

FCDOT COVID-19 Traffic Count Guidance

Date: May 1, 2020

Executive Summary

After research and evaluation, FCDOT has determined to utilize historical traffic data as the foundation for traffic impact studies conducted during the COVID-19 crisis. It is critical that data collected provides accurate insights on the typical distribution and demand of turning movement volumes. Older traffic count data should carefully be scrutinized to ensure applicability. Turning movement counts collected within the last two years are generally acceptable. If beyond the two year threshold, site specific adjustment factors and changes in land use should be investigated. Adjustment factors could be derived from analyzing Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) database at <https://www.virginiadot.org/info/ct-TrafficCounts.asp>. In these instances, changes in land use over time will need to be determined from previous traffic impact studies and Fairfax County's planning and zoning viewer at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maps/property-planning>. *Alternative methodologies may be considered, and proposals will be evaluated by FCDOT and VDOT.* Both agencies will review alternative methodologies on a case by case basis for each proposal and make the final determination regarding their use.

Given the atypical traffic patterns during the crisis, applying adjustment factors to turning movement counts during this pandemic could result in inaccuracies due to distribution and demand that is not reflective of typical traffic patterns. Because citizens are strongly encouraged to remain at home and all non-essential businesses and schools are temporarily closed due to the Governor's "stay at home" order, turning movement counts taken during this time would be skewed. The sporadic travel patterns make it challenging for reviewers to evaluate the specific impacts to each movement. Therefore, FCDOT will not accept counts during the COVID-19 crisis. If historical or alternative traffic data is not available as a foundation, collection of count data will need to occur after the situation has normalized. FCDOT, in coordination with VDOT, will determine when it is appropriate to relax or remove these guidelines. A letter will be issued to that effect when any changes to these guidelines occur.

Guidelines

- Traffic count data collected during this time is not acceptable for development analysis due to atypical traffic patterns
- Every project will need to be evaluated on a case by case basis
- Coordination with and approval from FCDOT and VDOT is necessary to determine acceptable evaluation options
- FCDOT and VDOT will determine acceptable methodologies in coordination with applicants prior to study submission. Studies will not be accepted without an agreed methodology framework in place.

Recommended Practices

1. Historical Count Data

- a. Gather any historical count data available for the intersections to be studied
- b. If count data is beyond 2 years old,
 - i. Evaluate changes in nearby land use over the years using County's planning and zoning viewer
 - ii. AADT from the VDOT database to understand the growth trend
- c. Adjust historic counts to approximate current year conditions

2. MIST Data

- a. VDOT has data for turning movement counts at signalized intersections
 - i. Verify when the data was collected
- b. This data is retrieved on a request basis
- c. This can be used as a point of reference to understand traffic patterns

3. Big Data Analytics

- a. Traffic count data extrapolated through Location-Based-Services (smartphones)
- b. ADT and turning movement counts
- c. Must be based on data collected before the COVID-19 crisis and within the last two years

4. Modeling

- a. County Transportation Planning Section could use the 2015 validated County model to estimate turning movement volumes for 2020 conditions
- b. This can be used as another point of reference