



Memorandum

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Subject: **INFORMATION**: Revised FHWA on Census
Urban Boundary Changes

Date: October 2, 2002

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Refer To: HEPS-10

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To: Division Administrators
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The purpose of this memorandum is to adjust FHWA's position on Census Urban Boundaries.

Previously, we were informed that Census had adopted a new procedure for determining what they considered as urban. Their new procedure resulted in a new term called "urban clusters", which were based on the residential density of Census Blocks. In some cases, this new definition could cause substantial areas that are essentially rural in character to be designated as urban. In other cases, it can cause commercial and industrial areas to be designated as rural.

Title 23 designates urban places with a population of 5,000 or more as urban. Moreover, it allows States and locals to adjust those boundaries provided the adjusted area includes all of the area that Census designated. What this means is that they can add territory but not subtract areas. Any adjustments must be approved by FHWA's Division Offices.

Title 23 does not mention the term "urban cluster". Because of some of the previously mentioned problems in using urban clusters, we have contacted the Census and learned that they still have the capability for mapping places (urban places refers to incorporated places and if not incorporated, Census designated places with a population of 5,000 or more). Although the Census Bureau replaced the urban place by the urban cluster to address the problem that some political boundaries included rural areas, the urban cluster presented some new problems. Therefore, FHWA has decided to allow the States the flexibility of using either the Census urban place or the Census urban cluster.



Whichever option the State chooses, we will still allow further adjustments provided that they include whatever the Census has included. States should cooperate with local officials before making their decision. There could be some cases where an area might have 5,000 population using one definition but less than 5,000 if they used the other. Whichever option is chosen, it should be applied consistently throughout the state.

Once the boundaries are approved by FHWA, any roads affected shall have their functional classification changed.

Federal Highway Administration
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