Guidance for Urban Area Boundary Adjustment in Washington State

For Development Using the 2010 Decennial Urban Area (UA) Boundaries with Populations of 5,000 or Greater
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Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has adopted specific procedures for adjusting Urban Area (UA) boundaries. These boundaries are important because they define the breaks between rural and urban areas for transportation planning and operational purposes. This guidance defines the concepts and criteria, and establishes the procedures to be used by local agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for requesting changes to UA boundaries.

Urban Area (UA) Boundaries

Adjusted Urban Area (AUA) boundaries are used primarily to establish eligibility for transportation planning and operational purposes. AUAs should not be confused with the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Boundary\(^1\) or other boundary area studies, such as the Growth Management Area (GMA) boundaries that may be selected for the comprehensive urban planning process. The authority to adjust US Census designated Urban Area (UA) boundaries is provided in 23 CFR 470.105 and clarified in Section 6 of the FHWA 2012 guidance\(^2\). This document and the federal guidance are provided to assist affected Washington state MPOs and local jurisdictions (Appendix A) with the Adjusted Urban Area (AUA) process.

The UA boundary adjustments are cooperatively negotiated by MPO’s, local officials, and WSDOT before being submitted for approval by FHWA. The UA boundary process must be completed before any resulting Functional Classification (FC) adjustments can be made.

FHWA has determined the 2010 US Census “Urban Clusters” with populations of 5,000 to 49,999 will be used instead of Urban Places (previously used) in the AUA process. The US Census Bureau’s UA definition uses a population of 2,500. FHWA redefines the population as 5,000 for establishing AUAs.

Table 1. Urban Area Types as defined by US Census for population size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Bureau Area Definition</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Clusters</td>
<td>2,500 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanized Area</td>
<td>50,000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Note: The MPOs/TMAs will develop their MPAs in accordance with 23 CFR 450.312.

Table 2. Urban Area (UA) types as defined by FHWA for populations of 5,000 or greater.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FHWA Area Population Definition</th>
<th>Population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Urban Area</td>
<td>5,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanized Area (UZA)</td>
<td>50,000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boundary Review Team (BRT)

Following each decennial census release of the UA boundaries, the Transportation Planning Office (TPO) convenes a Boundary Review Team (BRT) to review boundary adjustment proposals from MPOs and local region planning agencies. The BRT is responsible for coordination, review, and communicating adjustment decisions to the affected parties, planning partners, and FHWA. The team also moderates unresolved disagreements between affected agencies or organizations and negotiates the final “draft” AUA recommendations for FHWA approval.

The BRT may consist of a staff representative from each of the following:

**WSDOT - Strategic Planning Division**
- Transportation Planning Office (TPO) - Lead
- GIS & Roadway Data Office (GRDO)
- Statewide Transportation Collisions Data Office (STCDO)

**WSDOT – Other Offices**
- Capital Program Development & Management Office (CPDM)
- Highways and Local Programs Offices, Regions and Headquarters’ (H&LP)
- Urban and Region Planning Offices

**Other Agency and Local Planning Representatives**
- County Road Administration Board (CRAB)
- FHWA Division Office
- Office of Financial Management (OFM)
- Representative of small urban area (with a population greater than 5,000)
- Transportation Improvement Board (TIB)
- Association of Washington Cities (AWC)
- Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC)

**Local and Regional Planning Partners**
During the AUA process the BRT interacts and communicates with regional WSDOT staff and local planning partners in all of the statewide areas affected by the boundary adjustments.

- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO)
Public Transportation Division
Tribal Transportation Planning Organization (TTPO)

**UA Boundary Adjustment Process**

The Transportation Planning Office (TPO) initiates a process for affected parties to adjust the UA boundaries. US Census maps and FHWA and WSDOT guidance are provided to assist with the AUA process.

- BRT will establish seven regional meetings to discuss this process.
- BRT provides guidance, maps and other resource information necessary for the AUA process.
- If a MPO/RTPO or local agency decides to adjust their urban area boundary, they are responsible for coordinating and working cooperatively with cities, counties, ports, transit, ferries, rail, and Tribes as boundaries are reviewed, discussed, and adjusted.
- BRT cooperatively assists each MPO/RTPO and other affected parties with the AUA process. If necessary, BRT arbitrates differences.
- WSDOT’s BRT members are responsible for establishing or revising the final “draft” AUA boundaries and presenting them to the Strategic Planning Director.
- The Strategic Planning Director, Brian Smith, provides approval and forwards the “drafts” to FHWA.
- FHWA provides final approval and notifies TPO.
- TPO notifies MPOs/RTPOs and other affected parties.

