Chapter 16

Above: Mailbox on a County Road in Rural Central Ohio
(Photo: 18banderson rustymailbox.blogspot.com)

Above Right: County Road Driveways
(Photo: Joe Robinson)

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Background

What is Access Management?

Access management regulations specify the number and spacing of driveways, traffic signals, medians, and intersections. These regulations can control allowable turning movements to and from driveways and streets, provide for cross access between parcels, and require adequate space for onsite vehicular circulation without causing overflow onto surrounding major highways. The purpose of these regulations is to reduce vehicular conflicts and accidents and maintain the capacity and efficient flow of major highways. Access management is also important for efficiency of access to local businesses by customers and delivery vehicles. Poorly spaced driveways can reduce roadway capacity by over 50%, and it has been estimated that left turns at driveways account for 60% of accidents on many urban roadways. The need for well thought out access control increases with the importance of the roadway. Local officials need to rank each roadway based on its importance to mobility and access.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) adopted access management regulations for state highways in 1998. Those regulations are spelled out in detail in the ODOT Access Management Manual. (see Resources). In the manual, standards for roadways are set out that are based on the speed limit, traffic volume and length of the roadway. These three factors dictate the types of access to the road, number of lanes and the types of turning lanes that are allowed. Speed and volume will also decide how far apart driveways and other access to the road are spaced. These standards have been developed to maximize safety and efficiency; they do not address land use considerations such as appropriate use, intensity of use, and adjacency concerns.

"Sound access management techniques increase driver safety. Increasing access points along a road increases the number of traffic accidents, so that a road with 60 points of access per mile has an accident rate three times that of a road with 10 access points per mile."

(Papayannoulis, Gluck, and Feeney, 2000).

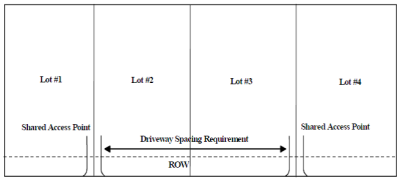
Often the only access restrictions placed on properties outside commercial areas and high density residential areas is to limit the number of driveways so that they are separated by a safe stopping distance for the posted speed limit. The driveway spacing for category IV highways maintained by ODOT is 250 feet for a section of roadway with a 35 miles per hour speed limit, 325 feet for 40 mph, 495 feet for 45 mph, 550 feet for 50 mph, and 605 feet for 55 mph. Furthermore, limited sight distances near hillcrests or along horizontal curves might restrict driveway and street locations. If not carefully integrated with subdivision regulations or zoning requirements, driveway spacing requirements can require frontages larger than intended, depending on where existing driveways have been placed on adjacent properties.

Counties, municipalities and townships can implement access management regulations on roads within their jurisdiction through spacing requirements for driveways and intersections, and allowing shared driveways to reduce the number of entries along a particular stretch of road. Similarly, requirements should reflect the design speed for the road, sight distances, and other safety considerations. Some counties permit common access driveways as a method of access management. See the Conservation Development chapter for more information.

How does Access Management relate to Balanced Growth?

Access management is an effective tool to help communities manage the safety and congestion impacts of development of individual parcels along a high-use road. It is very important to understand the role of access management in efficient development applications in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Access management helps to address safety and efficient roadway use in low-intensity development areas. However, it cannot substitute for up-front planning for compact, well-designed, efficient land uses that provide a range of transportation options and reduce congestion through their layout and clustering of uses. It is recommended, especially for urban and suburban areas, that careful planning address circulation that minimizes access management needs. In rural areas, however, access management can be a very effective tool for low-density situations. Access management can discourage strip development, flag lots, or minor subdivisions (lot splits) and promote clustering of land uses into unified developments with shared access. In addition to improving safety and mobility, properly implemented access management can discourage wasteful land use practices that can be aesthetically unpleasing and environmentally harmful.

Many closely spaced driveways along rural roads can contribute to congestion and traffic hazards.
(Photo: K.Date)



Proper driveway spacing can alleviate congestion and reduce traffic hazards.

Subdivision, Land Division, Development and Congestion Prevention Regulations
(Map: Licking County Planning Commission)

In Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, and North Carolina, implementation of access management projects had an overwhelmingly positive impact on affected businesses and consumers.

(Plazak and Preston, 2005; Williams, 2000; Maze, Plazak, Witmer, and Schrock, 2000; Cunningham et al., 2009)

Issues

- Responsibilities and authorities of counties, townships and municipalities with regard to access management differ according to Ohio Revised Code. Consult your County Engineer and County Prosecutor or community law director for advice.

- If your county or community has adopted access management regulations, they should be adhered to even in lot split situations. Your legal advisor is the best advisor on this and related issues.

- All access management regulations should be consistent with appropriate zoning, subdivision, storm water, and other land use-related regulations.

- The best opportunity to establish the most appropriate access management is when new roads are constructed or before development occurs. It is important to be proactive in considering access management in community decision making.

