way and Limited Access Plan (R/W and L/A plan):** A right of way plan that also shows limited access control details.

**Road Approach:** A road or driveway built to provide private access to or from the state highway system.

**Shoulder:** The portion of the highway contiguous with the traveled lanes for the accommodation of stopped vehicles for emergency use and, where allowed, for bicycles (see [Chapter 530](#)).

**State Highway System:** All roads, streets, and highways designated as state routes in compliance with [RCW 47.17](#).

## 520.04 Vocabulary

The entries shown in [Exhibit 520-1](#) are examples of suitable wording for the distinctly different types of access control in [Chapter 530](#) and [Chapter 540](#).

These entries demonstrate the difference in terminology between limited access and managed access in the applicable WACs. For instance, there is nothing about *permit*, *connection*, *category*, or *class* in the limited access vocabulary and, likewise, nothing about *approach* or *type* in the managed access vocabulary.

Also note that [Chapter 1340](#) uses *road approach*, *access*, and *driveway* in a generic way, unrelated to WAC legal terminology, and makes no distinction related to access control.

### Exhibit 520-1 Access Control Vocabulary

Access Control Vocabulary	
intersections at grade, geometrics roundabout geometrics road approach geometrics interchange geometrics freeway access point functional classification of highways	<a href="#">Chapter 1310</a> <a href="#">Chapter 1320</a> <a href="#">Chapter 1340</a> <a href="#">Chapter 1360</a> <a href="#">Chapter 550</a>  WSDOT Functional Classification web site: <a href="http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/mapsdata/travel/hpms/functionalclasses.htm">www.wsdot.wa.gov/mapsdata/travel/hpms/functionalclasses.htm</a>
Limited Access Highway (Chapter 530)	Managed Access Highway (Chapter 540)
Access point (freeway ramp or other access break) Approach (street, road, driveway) Road approach (street, road, driveway) Driveway approach (not street or road)	Access point (public or not) Public access point Access connection (not public)
(Level of) limited access (highway) Full/partial/modified control limited access highway	Managed access highway class Class (1-5) managed access highway
Type (A, B, C, D, F) approach Type A approach = Type A road approach	Category (I-IV) access connection
Allowed (policy)	Permitted (a document) or allowed (policy)
	Conforming access connection permit (among others)
Terms Not Used in Chapter 530	Terms Not Used in Chapter 540
class	classification (except functional)
category	type
connection	approach
permit or permitted	