**Criteria for Establishing Adjusted Urban Area (AUA) Boundaries**

1. The UA boundary, at a minimum, must encompass the entire 2010 decennial US Census UZA or urban cluster of 5,000 people or greater.

2. A review of local and regional plans should be conducted so that the boundary reflects expectations for the upcoming decade (i.e., until the 2020 US Census UA designation).

3. The Adjusted Urban Area (AUA) boundary will encompass a single contiguous area without holes or discontinuities and rural areas should not be situated along the inside edges of the AUA boundaries.

4. The AUA boundary should include entire municipalities (incorporated areas), as long as there is not an attempt to extend the boundaries beyond the area expected to become part of the UA within the upcoming decade.
5. The AUA boundary should encompass areas outside of the municipal boundaries having residential, commercial, industrial, and/or national defense land use patterns that are consistent with or related to development patterns.

6. The AUA boundary will encompass all traffic generators that are located within a reasonable distance to the edges of public parks, large places of assembly, large industrial plants, etc.

7. Rapidly expanding areas of urbanization should be included within the AUA boundary, if these areas are expected to fall within the 2020 US Census UA designated area.

8. Transportation terminals and/or access roads serving these areas, (e.g., airports and seaports), but outside of the UA should be included if they are located within a reasonable distance from the AUA.

9. Consideration should be given to transit service routes (e.g., bus, passenger rail) and linkage points (e.g., stations and bus stops) with substantial implications and where inclusion will not unduly distort the 2010 US Census designated UA boundaries.

10. The AUA boundary should be designed to deter peripheral roadways from snaking in and out across the boundary. Adjustments should support consistent designations of roadways, such that they are either inside or outside of the boundary.

11. The AUA boundary, to the greatest degree possible, should be defined so that by using a map in the field it can be easily located. In instances where the boundary deviates from political jurisdictions, the boundary should follow physical features (e.g., rivers, streams, irrigation canals, transmission lines, railroads, streets, or highways). In instances where physical features are lacking, the AUA boundary should cross roads, streets, highways intersections, major crossroads, and/or interchanges that are easily identified in the field.

12. After the preliminary AUA boundary has been established using these criteria, as a final step the AUA boundary irregularities should be minimized to reduce confusion that can result from complex boundaries.

Additional AUA Boundary Recommendations

1. Minimize confusion and ambiguity, such as between a divided highway, by either including or excluding both sides of the highway.

2. Roadways that define a boundary between two UAs belong in the UA that it primarily serves. If the roadway serves both UAs equally, a binding agreement should be made that assigns the roadway appropriately.
3. All ramps and interchanges for access controlled roadways should be included or excluded, and intersections should not be divided.

4. Coastal areas should reflect the generally accepted geospatial coastal boundaries.

**Procedures**

1. The BRT will review all AUA boundary decisions and have the opportunity for input. Members of this team may participate in the weekly reviews.

2. WSDOT will provide all resource information and maps at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/2010UABoundaries](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/2010UABoundaries)

3. Submittal of maps and AUA boundary proposals should be sent to:
   - Mark Bozanich
   - WSDOT GIS & Roadway Data Office
   - BozaniM@wsdot.wa.gov
   - Phone: 360-596-8921

4. As proposed changes are received from agencies, WSDOT will review and communicate with MPOs, RTPOs, and other locals as needed to establish the boundaries.
   - These meetings will occur as needed during March - June 2013.
   - There will be 7 region meetings held across Washington. These meetings will be organized by the WSDOT TPO to include local agencies involved with this process.
   - The time period for local agencies to submit proposals to the BRT will conclude on May 31, 2013.

5. The BRT will complete their review and define the “draft” AUA boundaries by June 14, 2013 to ensure the following deadlines are met.

6. The “draft” AUA boundaries will be sent to the Strategic Planning Division Director, Brian Smith, for WSDOT signature, and then forwarded to FHWA.

