



## tool kit

# Access Management Strategies

## What is Access Management?

Access management is the implementation of controls on driveways and intersections that preserve safety while safeguarding the roadway's full traffic carrying capacity. Through managing the number of driveways that a vehicle may encounter without restricting access to property unreasonably, access management can remove slower, turning vehicles from roadways with heavy through-traffic movements. Access management encourages smooth and safe traffic flow and helps to avoid some of the traffic problems caused by driveways and turning movements associated with strip development.

## Why do we need access management?

Roadways work together in a network to provide a balance between access to homes and businesses and the movement of traffic from one area to another. In a network, some roads, like those that travel through neighborhoods, service almost entirely the access needs of drivers, while others, like freeways, service mainly the movement of traffic. Many roads, however, service both needs, which creates conflict between through-traffic, which prefers to move at higher speeds with fewer distractions and obstacles, and local traffic, which prefers to move at slower speeds and creates obstacles to through movement. Many of the thoroughfares in the Regional Thoroughfare Network (RTN) are among these roadways. Therefore, access management is an important part of the Strategic Regional Thoroughfare Plan (S RTP), because it helps to ease the conflict between these two types of traffic.

Access management aids in roadway safety while it also protects the capacity of the roadway. In reducing the locations at which drivers can expect to encounter slowing or turning traffic, access management reduces conflicts between these types of traffic. This reduction in conflict translates into fewer crashes, greater mobility, reduced congestion, and a better investment of transportation funds.

### Review of general access management strategies:

- **Minimum spacing between driveways to commercial properties** limits the number of driveways per block or mile, and allows for fewer interruptions in the flow of traffic along the thoroughfare.
- **Parcel to parcel access among commercial properties** allows drivers to visit two adjacent businesses without having to access the thoroughfare.
- **Raised center medians** restrict turning movements to a limited number of locations and so reduce the number of conflicts at driveways.
- **Locating driveways away from signals** reduces confusion and conflict around locations where cross-traffic is common.
- **Consolidating driveways** for residential properties along a mutual property line can reduce the number of points of access to thoroughfares in rural areas.
- **Constructing parallel access roads** behind commercial development can create opportunities for inter-parcel access away from the thoroughfare as it maximizes the impact of signalized access from the thoroughfare.



There are many advantages to taking an access management approach to thoroughfares in the Atlanta area. The ARC reports that:

- **Raised medians** actually contribute to a safer, more attractive pedestrian landscape. By creating a refuge in the middle of the street for those crossing on foot, raised medians reduce midblock pedestrian crash rates by 42% and intersection pedestrian crash rates by 58%.
- The ARC further reports that a Texas study found an 18% increase in **property values** in areas with access management controls in place
- A study considering Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, and Texas indicated that businesses in areas with access management controls in place performed **as well or better** as before those measures were introduced.

## Local Government Involvement

Access is a point of contact between transportation and land use, and the role of local government in access management is often in the context of determining land uses. Local governments can contribute to access management with policies and regulations that anticipate a corridor’s evolution and proactively manage the impact of added growth and development along the corridor. Localities with development regulations that require shared driveways and other features that reflect access management policies can help to extend the life of the thoroughfares within their jurisdiction.

Local governments should develop access policies and regulations within the purview of their development review authority, facilitating coordination of development with access placement, consolidation and closure. The diagram below illustrates a series of access management approaches that can be applied in different land use contexts

	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Applicability</i>
①	No management: applies in rural contexts with limited driveway access	Local roads with relatively low volumes (ADT > 4,000; rural contexts)
②	Right-of-way management: applies along major roadways where growth is expected	Higher-volume roads but in predominantly rural, low-density settings (rural and high-speed suburban contexts).
③	Access identification: Specifies points where access and intersections are allowed	Existing roads where development is expected; capacity projects and new roads (suburban and urban contexts)
④	Driveway-based management: Organizes access for multiple buildings and properties for safe spacing	In established built environments without regular side-streets, or in between these side streets where they exist but are not on a regular block-level spacing (suburban and urban contexts).
⑤	Public street-based management: relies on existing side streets to provide service access instead of driveways off of a corridor’s principal road	In established built environments with regular side-street spacing (urban contexts)



Buford Highway is an example of strip style development creating turning needs at locations all along the roadway. Photo: Hyosub Shin, [hshin@ajc.com](mailto:hshin@ajc.com)



Michael Ronkin, Designing Streets for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

The above digital illustration is an example of a raised center median reducing the number of locations for turning traffic and creating a more pleasant aesthetic experience.

