

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROCEDURES

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1. **What is controlled correspondence?** Controlled correspondence refers to all correspondence received or processed through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Executive Secretariat (Exec Sec). An FHWA Correspondence Control Sheet (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2) is attached to all controlled correspondence. Controlled correspondence is separated into categories as follows:

- a. **Very Important Person (VIP) correspondence:** This category includes correspondence from White House officials, Cabinet officers and heads of independent agencies, Members of Congress, Supreme Court Justices, State Governors, State Representatives, mayors, and foreign equivalents of the above.
- b. **Other correspondence requiring priority action:** This category includes correspondence from prominent citizens including leaders of industry, finance, labor, politics, law, education and research, and other correspondence based on the subject matter or other reasons requiring priority action.
- c. **Routine correspondence:** This category includes correspondence received from any source not described above. The action office will take the appropriate action as indicated on the control sheet.

2. **How are the due dates assigned?** The due dates are assigned as follows: (Workdays shown are counted from date of receipt of correspondence in the OST or FHWA Exec Sec offices.)

- a. S-10 controlled mail - 5 workdays (Secretary's signature)
5 workdays (Direct Reply)

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|----|----------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| b. | White House (WH) referrals | - | 15 days WH hardship mail
30 days WH bulk mail |
| c. | VIP correspondence | | 5 workdays |
| d. | Other correspondence | - | 5 workdays |
| e. | Routine correspondence
(if a response is appropriate) | - | 10 workdays (Washington
Headquarters)
15 workdays (Division Offices) |
3. **What actions need to be taken if the due date cannot be met?** Action offices are expected to meet the due date as assigned. The following procedures are to be used if a due date cannot be met:
- a. **Request for extension of due date.** If circumstances are such that the due date must be extended for 1 to 5 days, contact the Exec Sec Correspondence Analyst listed at the bottom of the control sheet for further instructions. Requests for extensions from S-10 must be made by email, discuss with the Exec Sec Correspondence Analyst before any action is taken.
 - b. **Interim replies on correspondence prepared for signature in FHWA.** An interim reply should be prepared when the final reply cannot be made within 2 weeks of the assigned due date. Check with Exec Sec before preparing interim replies.
4. **What are the procedures for interim replies for OST controls?** Contact the Exec Sec Correspondence Analyst before preparing interim replies for an OST Executive Secretariat's control (see Figure 1.3 for a sample interim reply).
5. **What are the procedures for acknowledgment letters for correspondence that Washington Headquarters refers to the field offices?**
- a. The Exec Sec sends an acknowledgment letter to the writer of the incoming letter advising of the referral to the field office (see Figure 1.4 for a sample acknowledgment letter).
 - b. A copy of the acknowledgment letter is uploaded to the electronic control and the field office is notified of the control.
6. **What are the procedures for congressional correspondence that field offices refer to Washington Headquarters?**
- a. When a Member of Congress writes directly to a field office on matters requiring higher-level coordination:

- (1) The letter is promptly referred through appropriate channels to Exec Sec with a proposed reply.
 - (2) The field office sends an acknowledgment letter (similar to the acknowledgment letter sent for correspondence referred to field offices) to the Member of Congress advising of the referral to the Washington Headquarters.
 - (3) A copy of this acknowledgment letter is sent to Exec Sec with the referred letter. When a response is prepared, the action office will identify the incoming letter and reference the acknowledgment made by the field office in the opening paragraph of the reply.
- b. Direct replies may be made by field offices through appropriate channels to Members of Congress if purely local matters are involved or the subject matter is noncontroversial.
7. **What are the Associate Administrators' responsibilities?** The Associate Administrators shall:
- a. Designate an employee (Correspondence Contact) to maintain liaison with the Exec Sec and to be responsible for effective control and timely processing of controlled correspondence, including returning correspondence to Exec Sec that should be handled by another program office. Disseminate information received from the Exec Sec to the appropriate people within their office.
 - b. Ensure that any correspondence of the type described in paragraph 1a (VIP Correspondence) of this chapter that has not been routed through Exec Sec is promptly hand carried to them.
 - c. Audit the controls assigned to the action office to ensure that due dates are met.
 - d. Respond promptly to letters and inquiries from Exec Sec.
 - e. Ensure that the draft responses are available on a shared directory and accessible by others in the office.
 - f. Coordinate with other offices that have any interest in the subject matter.
8. **What are the concurrence and coordination guidelines and procedures for correspondence?** In addition to the following, please refer to FHWA Order 1300.5, FHWA Coordination Guidelines, at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/orders/13005.htm>

a. **General Concurrences**

- (1) **Concurrence within FHWA.** Only those offices having a substantive interest in the subject of the correspondence shall be requested to concur on the Official File Copy, hereinafter referred to as the “Grid” Form DOT F 1320.65 (see Figure 1.5).
- (2) Concurrence shall not be requested merely for courtesy or informational reasons. Information copies of the signed correspondence are sufficient for these purposes.
 - (a) **Timely coordination.** Concurrence or non-concurrence shall be accomplished without delay. Concurring offices must give high priority to correspondence requiring concurrence.
 - (b) **Editorial correctness.** The originating office is responsible for editorial correctness of correspondence. Correspondence should be signature-ready when it is forwarded to other offices for concurrences.