7. FHWA will review the “drafts” and provide signature approval by June 28, 2013

**Following the AUA Process**

WSDOT’s GRDO and STCDO staff will incorporate the new boundaries and resulting Functional Classification (FC) changes into the WSDOT systems. They will also facilitate this boundary process involving all affected agencies, MPOs, RTPOs, WSDOT Regional and Urban Planning offices, Local Programs offices, and FHWA to approve changes to the Functional Classification System by December 31, 2013. Calendar Year 2013 data will be submitted to FHWA for the HPMS submittal including the new boundaries and FC.
**UA Boundary Adjustment and Functional Classification (FC) Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Completed by</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) January 31, 2013</td>
<td>(1) Establish the Adjusted Urban Areas (AUA) Boundary Review Team (BRT)</td>
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<td>(2) January 31, 2013</td>
<td>(2) Ensure Agencies have updated maps to review</td>
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<td>(3) February – June 2013</td>
<td>(3) BRT group holds regular meetings.</td>
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<td>(4) March – May 2013</td>
<td>(4) Seven region meetings are held statewide.</td>
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<td>(5) May 31, 2013</td>
<td>(5) BRT reviewers meet to review/discuss proposed changes as they are received and determine any necessary responses</td>
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<td>(6) June 14, 2013</td>
<td>(6) Complete the 2013 AUA Boundaries for approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) June 18, 2013</td>
<td>(7) Send the AUA boundaries to WSDOT’s Strategic Planning Director, Brian Smith, for signature</td>
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<tr>
<td>(8) June 21, 2013</td>
<td>(8) Submit the AUA boundaries to FHWA</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>July 3 to December 31, 2013 – Functional Classification (FC) process occurs.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(9) December 31, 2013</td>
<td>(9) Incorporate the new boundaries and resulting Functional Classification (FC) changes into the WSDOT systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) December 31, 2013</td>
<td>(10) Submit the boundaries and FC System to FHWA (HPMS submittal)</td>
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<td>(resulting data reported by June 15, 2014)</td>
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Appendix A.

US Census Urbanized Areas and Urban Clusters with Populations
US Census Urbanized Areas and Urban Clusters

Urbanized Areas (population 50,000 and over)

Bellingham, WA
Bremerton, WA
Kennewick-Pasco, WA
Lewiston, ID-WA
Longview, WA
Marysville, WA
Mount Vernon, WA
Olympia-Lacey, WA
Portland, OR-WA
Seattle, WA
Spokane, WA
Walla Walla, WA-OR
Wenatchee, WA
Yakima, WA

Small Urban Areas (Cluster Areas) (population 5,000 to 49,999)

Aberdeen, WA
Anacortes, WA
Birch Bay, WA
Camano, WA
Centralia, WA
Chelan, WA
Cheney, WA
Ellensburg, WA
Ephrata, WA
Grandview, WA
Granite Falls, WA
Indianola, WA
Lynden, WA
Montesano-Elma, WA
Moses Lake, WA
Oak Harbor, WA
Ocean Shores, WA
Omak, WA
Othello, WA
Port Angeles, WA
Port Townsend, WA
Pullman, WA
Quincy, WA
Sequim, WA
Shelton, WA
Snoqualmie, WA
Stanwood, WA
Sultan, WA
Sunnyside, WA
Toppenish, WA
Wapato, WA
Woodland, WA
Yelm, WA
Appendix B.

Acronyms for AUA Guidance
Acronyms for AUA Guidance (2010 Decennial Census)

1. AUA – Adjusted Urban Area *(federal designation)*
2. AWC – Association of Washington Cities
3. BRT – Boundary Review Team
4. CFR – Code of Federal Regulations
5. CPDM – Capital Program Development & Management
6. CRAB – County and Roads Administration Board
7. FC - Functional Classification
8. GRDO – GIS and Roadway Data Office
9. H&LP – Highways and Local Programs
10. HPMS – Highway Performance Monitoring System
11. FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
12. OFM – Office of Financial Management
13. MPA – Metropolitan Planning Area *(for MPO Planning)*
14. MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization
15. RTPO – Regional Transportation Planning Organization
16. STCDO – Statewide Transportation Collisions Data Office
17. TIB – Transportation Improvement Board
18. TPO – Transportation Planning Office
19. UA – Urban Area
20. US – United States
21. USC - United States Code
22. UZA – Urbanized Area
23. WSAC – Washington State Association of Counties
24. WSDOT – Washington State Department of Transportation