

Design Advisory

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Index:

[Road Design Manual](#)
3.08.01
[Bridge Design Manual](#)
12.01, 12.03
Form DV26

This advisory is superseded by any subsequent revisions to the references listed in this index.

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**Better
DESIGN**

Design Controlling Criteria Design Exception/Design Variance

On May 5, 2016, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published a final notice in the federal register establishing a revised list of controlling design criteria that require formal design exception documentation and approval when minimum standards are not met.

The former policy established in 1985, included 13 controlling criteria which have now been reduced to eliminate elements no longer deemed by FHWA as critical. The new list has been established and is now applied in relation to design speed. Most controlling criteria will apply only at high design speeds (≥ 50 mph).

Some criteria, while no longer requiring a design exception, are still of interest to the department and will be documented as a **Design Variance** (form [DV26](#) trunkline). Design Variance documentation requirements will be less involved than a Design Exception, and will be approved for MDOT projects at the region level and filed in ProjectWise.

The [Road Design Manual](#) and [Bridge Design Manual](#) have been revised to identify the new controlling criteria and define the application and procedures.

This revision provides greater flexibility to use performance based practical design solutions when challenged with constraints and shared multimodal needs.

Implementation is effective immediately for MDOT projects.