Attachment 4 – Road Classification Criteria Updates

Background

In 2000, City Council adopted a new Road Classification System to consolidate the various road classification systems inherited from Toronto's seven former municipalities.

The Road Classification System establishes functional categories consisting of local, collector, minor arterial, major arterial and expressway, based on a street's role in supporting mobility, access, and network continuity. Each functional category is defined by specific characteristics such as traffic movement versus property access, typical daily motor vehicle traffic volume, flow characteristics, speed limits, and accommodations for pedestrians, people cycling, and transit.

These classifications help ensure that each road serves its intended function while supporting the City's broader transportation and land-use policies. The system informs a range of municipal processes, including right-of-way planning, infrastructure design, development review, and level of service for roadway operations and maintenance. For example, in the development review process, Transportation Impact Studies (TIS) utilize these criteria to assess proposed and affected classifications, ensuring alignment with network function, modal hierarchy, and the City's broader planning framework.

The purpose of the Road Classification Criteria is to provide a descriptive (rather than prescriptive) set of guidelines that is used to assign classifications. In this context, a descriptive classification system reflects how a street type typically functions based on observed and expected characteristics (e.g., projected volume, land use, modal infrastructure), whereas a prescriptive system would dictate how a street should be designed or operated based strictly on its classification. The characteristics of a particular road segment may match several criteria in Table 1, and when a roadway is assigned a classification, the selection is based on the best fit.

Since 2000, the City has updated and adopted several new policies and guidelines including the Official Plan, Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, and Cycling Network Plan. Transportation Services has reviewed the existing Road Classification Criteria and is recommending minor updates to some characteristics to align with Council direction on these policies and current practice.

Summary of Proposed Changes

Where changes to the characteristics have been proposed they are described as follows:

<u>Number of Peak Period Lanes</u>

In order to better reflect varied urban conditions, the term: "minimum" is proposed to be revised to "typical", and a range is proposed to be introduced for Arterial roads.

<u>Legal Speed Limits</u>

For consistency with City Council decisions on speed limits for Local roads and Collector roads associated with the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, the following updates are proposed:

- Locals: 30 km/h is specified for all Local roads, in accordance with the City Council decision in July 2019 for speed limits on all Local roads to be reduced to 30 km/h.
- Collectors: A range of 30-40 km/h is specified, noting that in accordance with the Traffic Calming Policy, speed limits are lowered to 30 km/h when traffic calming measures are approved for implementation on Collector roads.
- Arterials: No change.

Accommodation of Pedestrians

No changes are proposed to be made to the criteria. A note has been added that references the Sidewalk Policy, as amended by City Council in July 2019.

Accommodation of Cyclists

References are proposed to be added to the type of accommodation, as follows:

- Locals and Collectors: a reference that shared roadway or bike lanes are desirable, where feasible.
- Minor Arterials and Major Arterials: a reference that protected bike lanes are preferred, where feasible.
- A note has been added that references the On-Street Bikeway Design Guidelines.

Surface Transit

A revision is proposed to be made to the description to add the word "accommodation" for consistency with other characteristics in the table.

Heavy Truck Restrictions

A revision is proposed to be made to clarify that Local roads would typically be excepted from heavy truck restrictions in industrial areas.

Intersection Traffic Control Spacing

Typical minimum spacing is proposed to be identified rather than a range, to improve clarity and align with current engineering practice.

Right-of-Way Widths

No changes are proposed to be made to the criteria. A note has been added that references Map 3 in the City's Official Plan.

Table 1: Recommended City of Toronto Road Classification System Criteria[1]

