

Chapter 47.50 RCW
HIGHWAY ACCESS MANAGEMENT

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RCW 47.50.010
Findings -- Access.

- (1) The legislature finds that:
 - (a) Regulation of access to the state highway system is necessary in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare, to preserve the functional integrity of the state highway system, and to promote the safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the state;
 - (b) The development of an access management program, in accordance with this chapter, which coordinates land use planning decisions by local governments and investments in the state highway system, will serve to control the proliferation of connections and other access approaches to and from the state highway system. Without such a program, the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of this state are at risk, due to the fact that uncontrolled access to the state highway system is a significant contributing factor to the congestion and functional deterioration of the system; and
 - (c) The development of an access management program in accordance with this chapter will enhance the development of an effective transportation system and increase the traffic-carrying capacity of the state highway system and thereby reduce the incidences of traffic accidents, personal injury, and property damage or loss; mitigate environmental degradation; promote sound economic growth and the growth management goals of the state; reduce highway maintenance costs and the necessity for costly traffic operations measures; lengthen the effective life of transportation facilities in the state, thus preserving the public investment in such facilities; and shorten response time for emergency vehicles.
- (2) In furtherance of these findings, all state highways are hereby declared to be controlled access facilities as defined in RCW 47.50.020, except those highways that are defined as limited access facilities in chapter 47.52 RCW.

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- (3) It is the policy of the legislature that:
 - (a) The access rights of an owner of property abutting the state highway system are subordinate to the public's right and interest in a safe and efficient highway system; and
 - (b) Every owner of property which abuts a state highway has a right to reasonable access to that highway, unless such access has been acquired pursuant to chapter 47.52 RCW, but may not have the right of a particular means of access. The right of access to the state highway may be restricted if, pursuant to local regulation, reasonable access can be provided to another public road which abuts the property.
- (4) The legislature declares that it is the purpose of this chapter to provide a coordinated planning process for the permitting of access points on the state highway system to effectuate the findings and policies under this section.
- (5) Nothing in this chapter shall affect the right to full compensation under section 16, Article I of the state Constitution.

[1991 c 202 § 1.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- 1991 c 202: "Section captions and part headings as used in this act do not constitute any part of the law." [1991 c 202 § 22.]

Effective date -- 1991 c 202: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1991." [1991 c 202 § 24.]

Severability -- 1991 c 202: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1991 c 202 § 25.]

RCW 47.50.020

Definitions -- Access.

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

- (1) "Controlled access facility" means a transportation facility to which access is regulated by the governmental entity having jurisdiction over the facility. Owners or occupants of abutting lands and other persons have a right of access to or from such facility at such points only and in such manner as may be determined by the governmental entity.
- (2) "Connection" means approaches, driveways, turnouts, or other means of providing for the right of access to or from controlled access facilities on the state highway system.
- (3) "Permitting authority" means the department for connections in unincorporated areas or a city or town within incorporated areas which are authorized to regulate access to state highways pursuant to chapter 47.24 RCW.

[1991 c 202 § 2.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW [47.50.010](#).

RCW 47.50.030

Regulating connections.

- (1) Vehicular access and connections to or from the state highway system shall be regulated by the permitting authority in accordance with the provisions of this chapter in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.
- (2) The department shall by July 1, 1992, adopt administrative procedures pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW which establish state highway access standards and rules for its issuance and modification of access permits, closing of unpermitted connections, revocation of permits, and waiver provisions in accordance with this chapter. The department shall consult with the association of Washington cities and obtain concurrence of the city design standards committee as established by RCW 35.78.030 in the development and adoption of rules for access standards for city streets designated as state highways under chapter 47.24 RCW.
- (3) Cities and towns shall, no later than July 1, 1993, adopt standards for access permitting on streets designated as state highways which meet or exceed the department's standards, provided that such standards may not be inconsistent with standards adopted by the department.

[1991 c 202 § 3.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW [47.50.010](#).

RCW 47.50.040

Access permits.

- (1) No connection to a state highway shall be constructed or altered without obtaining an access permit in accordance with this chapter in advance of such action. A permitting authority has the authority to deny access to the state highway system at the location specified in the permit until the permittee constructs or alters the connection in accordance with the permit requirements.
- (2) The cost of construction or alteration of a connection shall be borne by the permittee, except for alterations which are not required by law or administrative rule, but are made at the request of and for the convenience of the permitting authority. The permittee, however, shall bear the cost of alteration of any connection which is required by the permitting authority due to increased or altered traffic flows generated by changes in the permittee's facilities or nature of business conducted at the location specified in the permit.
- (3) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, an unpermitted connection is subject to closure by the appropriate permitting authority which shall have the right to install barriers across or remove the connection. When the permitting authority determines that a connection is unpermitted and subject to closure, it shall provide reasonable notice of its impending action to the owner of property served by the connection. The permitting authority's procedures for providing notice and preventing the operation of unpermitted connections shall be adopted by rule.

