

2026 Interstate Highways Congestion Policy

Summary of Key Changes from the 2017 Policy

The following summarizes major changes introduced with the 2026 update:

FORMAT

The 2026 IHCP has been restructured to follow INDOT's standard policy-document format. Much of the prior policy content remains but it may have been editorially simplified, clarified, or relocated so related topics are grouped more logically.

INTENT

While the overarching purpose of the policy remains unchanged, the 2026 IHCP clarifies that the focus is on preventing queue formation and ensuring appropriate queue mitigation whenever a queue occurs.

SCOPE

The 2026 IHCP more clearly states that the scope includes work operations both on and adjacent to the interstate, including off-pavement activities and all capacity-reducing work.

DEFINITIONS

An expanded Terms and Definitions section has been added as an appendix. "Restriction" is now used as the umbrella term for all forms of closures and width reductions.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The new policy more clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the Requestor, Reviewer, District Traffic Engineer, Approver, Work Zone Council, and Responsible Site Supervisor.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

The 2026 IHCP reflects recent changes to approval authorities for the different work types:

- INDOT Construction Contract work..... Managing Director of TSMO
- INDOT Maintenance work..... District Deputy Commissioner
- Permit work District Deputy Commissioner
- TMD ITS Infrastructure maintenance work..... Managing Director of TSMO

PROCESS

Overall handling of planned restrictions remains similar to the prior combination of the 2017 IHCP and Design Memo 24-08 (High-Volume Interstate Segments), with several key changes:

- All restrictions must be vetted by the District Traffic Office and submitted using a new IHCP Restriction Notification form.
- The 2026 IHCP incorporates recent Operations and Design memoranda related to High-Volume Interstate Segments, and Appendix B now includes a column to help identify such segments.
- Defined review timelines are established based on the case:
 - For Appendix B-compliant restrictions not requiring a Policy Exception 7 days
 - For Policy Exceptions not involving Appendix D..... 21 days
 - For Policy Exceptions involving Appendix D and Work Zone Council reviews 60 days
- Appendix E introduces District Special Project Corridor Segments, allowing districts to establish additional requirements or guidelines where needed.
- The new role of "Responsible Site Supervisor" emphasizes the importance of communicating restriction information to field personnel and the requirement to make notifications before implementation.
- Additional guidance on preparing IHCP Exceptions and conducting analyses will be issued separately outside the policy. See the new **Queue Analysis Guidelines** available from the IHCP website.
- See the new **Policy Exception Preparation and Review Process Guidelines**, focused on navigating Appendices C, D, and E available from the IHCP website.

Summary of Revisions from the 2017 Policy (continued)

SELECT INTERSTATE RESTRICTIONS AND TIMES REPLACE APPENDIX B “PRE-APPROVED CLOSURES”

Major revisions have been made to Appendix B.

- The previous concept of “pre-approved closures” has been removed. Historically, non-contract pre-approved restrictions had little oversight, and INDOT often had no awareness of them until implementation.
- Going forward, all planned restrictions must be routed through the appropriate District Traffic Office, giving districts operational control, ensuring awareness, and encouraging alignment with policy intent while reducing exception requests.
- Appendix B is now titled “Select Interstate Restrictions and Times” (SIRT) and includes additional restriction types that, with district concurrence, are considered policy compliant.
- The new SIRT tables replace the former pre-approved lane/shoulder closure tables. They follow the format previously used for District Biennial Maintenance Exceptions and provide more flexibility in restriction type (e.g., number of lanes) and allowable times.

EXCISIONS

Several components have been removed from the policy:

- **District Biennial Maintenance Exceptions (DBMEs)**
Removed because the new SIRT tables now serve the DBME function. All maintenance-related restrictions must now be coordinated through the District Traffic Office.
- **Emergency/Urgent Repair Notification Memo in Appendix A**
The district memo requirement is removed. Appendix A still includes notifications, but a memo is no longer required.
- **Computational Analysis Instructions in Appendix C**
Detailed procedures (e.g., queue analysis methods, converting raw traffic counts to PCEs) have been removed and will be provided separately as guidance document. See the new **Queue Analysis Guidelines** available from the IHCP website.
- **Policy Limits in Appendix C**
The 2017 “Policy Limits” framework has been eliminated. These thresholds were frequently misunderstood as acceptable targets. The 2026 intent is to avoid impacts where feasible, minimize unavoidable impacts, and mitigate queues whenever they occur. Queue mile-hours may be used to evaluate and compare alternatives. (For context: the 2017 framework effectively treated queues greater than 2 mile-hours as outside limits.)
- **Rolling Slowdowns Appendix D**
The 2017 Appendix D has been removed. As temporary traffic breaks, including rolling slowdowns, are a type of restriction, the 2026 IHCP continues to apply to them. A new guidance document has been created to maintain the guidance from the 2017 policy covering Rolling Slowdowns. Further expansion and development is planned in a future update to improve existing guidance and to cover other Temporary Traffic Break strategies. See the new **Temporary Traffic Breaks Guidelines** available from the Work Zone Safety website.
- **Queue Measurement & Reporting Appendix E**
The 2017 Appendix E has been removed. With INDOT’s current real-time and historical data capabilities, separate queue-measurement instructions are no longer needed.