



UNDERSTANDING ROAD DESIGN IN MINNESOTA

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Road project funding, design, and decision making vary depending on a road's classification. This document identifies different types of roads within Minnesota and explains how the Complete Streets legislation impacts municipal state-aid streets and county state-aid highways.

Minnesota Complete Streets legislation changes the road design process for county state-aid highways and municipal state-aid streets. The law modifies the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (Mn/DOT) road design approval process by changing the variance process. The law also requires Mn/DOT to adopt a Complete Streets policy and encourages collaboration between Mn/DOT and stakeholders, including local governments.

Road projects involving county state-aid highways and municipal state-aid streets must be designed according to Mn/DOT's state-aid design standards. State-aid design standards include required road specifications, such as lane and shoulder widths. Occasionally, projects which have been carefully designed to implement Complete Streets principles do not meet the state-aid design and engineering standards. In such instances, local governments may decide to seek variance from the state-aid design standards.

Complete Streets legislation directs Mn/DOT to consider two alternative design manuals when hearing a variance request: *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways* and *Streets and Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities*, both of which are sensitive to Complete Streets principles.

Road Design Decision Making

The process for road design approval varies by type of road. For many projects, approval must be sought through multiple levels of government.

Primary Road Classifications in Minnesota	Decision-Makers	Role of Decision-Makers
Minnesota Trunk Highway System Includes Interstate Highways, U.S. Highways and Minnesota State Highways	Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT)	Designs all road construction plans on MN trunk system
	Municipal governing body	Approves design of major trunk highway projects that pass through the municipality
County State-Aid Highways (CSAH) Constructed and maintained by a county authority that receives state funding through the county state-aid highways system	County board	Directs state-aid funds to local projects on the county state-aid highway system
	County highway engineer	Designs projects to state-aid standards
	Mn/DOT: State Aid for local transportation office	Approves final project design to ensure design meet state-aid standards
	Local city council through which the road passes	Reviews and approves of design of projects that run through the municipality
County roads/highways Roads constructed and maintained by a county authority	County Board	Directs use of state-aid funds and approves project design for county road projects
	County highway engineer	Designs county road projects
City Street and Town Roads Non-highway and non-country roads under the direct control of local government	Municipal governing body (city council or town board)	Diects use of local funds and approves final project design
	Local planner and city engineer	Designs road project
Municipal State-Aid Streets City streets located in communities with 5,000 inhabitants or more that receive state funding through the municipal state aid road system	City Council	Directs state funds to street projects on the municipal state-aid system and approves final project design
	Local planner and city engineer	Designs street projects to state-aid standards
	Mn/DOT: State Aid for local transportation office	Approves final project design to ensure design complies with state-aid standards



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