[1991 c 202 § 4.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW [47.50.010](#).

RCW 47.50.050

Permit fee.

The department shall establish by rule a schedule of fees for permit applications made to the department. The fee shall be nonrefundable and shall be used only to offset the costs of administering the access permit review process and the costs associated with administering the provisions of this chapter.

[1991 c 202 § 5.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW 47.50.010.

RCW 47.50.060

Permit review process.

The review process for access permit applications made by the department shall be as follows: Any person seeking an access permit shall file an application with the department. The department by rule shall establish application form and content requirements. The fee required by RCW 47.50.050 must accompany the applications.

[1991 c 202 § 6.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW 47.50.010.

RCW 47.50.070

Permit conditions.

The permitting authority may issue a permit subject to any conditions necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter, including, but not limited to, requiring the use of a joint-use connection. The permitting authority may revoke a permit if the applicant fails to comply with the conditions upon which the issuance of the permit was predicated.

[1991 c 202 § 7.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW 47.50.010.

RCW 47.50.080

Permit removal.

- (1) Unpermitted connections to the state highway system in existence on July 1, 1990, shall not require the issuance of a permit and may continue to provide access to the state highway system, unless the permitting authority determines that such a connection does not meet minimum acceptable standards of highway safety. However, a permitting authority may require that a permit be obtained for such a connection if a significant change occurs in the use, design, or traffic flow of the connection or of the state highway to which it provides access. If a permit is not obtained, the connection may be closed pursuant to RCW 47.50.040.

- (2) Access permits granted prior to adoption of the permitting authorities' standards shall remain valid until modified or revoked. Access connections to state highways identified on plats and subdivisions approved prior to July 1, 1991, shall be deemed to be permitted pursuant to chapter 202, Laws of 1991. The permitting authority may, after written notification, under rules adopted in accordance with RCW 47.50.030, modify or revoke an access permit granted prior to adoption of the standards by requiring relocation, alteration, or closure of the connection if a significant change occurs in the use, design, or traffic flow of the connection.
- (3) The permitting authority may issue a nonconforming access permit after finding that to deny an access permit would leave the property without a reasonable means of access to the public roads of this state. Every nonconforming access permit shall specify limits on the maximum vehicular use of the connection and shall be conditioned on the availability of future alternative means of access for which access permits can be obtained.

[1991 c 202 § 8.]

NOTES:

Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202: See notes following RCW 47.50.010.

RCW 47.50.090

Access management standards.

- (1) The department shall develop, adopt, and maintain an access control classification system for all routes on the state highway system, the purpose of which shall be to provide for the implementation and continuing applications of the provision of this chapter.
- (2) The principal component of the access control classification system shall be access management standards, the purpose of which shall be to provide specific minimum standards to be adhered to in the planning for and approval of access to state highways.
- (3) The control classification system shall be developed consistent with the following:
 - (a) The department shall, no later than January 1, 1993, adopt rules setting forth procedures governing the implementation of the access control classification system required by this chapter. The rule shall provide for input from the entities described in (b) of this subsection as well as for public meetings to discuss the access control classification system. Nothing in this chapter shall affect the validity of the department's existing or subsequently adopted rules concerning access to the state highway system. Such rules shall remain in effect until repealed or replaced by the rules required by this chapter.
 - (b) The access control classification system shall be developed in cooperation with counties, cities and towns, the department of community, trade, and economic development, regional transportation planning organizations, and other local governmental entities, and for city streets designated as state highways pursuant to chapter 47.24 RCW, adopted with the concurrence of the city design standards committee.
 - (c) The rule required by this section shall provide that assignment of a road segment to a specific access category be made in consideration of the following criteria:

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- (i) Local land use plans and zoning, as set forth in comprehensive plans;
 - (ii) The current functional classification as well as potential future functional classification of each road on the state highway system;
 - (iii) Existing and projected traffic volumes;
 - (iv) Existing and projected state, local, and metropolitan planning organization transportation plans and needs;
 - (v) Drainage requirements;
 - (vi) The character of lands adjoining the highway;
 - (vii) The type and volume of traffic requiring access;
 - (viii) Other operational aspects of access;
 - (ix) The availability of reasonable access by way of county roads and city streets to a state highway; and
 - (x) The cumulative effect of existing and projected connections on the state highway system's ability to provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the state.
- (d) Access management standards shall include, but not be limited to, connection location standards, safety factors, design and construction standards, desired levels of service, traffic control devices, and effective maintenance of the roads. The standards shall also contain minimum requirements for the spacing of connections, intersecting streets, roads, and highways.
- (e) An access control category shall be assigned to each segment of the state highway system by July 1, 1993.

[1995 c 399 § 124; 1991 c 202 § 9.]

NOTES: **Captions not law -- Effective date -- Severability -- 1991 c 202:** See notes following RCW 47.50.010.