Access Management has been defined as “the process that provides (or manages) access to land development, while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system in terms of safety, capacity, and speed.”\(^1\) This process is achieved through managing the design and location of driveways, median openings and points of access to the state highway system. The level of highway access control is based on the importance of the highway to regional and statewide travel as determined through a functional classification system.

**Access Management Concepts**

State highways can have a significant impact on the state’s economy and their mobility function must be protected. The main function of access management is to establish a balance between the existing traffic flow and highway access. The functional class to which the road belongs should be taken into consideration while providing access, with the objective of maintaining the appropriate quality.

of traffic flow. In order to achieve successful access management, land use development should be integrated with the layout and design of roads and major highways.

**Legal Considerations**

Government authority to engage in regulation is traditionally derived from the power to exercise police power to protect the public good. Both state statutes and state constitutions provide procedural planning authority. When considering any form of access management, governments must consider whether they have statutory authority to engage in any program of regulation, and whether this regulation is consistent with procedural requirements provided in State statutes.

Local land development activities can also be affected by access management procedures of the state DOTs. Proposed changes in land use, which affect the amount, type or intensity of traffic activity to a site, may require alterations in order to meet access requirements. These requirements can be imposed either by the state or local authority. However, in some states local agencies are prohibited from implementing access regulations more stringent than those issued by the state DOT. In some states, South Carolina and Oregon for example, approval must be obtained from both the local jurisdiction and the state. Approval by the state DOT does not relieve the applicant of the need to comply with local access requirements.

**Land Use Connection**

ISTEA instituted policy support for access management and coordinated land use and transportation solutions. Policies, like access management focus on making more efficient use of existing transportation facilities. By adopting a state policy on access control, state DOTs can establish a framework to induce local action that will effect changes in access management policies and increase

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2 Statutory Authority; Legal Considerations; Land Development Regulations that Promote Access Management; NCHRP Synthesis 233, Chapter 5. p. 24.
3 Loc. cit.
4 Loc. cit.
5 Ibid, p. 24-25
coordination between state and local agencies when making transportation planning decisions. Access management strategies may be incorporated into local plans and work programs when planning agencies attempt to resolve the inconsistencies between transportation facilities and the land use that still exists.

**Interagency Coordination**

Access management requires improved coordination between land use and transportation and between government agencies. While a state DOT logically initiates the statewide agenda to integrate access management practices into transportation planning, MPOs and local governments must also play a strong role in facilitating coordination on access management objectives.

**Traffic Impact Analysis**

A number of state DOTs, regardless of access management policies, require that a traffic impact analysis (TIA) be performed for any development along a state highway that attracts or generates traffic beyond a given threshold of peak hour trips. A TIA provides state transportation planners with a description of the development and land use, existing and future traffic patterns, existing roadway geometry with current traffic levels, and proposed access points and improvements. TIAs can be useful tools for identifying the land use impacts imposed by particular developments. By understanding the existing and future development within the study area, the best access points and improvements can be determined. However, to systematically determine the appropriate access points and geometric improvements, TIAs must correctly identify land development patterns for the study area.  

**Driveway Permits Following Guidelines**

At its most basic level, access management is handled through a driveway permitting process. State DOTs normally have specific guidelines for the placement of driveways along the state highway system. These guidelines may relate to placement of driveways near intersections, sight distances and frequency of driveways. Access control simply limited to a permit process would imply a rather passive approach to access management. More active strategies involve comprehensive access management planning and regulation of access systems.

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1 Wisconsin’s Plan for Managing Access to State Highways; Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1996.
Comprehensive Access Management

The ISTEA sets forth a recommendation for state DOTs to consider access management to promote congestion management and corridor preservation. While most states have some form of access management policy, a few states have taken the lead in progressive efforts to coordinate intergovernmental cooperation to successfully carry out access management goals. Access management can be effective when state DOTs develop broad programs and provide technical support to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to include access management in comprehensive planning and land use management. Transportation elements of comprehensive plans provide a means of achieving well designed communities and roadway systems that adequately accommodate traffic flow. Local development decisions that follow these plans can cause development and traffic patterns that minimize future problems of land use and travel conflict. The following are some examples of this approach.

Access Management in Wisconsin

Wisconsin’s Access Management System Plan delineates those state highways that will be subject to access management. This highway network comprises a total of 5,320 miles and is made up of segments already subjected to a high degree of access control. The network consists of two groups of highways, those covered by the state transportation plan, Corridors 2020, and supplemental highways. This network connects all of Wisconsin’s population and economic centers. WisDOT also identified highways in areas where the present rate of traffic growth is likely to necessitate access management in the near future.

The state manages access to designated highways by the following methods:

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1 “System plan indicates roads where access will be managed”; Wisconsin’s Plan for Managing Access to State Highways. Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1996.
2 Loc. cit.
3 Loc. cit.
• Purchase access rights at the same time that right-of-way is purchased.¹
• Designate “controlled access highways” that cannot have access without specific WisDOT approval.²
• Work with local governments to review development plans and subdivision plans for lands that are adjacent to or affect the traffic flow to a state highway.
• Insert covenants into deeds to limit accesses to a property³ along a state highway.

Access Management in Florida

Florida’s Access Management Act outlines regulation of access to the state highway system. The act also assists in the coordination of land use planning decisions by local governments, which will serve to enhance managed growth within the state. In addition, administrative rules have been adopted to deal with the application and permit process, with the classification system and with standards for access.

It is important to note that the Florida state statutes and administrative rules only provide standards under prescribed conditions. The procedures require close interaction between state DOT staff and local officials to successfully integrate access management into local level planning. Through the decentralized structure of FDOT, access standards serve as guides for MPOs and counties to draw upon for local plans. FDOT staff provides local administrative assistance to communicate these principles through training workshops.⁴

¹ “The Department of Transportation (WisDOT) manages access to state highways by:”; Wisconsin’s Plan for Managing Access to State Highways. Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1996.
² Loc. cit.
³ Loc. cit.
⁴ Adapted from (a) Florida’s Access Management Guidelines; (b) Florida Statute 335 – The Access Management Act; (c) Rules of the Department of Transportation Chapter 14-97 State Highway System Access Management Classification System and Standards.