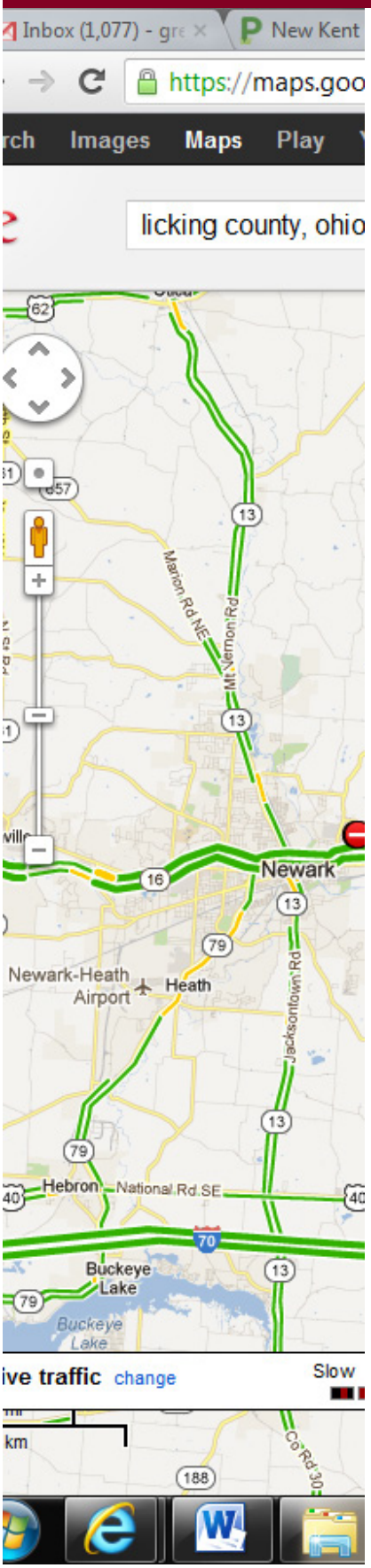
- "Complete streets" are roadways that facilitate different modes of transportation in addition to automobiles, such as pedestrians, bicycles and public transportation. A complete street does not need to accommodate all types of transport, but should try to address the needs that should be serviced in that area. In urban and suburban areas, complete street designs should be considered simultaneously with access management considerations. The Ohio Department of Transportation follows a 2005 Policy on Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel on ODOT Owned or Maintained Facilities. This policy provides for ODOT to consider bicycle and pedestrian accommodations as a component of the project development process for all transportation projects on ODOT owned or maintained facilities based on three criteria: 1) safety; 2) feasibility; and 3) local desire and potential for use.

Recommendations

A comprehensive countywide approach to access management is strongly recommended. Land use, zoning subdivision, and commercial regulations should address the following items to support access management. All local governments in the county should work together to ensure that their policies and regulations are aligned.

1. Building set back requirements should be adequate to preserve right-of-way for future road improvements and achieve adequate sight distances.

2. Joint easement requirements should be adequate to allow internal traffic circulation and encourage shared access between adjoining commercial frontages.



3. Minimum frontage requirements should be adequate for conforming lots to support desirable access spacing.

4. Subdivision development should occur along an arterial to provide access to all lots by an internal road system.

5. Regulate minor land divisions (lot splits) to support access standards.

6. Development review should explicitly provide an opportunity to ensure proper access and street layout in relation to existing and planned roadways.

7. Private road regulations and restrictions on flag lots or privately owned access easements should be adequate to prevent or address substandard private roads and related land division problems.

Example Regulations

Refer to the Example Regulations Matrix for a summary of the following. http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/BestLocalLandUsePractices/BestLocalLandUsePracticeChapters.aspx#Matrices

Licking County Access Management Regulations
http://www.lcounty.com/

Lucas County Access Management Regulations
http://co.lucas.oh.us/documentcenter/view/1277

Butler County Access Management Regulations
http://www.bceo.org/AccessManagementManual.pdf

Use of the Guidance and Example Regulations

This example guidance and/or regulations **should never be adopted without careful legal review** to assure that they are adapted to fit the authority and needs of the specific governmental body. They may need to be adapted for use by the specific type of local government and must be independently evaluated against potentially applicable federal or state law. **The law director/ solicitor, county prosecutor or other appropriate qualified legal counsel should always be consulted prior to adoption of any enforceable measures** based upon this guidance document to insure compliance and consistency with any applicable state and federal law, and to consider potential legal ramifications and liability in the implementation of the laws or rules to be adopted. Questions about the models and guidance can be directed to the Ohio Balanced Growth Program.

Resources

Ohio Department of Transportation, Division of Engineering, *Access Management Manual*. Web: http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Engineering/Roadway/AccessManagement/Pages/default.aspx

County Commissioners Association of Ohio, Access Management, *County Advisory Bulletin No.2002-06* September 2002, . Web: http://www.ccao.org/userfiles/CAB%20200206.pdf

County Engineers Association of Ohio, Tel: (614) 221-0707; Web: http://www.ceao.org

Butler County, OH, Engineer's Office, Transportation and Project Studies, *Access Management Manual* http://www.bceo.org/nbts.html

Complete Streets resource: http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission – Complete Streets resources:
http://morpc.org/transportation/complete-streets/index
http://morpc.org/transportation/complete-streets/toolkit/index

Ohio Dept of Transportation policy on pedestrian and bicycle accommodation: http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/SPR/bicycle/Pages/Design.aspx

ODOT bicycle and pedestrian program: http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/SPR/bicycle/Pages/default.aspx

Institute of Transportation Engineers
http://www.ite.org/

The American Planning Association
http://www.planning.org

For additional references cited, see the Bibliography in the Appendix, http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/BestLocalLandUsePractices/BestLocalLandUsePracticeChapters.aspx#Bibliography

Access management in rural areas reduces impacts along road frontages. (Photo: Brett McBean