Characteristic	Locals	Collectors	Minor Arterials	Major Arterials	Expressways
Traffic movement vs. property access	Property access primary function	Traffic movement and property access are of equal importance	Traffic movement primary consideration with some property access	Traffic movement primary consideration subject to property access control	Traffic movement primary consideration subject to property access control
Typical daily motor vehicle traffic volume (both directions)	< 2,500	2,500 - 8,000	8,000 - 20,000	> 20,000	> 40,000
Typical number of peak period lanes (excluding bicycle lanes)	One (one-way streets) or two		Two	Two to Four	Four+
Desirable connections	Locals, collectors	Locals, collectors, arterials	Collectors, arterials	Collectors, arterials, expressways	Major arterials, expressways
Flow characteristics	Interrupted flow	Interrupted flow	Uninterrupted except at signals and crosswalks	Uninterrupted except at signals and crosswalks	Free flow (grade-separated)
Typical legal speed limit (km/h)	30	40 (30 where traffic calming is prescribed)	40 - 60	50 - 60[2]	80 - 100
Accommodation of pedestrians [3]	Sidewalks on at least one side	Sidewalks on both sides			Pedestrians prohibited
Accommodation of cyclists	Special facilities as required [4] / shared roadway or bike lanes desirable, where feasible		Wide curb lane and special facilities desirable / protected bike lanes preferred, where feasible [4]		Cyclists prohibited
Accommodation of surface transit	Generally not provided	Permitted	Preferred	Preferred	Express buses only
Surface transit daily passengers	Not applicable	< 1,500	1,500 - 5,000	> 5,000	Not applicable
Heavy truck restrictions (e.g. seasonal or nighttime)	Restrictions preferred (except industrial areas)	Restrictions permitted	Generally, no restrictions	Generally, no restrictions	No restrictions
Typical Minimum spacing between traffic control devices [5] (metres)	150 [6]	200	200	200	Not applicable
Typical right-of-way width (metres)	15 - 22	20 - 27	20 [7]- 30 [8]	20 [7] – 45 [8]	> 45 [8]

Notes:

1. Private roads and laneways (public or private) are not part of this classification system.
2. A number of major arterial roads have speed limits that fall outside the typical range listed, as approved by City Council on a site-specific basis.
3. Refer to the Sidewalk Policy.
4. Refer to the On-Street Bikeway Design Guidelines.
5. Traffic control devices include traffic control signals, pedestrian crossovers and 'Stop' signs.
6. Spacing between intersections on local streets is preferred to be a minimum of 150 m and may be less in some situations.
7. Many downtown or older arterial roads have 20-metre rights-of-way. New arterial roads should have wider rights-of-way. The majority of existing arterial roads are 20-36 m wide as illustrated in Map 3 of the Official Plan.
8. Wider rights-of-way are sometimes required to accommodate other facilities such as installation of utilities, noise mitigation, transit, bicycle facilities, and streetscaping. For new streets, wider rights-of-way should be considered to accommodate such facilities.

Figure 1: Original Attachment 1: City of Toronto Road Classification System Criteria Table

Attachment 1: Road Classification Criteria (adopted by City Council on February 29, March 1 & 2, 2000)

Characteristic	Locals	Collectors	Minor Arterials	Major Arterials	Expressways
Traffic movement versus property access	Property access primary function	Traffic movement and property access of equal importance	Traffic movement primary consideration; some property access control	Traffic movement primary consideration; subject to property access control	Traffic movement primary consideration; no property access
Typical daily motor vehicle traffic volume (both directions)	< 2,500	2,500 - 8000	8,000 - 20,000	> 20,000	> 40,000
Minimum number of peak period lanes (excluding bicycle lanes)	One (one-way streets) or two		Two	Four	Four
Desirable connections	Locals, collectors	Locals, collectors, arterials	Collectors, arterials	Collectors, arterials, expressways	Major arterials, expressways
Flow characteristics	Interrupted flow	Interrupted flow	Uninterrupted except at signals and crosswalks	Uninterrupted except at signals and crosswalks	Free-flow (grade separated)
Legal speed limit, km/h	40 - 50	40 - 50	40 - 60	50 - 60[1]	80 – 100
Accommodation of pedestrians	Sidewalks on one or both sides	Sidewalks on both sides			Pedestrians prohibited
Accommodation of cyclists	Special facilities as required		Wide curb lane or special facilities desirable		Cyclists prohibited
Surface transit	Generally not provided	Permitted	Preferred	Preferred	Express buses only
Surface transit daily passengers	Not applicable	< 1,500	1,500 - 5,000	> 5,000	Not applicable
Heavy truck restrictions (e.g. seasonal or night time)	Restrictions preferred	Restrictions permitted	Generally no restrictions		No restrictions
Typical spacing between traffic control devices[2], (metres)	0 - 150	215 - 400	215 - 400	215 - 400	Not applicable
Typical right-of-way width, (metres)	15 - 22	20 - 27	20[3] – 30[4]	20[3] – 45[4]	> 45[4]

Notes: - Private roads and lanes (public or private) are not part of this classification system.

1. A number of major arterial roads have speed limits which fall outside this range.
2. Traffic control devices include; traffic control signals, pedestrian crossovers and 'Stop' signs.
3. 20 metre rights-of-way exist on many downtown or older arterial roads. New arterial roads should have wider rights-of-way.
4. Wider rights-of-way are sometimes required to accommodate other facilities such as utilities, noise mitigation, installations, transit, bicycle facilities, and streetscaping. For new streets, wider rights-of-way should be considered to accommodate such facilities.