

SMART SCALE Policy Guidance

Design Waivers (DW) and Design Exceptions (DE)

Design Waivers (DW) and Design Exceptions (DE) can be acceptable assumptions to include as part of SMART SCALE project submission, assuming there is proper documentation and support from the responsible approver as required by [Location and Design IIM-227](#). This policy is to address concerns DWs and DEs are not formally approved at the time of intake for SMART SCALE, and formal approval would only occur in future PE phase as part of project design if funded.

Documenting Design Waivers (DW) and Design Exceptions (DE)

1. Applicant, with input and assistance from VDOT or DRPT, identifies potential DW or DE during the development of the SMART SCALE Pre-Application and Full Application.
2. Applicant prepares and uploads as supporting documentation a DW or DE overview document.
3. A DW or DE overview document should include the following information.
 - a. Detailed project description and summary of project objectives
 - b. Conceptual sketch identifying the feature(s) and location(s) for which a DW or DE is being proposed
 - c. Concise reasoning for why proposed DW or DE is being requested (example: significant reduction in specific project impact).
 - d. Justification as to why the proposed substandard element is an acceptable design (examples: does not compromise sight distance, no signs anticipated in reduced buffer strip)
 - e. Summary of safety implications and any applicable proposed mitigation
4. Applicant provides an estimated percentage of cost impact to the overall project.
5. Applicant submits an overview document to the appropriate approving entity (outlined in the [Location and Design IIM-227](#) - District L&D Engineer (DW), Assistant State L&D Engineer (DE), or FHWA (DE - some interstate projects) during the Pre-Application and early Full Application intake phase (April – June)
 - a. Appropriate approving entity provides, in writing, a preliminary opinion (email or memo) outlining if the information provided overview document is acceptable - applicant includes this feedback in application supporting documentation for future reference. The preliminary opinion shall not guarantee approval of a future DW or DE submission as more detailed information will be discovered after pre-scoping that affects the information in the overview document.
 - b. If there is preliminary support from the appropriate approving entity then the project cost estimate may reflect the cost savings from the DW or DE with acknowledgement of the final DW or DE approval risk stated above.