b. **Procedures**

- (1) **Concurring offices.** FHWA Order M 1100.1A, the FHWA Delegations and Organization Manual <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/orders/m11001a.htm> and the FHWA Routing Guide <https://fhwapap03.fhwa.dot.gov/foisp/routingSymbolsDisplay.do> are helpful references for determining FHWA concurring offices.
- (2) **Pre-drafting conference.** By telephone, email, or personal visit, confer as appropriate with the concurring office(s) concerning the prepared correspondence.
- (3) **What unit of measurement should be used in FHWA reports and correspondence?** The mandatory use of metric measurements on FHWA documents has been rescinded per the November 25, 2008, memorandum from the Executive Director <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/contracts/1108metr.cfm>. The use of inch-pound measurements is the practical form of measurement to use in FHWA's documents (including letters, memoranda, publications, reports, and information).

c. **Clearances**

- (1) Prepare copies of all essential background material, such as the incoming letter. Make copies of those documents that are essential for understanding the correspondence, not necessarily all those used for composing the correspondence. These should be placed behind the Background Tab of the correspondence package.
- (2) Add a second grid if it is anticipated that additional grid space will be needed. Indicate on the bottom of the first grid in red "For additional grid space see Page 2. On the second grid, in the bottom right hand corner, write in #2. Offset the second grid page just enough so that the #2 is visible. Staple the second grid to the first at the top.
- (3) In case of urgent correspondence, where simultaneous coordination is necessary, prepare a copy of the grid for each concurring office. Retain the originals of grids and backup material. When the copies are returned, include concurrences and non-concurrences stapled to the grid as a backup measure.
- (4) All correspondence for the Administrator's signature should be cleared by the Office of the Chief Counsel (HCC). In addition, Correspondence to a Member of Congress should be cleared through the Office of Policy and Governmental Affairs (HPL) and correspondence (including press releases and award notifications) that discuss allocations, allotments or discretionary spending should be cleared by the Office of the CFO (HCF). Discretionary grant packages, Reports to Congress and non-routine Federal Register items should be cleared through the Office of Public Affairs (HPA).

d. **Time limits.** The concurring offices should review correspondence as quickly as possible keeping in mind the assigned due dates.

- (1) In cases where prompt transmittal is essential, hand carry the correspondence.
- (2) Telephone concurrences may be obtained in crucial circumstances where the action and concurring offices are some distance apart. This should be followed by an email confirming the concurrence.
 - (a) Read the correspondence to the concurring party, or send it via a fax or an email and request verbal approval. Request a follow-up email confirming the verbal approval.
 - (b) Indicate this approval on the grid copy of the correspondence, and note how it was obtained.

- (3) Concurrences may also be obtained using email or a fax to transmit the signed concurrence grid. Electronic messages advising of concurrence must show the signing official as the sender and be attached to the grid.
- e. **“Previous Concurrences Valid.”** When concurrences have been obtained and a minor error is found causing the correspondence to be retyped, the words “Previous Concurrences Valid” will be written in the upper right-hand portion or along side of the active or current grid (See Chapter 2, Figure 2.11 for an example), allowing space for additional concurrences.
- f. **Concurrence.** If the correspondence is acceptable to the concurring official, concurrence is indicated in the section provided on the grid by recording the office routing symbol, the concurring official’s initials or surname, and the date of concurrence. The correspondence is promptly sent to the next office as listed on Form FHWA-111, Routing and/or Review Slip.
- g. **Concur with Edits.** If the correspondence is acceptable to the concurring official after the edits indicated on the correspondence are made, "Concur with Edits" should be written in the section provided on the grid by the recording the office routing symbol, the official's initials and the date of the concurrence with edits. After the edits are made, the correspondence will not be returned to the official who concurred with edits unless it is indicated on the grid.
- h. **Non-concurrences.**
 - (1) If at all possible, disagreements should be resolved before the reply is drafted.
 - (2) If disagreements are not resolved:
 - (a) State the differences and reasons on a separate sheet.
 - (b) Indicate non-concurrence on the grid of the correspondence.
 - (c) Return both the separate sheet and the grid copy to the action office.
 - (d) Do not make editorial changes other than to point out mistakes in spelling or grammar.

**CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING SYSTEM
CONTROL SHEET**

CONTROL NO: 110107-008-2004/I-2011-5198

WRITER'S NAME: DOE, JOHN

AFFILIATION(S): HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OTHER WRITERS: SMITH, JIM

ORIGINATOR: U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CATEGORY: PERMANENT WITH DUE DATE

SUBJECT: DOCKET NO. OST-2011-12170 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

COMMENTS: REPLY RETURN TO HPLS FOR EDIT 1/16/RZ

ASSIGNED TO:	TO ORGANIZATION	ACTION	DATE
	POLICY	ACTION OFFICE	01-07-11
	OFFICE OF LEGISLATION + STRATEGIC PLANNING	FORWARD REQUEST TO J. MCGARRY 1-8-11	01-08-11
	POLICY	SIGNED BY (NAME)	01-22-11
	EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT	CORRESPONDENCE CLOSED BY RZACCAGNINO	01-22-11

SIGNATURE LEVEL: POLICY

DISTRIBUTION:	ORGANIZATION	DATE
	OFFICE OF LEGISLATION +STRATEGIC PLANNING	01-07-11
	GOVERNMENTAL/CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS (I)	01-07-11

ANALYST/PHONE: ROSEMARY ZACCAGNINO (202) 366-5655

Figure 1.1

DESCRIPTION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL SHEET CATEGORIES

1. Control No. – The control number is assigned by the Correspondence Tracking System (CTS).
2. Writer’s Name – Name of the writer of the correspondence.
3. Affiliation - Name of company or organization of the writer.
4. Other Writer’s – Name of any other writer(s) associated with the correspondence, e.g., constituent’s name.
5. Originator – A list of common sources of correspondence.
6. Category – Whether a response is required or not.
 - a. Permanent with Due Date – date the reply is due in FHWA Exec Sec or due in OST Exec Sec. Correspondence due in OST Exec Sec needs to be in FHWA Exec Sec, with concurrences completed, no less than 1 business day before the due date.
 - b. Appropriate Handling – Assigned office determines whether a response is required.
 - c. For Your Information – No response is required; the control is assigned to the action office for informational purposes only.
7. Subject – Subject matter of the correspondence.
8. Comments – Any special instructions may be listed here, or special actions taken on the control.
9. Assigned to – Lists the Action Office and location/status of the correspondence.
10. Signature Level – Lists who should sign the letter.
11. Distribution – Lists offices that have been sent a copy of the incoming correspondence for their information.
12. Analyst/Phone – The analyst and phone number in the Exec Sec office that controlled the correspondence and the person who should be contacted with any questions.

*THE CONTROL NUMBER (110701-008-2004) IS BASED ON THE YEAR, MONTH, AND DATE, WHILE THE NEXT 3 DIGITS (-008) INDICATE THE NUMBERED DOCUMENTS ENTERED INTO THE SYSTEM ON THAT DAY, THE LAST 4 DIGITS (2004) REFER TO THE OFFICE THAT CREATED THE CONTROL. Other control numbers from other offices such as S-10 or OST/I are listed after the slash (e.g., 110701-008-2004/S10110701-010).

Figure 1.2

**INTERIM REPLY FOR LETTERS TO BE SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY OR THE
FHWA ADMINISTRATOR**

Click here and enter date

Click here and enter recipient's full name

Click here and enter address line 1

Click here and enter address line 2

Dear Click here and enter salutation:

Thank you for your letter of Click here and enter date to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding . In light of the scope of your request and the need for DOT to coordinate its response, completion of our final response will take some time. We will provide a response as soon as possible, and we appreciate your patience.

For your reference, we have assigned control number Click here and enter the control number to your letter.

Sincerely,

Victor M. Mendez
Administrator

ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER
(Prepared by Exec Sec)

Refer to: HOA-3

Ms. Nola Frick
Sun 'n Lakes of Lake Placid Recreation District
P.O. Box 1187
Lake Placid, FL 33862

Dear Ms. Frick:

This is in response to your letter to Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood requesting Federal funds to complete the sidewalk along the boulevard in your neighborhood.

I have forwarded your letter to our Florida Division and have asked someone to address your concerns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Florida Division at 850-942-9650.

Sincerely yours,

Mary L. Peterson
Executive Secretariat

cc: Florida Division

Grid Copy

CONCURRENCE ε
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Figure 1.5

GRID