



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Highway  
Administration**

# Memorandum

Subject: **ACTION:** Functional Classification Review of  
MAP-21 Enhanced NHS Principal Arterials

Date: February 19, 2014

From: Gloria M. Shepherd, Associate Administrator  
Planning, Environment and Realty, FHWA

In Reply

Refer to: HEPH-20

To: Division Administrators and Division Planners

As you know, there was a provision in Section 1104 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) that expanded the National Highway System (NHS) by including all principal arterials in existence on the effective date of MAP-21 (October 1, 2012). This resulted in the addition of 60,000 miles to the NHS. We have heard from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and several States that this provision has caused some unintended consequences, specifically related to bringing the newly added principal arterials into compliance with NHS federal requirements. These requirements include design standards, national performance measure data collection, and outdoor advertisement and junkyard control. We have reviewed the provision and have determined FHWA can take administrative actions to address these particular issues.

The purpose of this memorandum is to request each Division Office work with their respective State to review roads classified as principal arterial within the State and identify any functional classification changes needed to the rural and urban principal arterial system. This review can be used to adjust the State's NHS mileage total. In addition, States may also, in some cases, request certain roads be withdrawn from the NHS. While we want to assist States to identify appropriate roads that should not be functionally classified as principal arterial, we cannot allow States to remove all newly designated principal arterials from the NHS en masse. However, if the removal requests are reasonable and appropriate we will consider these actions.

The NHS modification process is defined in regulations (23 CFR 470) and requires a State to submit a request through the Division Office. Each request contains appropriate justification, including documented coordination with impacted MPOs and local officials. States should coordinate with one another for proposed NHS changes at the state line. Because these adjustments impact the NHS, the Divisions will review and forward their recommendation to Headquarters for final approval and subsequent adjustment to the NHS.

Many States routinely review their highway functional classifications, or may be in the midst of a statewide highway functional classification review triggered by the 2010 Census. This request is especially important in those States that have not recently conducted a statewide functional classification review. This is an opportunity for States, as they conduct their review to give

particular attention to routes that are designated as NHS routes. Since NHS routes—with the exception of NHS Intermodal Connectors or STRAHNET Connectors—must be classified as principal arterials or above, downgrading segments would require their removal from the NHS.

States can conduct the reviews at their convenience or to coincide with their existing State highway review processes. There is no deadline for response to this request. Please provide the Office of Human Environment an electronic list of Division Office approvals of functional classification changes to principal arterials (to include route number/name, from/to termini, beginning/ending mile points, digital maps, and associated geographic information system files). Below are links to references that will assist with this process. Please transmit the Division Office's approvals of principal arterials to Mike Neathery. For additional information, please contact Mike Neathery at 202-366-1257 ([mike.neathery@dot.gov](mailto:mike.neathery@dot.gov)) or Stefan Natzke at 202-366-5010 ([stefan.natzke@dot.gov](mailto:stefan.natzke@dot.gov)). For specific questions related to functional classification, please contact Spencer Stevens at 202-366-0149 ([spencer.stevens@dot.gov](mailto:spencer.stevens@dot.gov)).

#### References:

Functional Classification Manual,

[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/processes/statewide/related/highway\\_functional\\_classifications/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/processes/statewide/related/highway_functional_classifications/)

NHS Maps and Procedures,

[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national\\_highway\\_system/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national_highway_system/)

NHS Questions and Answers,

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/qandas/qanhs.cfm>