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DESIGN MEMORANDUM NO. 02-22

TO: Project Development Branch Managers
Location Engineers
Design Engineers
Active Consultants

FROM: William T. Layson, P.E. *WTL*
Director
Division of Highway Design

DATE: December 20, 2022

SUBJECT: Update to HD-203.6.3 Design Executive Summary Approval Processes

This Design Memorandum updates section HD-203.6.3 of the *Highway Design Manual* (Highway Design Administrative Procedures, Design Executive Summary Tier Level Approval Process). The updated chapter can be found at the following link:

[HD-200 Administrative Procedures.pdf](#)

Effective with this memorandum, administrative procedures and guidance in the updated version of HD-203.6.3 should be used for all new projects or for existing projects that have not advanced beyond the Preliminary Line and Grade stage.

Direct questions about this memorandum to the Division of Highway Design, (502) 564-3280.



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HD-203.6.3

DES Approval Processes

Tier 1 DES Approvals: Final approval requires the Location Engineer's signature if all the following criteria are met:

- Environmental document type is any categorical exclusion (CE) level
- Design year ADT < 15,000
- Design exception for design speed is required, but the difference between the design speed and recommended speed is ≤ 10 MPH
- Design exception(s) is required for any controlling criteria (**HD-704**), and the project is not on the NHS
- Total project cost < \$15M
- Alternative delivery methods are not anticipated

Tier 2 DES Approvals: Final approval requires signatures of the Location Engineer and Roadway Design Branch Manager for projects not meeting the Tier 1 criteria but that meet all the following parameters:

- Design year ADT < 50,000
- Total project cost < \$50M
- All other non-NHS design exceptions
- Design exception(s) are required on the NHS, non-interstate roadways, if other criteria are met
- Alternative delivery methods are not anticipated

Tier 3 DES Approvals: Final approval requires signatures of the Location Engineer, Roadway Design Branch Manager, and Director of the Division of Highway Design if the following criteria are met:

- EA-FONSI, EIS, ROD projects
- Projects not meeting Tier 1 and 2 parameters

*A DES may not be required on projects that (1) do not alter roadway geometrics (including bridge projects) or (2) are located on non-state routes. Contact the Location Engineer to determine if a DES is needed. Any project on the NHS that requires a design exception requires a DES.

**Regardless of whether the parameters are met, a reviewer at a lower tier level may determine the DES needs to be reviewed at a higher tier.

***If the total project cost estimate for the selected alternative is greater than 115% of the enacted Highway Plan estimate, the Location Engineer may elevate the approval to a higher tier. Alternatives with estimated costs that exceed the enacted Highway Plan budget may need to have their project scopes reevaluated.

A copy of the approved DES is returned to the PDM and the Location Engineer to be placed in the project file. On FHWA oversight projects the DES shall be provided to FHWA. FHWA's approval for design exceptions shall be solicited under separate cover. FHWA design exception(s) approvals shall be placed in the project records.

