



DESIGN STANDARDS

Purpose

The FAST Act makes several changes to design standards to increase flexibility and provide for greater accommodation of all highway users.

Statutory citations: FAST Act §§ 1404 and 1442; 23 U.S.C. 109

Program Features

Except as specified below, the FAST Act continues all of the design standards and requirements that were in effect under MAP-21.

Design considerations on the National Highway System (NHS)

The FAST Act now requires that designs *shall consider* (previously “may take into account”):

- The constructed and natural environment of the area;
- The environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and preservation impacts of the activity;
- Access for other modes of transportation; and
- Cost savings by utilizing flexibility that exists in current design guidance and regulations.

The FAST Act added the last criterion to this list of considerations. [FAST Act § 1404; 23 U.S.C. 109(c)(1)]

Development of criteria for the NHS

The FAST Act adds two new resources that DOT must consider in developing criteria to implement the requirements stated above. These new resources for consideration are:

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Highway Safety Manual; and
- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide.

[FAST Act § 1404; 23 U.S.C. 109(c)(2)]

Design standard flexibility for localities

Under the FAST Act, a locality may use a different roadway design publication than the State (with State approval), if the roadway is owned by the locality, the roadway is not on the Interstate System, the locality is the direct recipient of Federal funds for the project, the publication is recognized by FHWA and adopted by the locality, and the design complies with all other applicable Federal laws. [FAST Act § 1404(b)]

Accommodation of non-motorized users

The FAST Act requires DOT to encourage States and MPOs to adopt design standards for Federal surface transportation projects that provide for the safe and adequate accommodation (as determined by the State) of all users of the surface transportation network, including motorized *and* non-motorized users in all stages of project planning, development, and operation. Additionally, no later than 2 years after the enactment of the FAST Act, DOT must release a report identifying examples of State laws and policies in this area and examples of best practices. [FAST Act § 1442]