## Zoning and Future Land Uses

The local zoning ordinance can be used to direct future growth in a manner that avoids strip development and supports access management policies. The location and nature of commercial development in particular can have great impact on traffic patterns and safety. Traditional growth patterns have encouraged commercial strip development, which in turn creates safety problems, congestion, and can even create the potential need for the construction and expense of a bypass.

For suburban areas and transitional rural areas in particular, the following commercial growth and development strategies can support access management policy in developing areas:

- Prohibit single-lot driveways along thoroughfares, and require access points to be public, through streets that also serve adjacent development.
- Prohibit commercial strip development, and a proliferation of single-lot, house-by-house development, along thoroughfares.
- Prohibit development that creates shallow parcels along arterial roadways and at arterial intersections.
- Under a **Commercial Cluster Development** zoning strategy, new commercial buildings are required to be sited in small clusters, set back from thoroughfares. This approach works best where there are large parcels that allow room for several businesses on one lot. The cluster concept can be applied successfully to shopping centers, mini-malls, and multiple-use facilities.
- **Commercial Centers** located near major intersections have the capacity to handle more traffic. A municipality or county can ensure that the centers are the only areas of the thoroughfare to be developed commercially by designating commercial zones only at or near intersections and placing the areas in between commercial centers in other zoning categories. The locality can help construct access roads that make these centers highly visible, accessible, and commercially viable. Develop regulations to require that development along the arterials be clustered or limited to certain areas.
- **Rural Business Districts** can aid in the preservation of rural character while allowing certain types of rural commercial development, such as residential developments, home occupations, professional offices, tourist or agriculture-related businesses, and farm stands. Types of commercial developments that could just as easily be located in the downtown or growth area of the community would not be allowed.
- **Low-intensity Commercial Districts** use zoning powers to disallow businesses that generate high traffic volumes from locating along thoroughfares in areas where they will create traffic problems. Limits might include prohibitions, size limits, or a requirement for a traffic impact analysis plus remedial measures.

## Existing Land Uses

Managing access on already developed corridors can pose a greater challenge than managing access for future development. Common problems include limits to the right-of-way, development in close proximity to the right-of-way, and opposition by owners of adjacent properties and affected businesses. Land for access improvements is often unavailable, making it impossible to implement certain access management techniques and requiring the use of minimum rather than desirable guidelines. In addition, rights for access to property must be respected. Therefore, the most successful retrofit projects involve adjacent landowners and businesses in planning the access project from the earliest stages of project planning.

- **Restrictive medians** are useful for controlling turning movements and improving safety on already developed corridors.
- **Special corridor zoning and overlay zones** can be designed to address the unique circumstances of the corridor while advancing access management objectives. Local ordinances can also include

retrofitting guidelines that specify when existing users must come into compliance with the new guidelines, such as (1) substantial enlargements or improvements, (2) significant changes in trip generation, or (3) when new connection permits are requested.

## Local Issues in Access Management

Owners of properties along thoroughfares may have concerns about access management policies. They typically feel that these measures will negatively impact access to their property and often their business. However, the general public may respond very differently to the landscape of the roadway once access management measures have been implemented. Drivers may find the roadway feels less cluttered and the driving experience less stressful, which often creates a more positive and attractive area for commerce. Therefore, in weighing specific access management measures within its borders, each local government should consider the needs and input of both the property owners and the general public.

### For more information:

For more information about implementing access management on roadways within the RTN, please consult Section 4.2 of the *ARC's Management and Design Guidelines for the Regional Transportation Network*.

For help involving your community in access management decisions, refer to *A Public Involvement Handbook for Median Projects*, prepared for the Florida Department of Transportation Systems Planning Office, by Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida, 1995. <http://www.accessmanagement.info/pdf/pimedian.pdf>

For answers to frequently asked questions regarding access management, the Center for Transportation Research and Education offers its *Access Management Toolkit*: <http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/research/access/toolkit/index.htm>