GUIDANCE FOR REVISING FEDERAL-AID URBAN AREA BOUNDARIES

Census urbanized area (UZA) boundaries do not correspond to known geographic or municipal boundaries and are typically very irregularly and unusually shaped. The adjustment of these boundaries allows States and MPOs to smooth out irregularities, maintain administrative continuity, and encompass fringe area having residential, commercial, industrial, and/or national defense significance. Adjustment is optional but facilitates planning and programming statewide by creating more logical, less irregular boundaries for these purposes. Adjustments of UZAs must take place by June of 2014 or before the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MPO Long Range Plan) due date in MPO areas and must be approved by USDOT.

Subsequent to the urban area boundary update, NYSDOT will be updating functional classifications to reflect the new urbanized boundaries. Adjusting the Census urban area boundaries is a necessary first step in the functional classification review.

Policy and Planning Division (PPD) staff will work in conjunction with the NYSMPOs on UAB adjustments in urbanized areas over 50,000 in population and with Regional Planning Offices to accomplish adjustments of urbanized areas 5,000 to 50,000 in population.

According to FHWA’s Census FAQ’s
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/urbanized_areas_and_mpo_tma/faq/page00.cfm

Adjusted Urbanized Areas:

1) Must encompass the entire Urbanized Area or urban cluster area as designated by the Bureau of the Census

2) Should be one, single contiguous area.

3) Should encompass areas outside of municipality boundaries that have urban characteristics with residential, commercial, industrial, or national defense land uses that are consistent with or related to the development patterns with the boundary.

4) Should encompass all large traffic generators that are within a reasonable distance from the urban area (e.g., fringe area public parks, large places of assembly, large industrial plants, etc.). This would include transportation terminals and their access roads (e.g., airports, seaports).

Where an urban boundary coincides with or is close to a road or street, the road or street will be assumed by NYSDOT to be inside the urban area and, therefore, designated “urban.”
APPLICABLE FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

Please note population derived from the Adjusted UZA is not used in the federal transportation programs where a population count is required for funding allocations. Where a population count is required, the Census-designated UZA population is used. Once the adjusted urban area boundaries are approved, they become the basis for determining urban and rural classifications for several federal transportation programs as shown in the FHWA FAQ examples below:

**Highway Functional Classification:** The highway functional classification system distinguishes both by type of roadway facility and whether the facility is located in an urban or rural area. A specific type of roadway facility may have different design criteria depending on whether it is in a rural or urban area, but highway design criteria are not applied strictly according to an urban versus rural boundary designation.

**HPMS Reporting:** FHWA's Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) requests States to report annual highway statistics (i.e., lane and centerline miles, VMT) by highway functional classification, including urban versus rural. Several tables in FHWA's annual *Highway Statistics* Report also summarize information by urban versus rural classifications.

**Distribution of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds:** 23 USC 133(d)(3)(B) guarantees that a minimum of 110% of the amount of funds apportioned to the State in FY 1991 for the Federal Aid secondary system must be spent in rural areas. A rural area is defined as any area of the State that is outside of the Adjusted UZA (sometimes called the Federal Aid Urban Area or FAUA) boundaries. This provision only affects where funds may be spent within a State, not how much money the State receives.

**STP Apportionment Formula:** 23 USC 104(b)(3) includes, as part of the apportionment formula for STP funding, lane miles and VMT on Federal Aid highways within the state. Federal Aid highways include all highway functional classifications except local roads and rural minor collectors. Expanding the boundary of urban areas within the state may change some rural minor collectors to urban collectors, making them eligible as Federal Aid highways. However, the impact on apportionment of federal aid funding is insignificant.

**Control of Outdoor Advertising:** The Outdoor Advertising Control Program (23 USC 131) uses the UZA definition in 23 USC 101(a)(36) to specify the boundary between locations where signage can be placed beyond 660 feet and be intended to be read from the highway.
Sequence of UAB (Urban Area Boundary) & MPA (Metropolitan Planning Area)

Revision Steps

1) NYSDOT distributes UAB-MPA revision guidance

2) NYSDOT transmits Census block and urban area shape files to MPOs and Regions for revision purposes in January, 2013

3) MPOs and Regions prepare draft UAB adjustments, send files back to NYSDOT Main Office for review

4) NYSDOT Main Office signs off on draft UABs

5) MPOs determine if MPA revisions are necessary

6) MPOs vote to approve adjusted UABs via resolution and MPA revisions as applicable

7) Regions secure local approval for small urban area revisions

8) NYSDOT transmits MPO UABs to USDOT with NYSDOT approval letter. Approval letter reaffirms existing MPA or indicates if MPA is being revised

9) NYSDOT transmits revised MPAs to USDOT for information

10) FHWA/FTA approve UABs via letter.

11) Process should be completed for most MPOs and Regions by September 30, 2013