

APPENDIX B
Description of Level of Service Criteria and Characteristics

Freeway LOS

From the *Highway Capacity Manual 2000* published by the Transportation Research Board:

The level of service (LOS) for freeway is determined by density of vehicles in the freeway section area. The LOS criteria for freeway are as follow:

LOS CRITERIA FOR FREEWAY SEGMENTS

LOS	Density Range (pc/mi/ln)*
A	≤ 11
B	> 11-18
C	> 18-26
D	> 26-35
E	> 35-45
F	> 45

* pc/mi/ln = passenger cars per mile per lane

LOS A describes free-flow operations. Free-flow speeds prevail. Vehicles are almost completely unimpeded in their ability to maneuver the traffic stream. The effects of incidents or point breakdowns are easily absorbed at this level.

LOS B represents reasonably free flow, and free-flow speeds are maintained. The ability to maneuver within the traffic stream is only slightly restricted, and the general level of physical and psychological comfort provided to drivers is still high. The effects of minor incidents and point breakdowns are still easily absorbed.

LOS C provides for flow with speeds at or near the free-flow speeds of the freeway. Freedom to maneuver within the traffic stream is noticeably restricted, and lane changes require more care and vigilance on the part of the driver. Minor incidents may still be absorbed, but the local deterioration in service will be substantial. Queues may be expected to form behind any significant blockage.

LOS D is the level at which speeds begin to decline slightly with increasing flows and density begins to increase somewhat more quickly. Freedom to maneuver within the traffic stream is more noticeably limited, and the driver experiences reduced physical and psychological comfort levels. Even minor incidents can be expected to create queuing, because the traffic stream has little space to absorb disruptions.

LOS E, at its highest density value, describes operation at capacity. Operations at this level are volatile, because there are virtually no usable gaps in the traffic stream. Vehicles are closely spaced, leaving little room to maneuver within the traffic stream at speeds that still exceed 49 mi/h. Any disruption of the traffic stream, such as vehicles entering from a ramp or a vehicle changing lanes, can establish a disruption wave that propagates throughout the upstream traffic flow. At capacity, the traffic stream has no ability to dissipate even the most minor disruption, and any incident can be expected to produce a serious breakdown with extensive queuing. Maneuverability within the traffic

stream is extremely limited, and the level of physical and psychological comfort afforded the driver is poor.

LOS F describes breakdowns in vehicular flow. Such conditions generally exist within queues forming behind breakdown points. Breakdowns occur for a number of reasons:

- Traffic incidents can cause a temporary reduction in the capacity of a short segment, so that the number of vehicles arriving at the point is greater than the number of vehicles that can move through it.
- Points of recurring congestion, such as merge or weaving segments and lane drops, experience very high demand in which the number of vehicles arriving is greater than the number of vehicles discharged.
- In forecasting situations, the projected peak-hour (or other) flow rate can exceed the estimated capacity of the location.

Note that in all cases, breakdown occurs when the ratio of existing demand to actual capacity or of forecast demand to estimated capacity exceeds 1.00. Operations immediately downstream of such a point, however, are generally at or near capacity, and downstream operations improve (assuming that there are no additional downstream bottlenecks) as discharging vehicles move away from the bottleneck.

LOS F operations within a queue are the result of a breakdown or bottleneck at a downstream point. LOS F is also used to describe conditions at the point of the breakdown or bottleneck and the queue discharge flow that occurs at speeds lower than the lowest speed for LOS E, as well as the operations within the queue that forms upstream. Whenever LOS F conditions exist, they have the potential to extend upstream for significant distances.