

TRAFFIC IMPACT AND ACCESS STUDY

Powder Mill Place – Maynard/Acton, Massachusetts

APPENDIX

TRAFFIC-COUNT DATA

TRAFFIC-VOLUME ADJUSTMENT DATA

MASSDOT CRASH RATE WORKSHEETS

BACKGROUND DEVELOPMENT DATA

TRIP-GENERATION CALCULATIONS

JOURNEY-TO-WORK DATA

CAPACITY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

CAPACITY AND QUEUE ANALYSIS WORKSHEETS

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CAPACITY ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

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A primary result of capacity analysis is the assignment of levels of service to traffic facilities under various traffic flow conditions. The capacity analysis methodology is based on the concepts and procedures in the *Highway Capacity Manual* (HCM).⁸ The concept of level of service (LOS) is defined as a qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream and their perception by motorists and/or passengers. A level-of-service definition provides an index to quality of traffic flow in terms of such factors as speed, travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety.

Six levels of service are defined for each type of facility. They are given letter designations from A to F, with LOS A representing the best operating conditions and LOS F the worst. Since the level of service of a traffic facility is a function of the traffic flows placed upon it, such a facility may operate at a wide range of levels of service, depending on the time of day, day of week, or period of year. A description of the operating condition under each level of service is provided below:

- *LOS A* describes conditions with little to no delay to motorists.
- *LOS B* represents a desirable level with relatively low delay to motorists.
- *LOS C* describes conditions with average delays to motorists.
- *LOS D* describes operations where the influence of congestion becomes more noticeable. Delays are still within an acceptable range.
- *LOS E* represents operating conditions with high delay values. This level is considered by many agencies to be the limit of acceptable delay.
- *LOS F* is considered to be unacceptable to most drivers with high delay values that often occur, when arrival flow rates exceed the capacity of the intersection.

Unsignalized Intersections

Levels of service for unsignalized intersections are calculated using the operational analysis methodology of the HCM. The procedure accounts for lane configuration on both the minor and major street approaches, conflicting traffic stream volumes, and the type of intersection control (STOP, YIELD, or all-way STOP control). The definition of level of service for unsignalized

⁸ *Highway Capacity Manual 2010*, Transportation Research Board; Washington, D.C.; 2010.

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intersections is a function of average *control* delay. Control delay includes initial deceleration delay, queue move-up time, stopped delay, and final acceleration delay. The level-of-service criteria for unsignalized intersections are shown in Table A-1.

Signalized Intersections

Levels of service for signalized intersections are also calculated using the operational analysis methodology of the HCM. The methodology for signalized intersections assesses the effects of signal type, timing, phasing, and progression; vehicle mix; and geometrics on average *control* delay. Control delay includes initial deceleration delay, queue move-up time, stopped delay, and final acceleration delay. Table A-1 summarizes the relationship between level of service and average control delay.

**Table A-1
LEVEL-OF-SERVICE CRITERIA FOR INTERSECTIONS**

Level of Service	Unsignalized Intersection Criteria	Signalized Intersection Criteria
	Average Control Delay (Seconds per Vehicle)	Average Control Delay (Seconds per Vehicle)
A	≤10	≤10
B	>10 and ≤15	>10 and ≤20
C	>15 and ≤25	>20 and ≤35
D	>25 and ≤35	>35 and ≤55
E	>35 and ≤50	>55 and ≤80
F	>50 or v/c >1.0	>80 or v/c >1.0

Source: *Highway Capacity Manual 2010*, Transportation Research Board; Washington, D.C.; 2010. Pages 18-6 and 19-2.

For signalized intersections, this delay criterion may be applied in assigning level-of-service designations to individual lane groups, to individual intersection approaches, or to the entire intersection. For unsignalized intersections, this delay criterion may be applied in assigning level-of-service designations to individual lane groups or to individual intersection approaches.

TRAFFIC IMPACT AND ACCESS STUDY

Powder Mill Place – Maynard/Acton, Massachusetts

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