
I. Arterial Functional Classification

Functional classification is the designation of highways, road and streets into groups or classes according to the type of service they are intended to provide. A basic tenet to this process is that individual roads do not serve travel in any substantial way, but most travel involves movement through a network of roads. Functional classification helps to define the part that any individual road will play in serving the flow of traffic through the road system.

There are two primary functions of a street or road, and at times they may conflict with each other. First, the street must serve the safe and expedient movement of people and goods. Second, it must provide access to adjacent property. Roads that provide for the efficient movement of traffic have different characteristics from those that provide direct access to a wide variety of land uses.

Functional street classification is an important tool for planning a transportation or roadway system, as well as in designing and constructing individual facilities. The classification system and associated guidelines are used to distinguish between different types of roads for planning analyses, road design, and for allocating public funds for transportation improvements.

Between the extremes of high mobility and high access there is a range of street classifications to reflect the relative emphasis on traffic movement versus access to property. Specific classifications are assigned to each road, or section of road, depending on the transportation function served by the facility. The difference in the function of individual streets has been the basis for classifying King County's roads.

Three classification categories of arterials are defined as follows for Unincorporated King County:

PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL - Provides for movement across and between large subareas of an urban region and serves predominantly through traffic with minimum direct service to abutting land uses. This category includes freeways and major highways under the jurisdiction of the Washington State Department of Transportation.

MINOR ARTERIAL - Provides for movement within the larger subareas bound by principal arterials. A minor arterial may also serve through traffic but provides more direct access to abutting land uses than does a principal arterial.

COLLECTOR ARTERIAL - Provides for movement within smaller areas which are often definable neighborhoods, and which may be bound by arterials with higher classifications. Collectors serve very little through traffic and serve a high proportion of local traffic requiring direct access to abutting properties. Collector arterials provide the link between local neighborhood streets (i.e. non-arterials) and larger arterials.