

## Forest Service Roads Glossary

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*This glossary includes current definitions and policy references as well as additional explanations, historic references, and commentary to aid the user in understanding the evolution of road terminology within the Forest Service.*

**Accessibility.** The accommodation of access to buildings and transportation facilities or other infrastructure, particularly for persons with disabilities. (FSM 7715.79)

*Consistent with 36 CFR 212.1, FSM 2353.05, and Title V, Section 507(c), of the Americans With Disabilities Act, wheelchairs and mobility devices, including those that are battery-powered, that are designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion and that are suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area are allowed on all NFS lands that are open to foot travel. There is no legal requirement to allow persons with disabilities to use motor vehicles on roads, on trails, and in areas that are closed to motor vehicle use. Restrictions on motor vehicle use that are applied consistently to everyone are not discriminatory. Generally, granting an exemption from designations for people with disabilities would not be consistent with the resource protection and other management objectives of designation decisions and would fundamentally alter the nature of the Forest Service's travel management program (29 U.S.C. 794; 7 CFR 15e.103).*

**Access right.** The right of a private landholder or mineral right owner whose property interest is entirely or partially surrounded by National Forest System lands to reasonable access, either permanent or temporary. (FSH 7709.59 ch22)

*These rights may be exercised on National Forest System Roads open to unrestricted motorized public use without a written authorization. Authorization of reasonable access should be in writing if the use conflicts with designation, road regulations, or orders.*

*The responsible official may prescribe such terms and conditions as the official deems adequate to secure to non-federal property owners the reasonable use and enjoyment of their property (16 U.S.C. 3210(a); 36 CFR 212.6(b) and 251.110(c)). These private property owners may be exempted from closure orders through road use permit or a special use authorization. (36 CFR 251.113; FSM 2730; FSM 7731.14)*

**Administrative Road.** Any National Forest System road that is not a public road. (FSM 7730.5)  
*Administrative roads may be designated for motor vehicle use, or may be closed.*

**Area.** A discrete, specifically delineated space that is smaller, and in most cases much smaller, than a ranger district (36 CFR 212.1).

**Commensurate Share.** The proportion of maintenance and reconstruction associated with an NFS road that is assignable to a commercial hauler for purposes of cost recovery under FSM 7730 (16 U.S.C. 537). (FSM 7730.5)

**Condition Survey.** An inspection of the facility which identifies and documents the roadway conditions, deficiencies, and physical features using established maintenance standards as reference. (FSH 7709.58)

**Cooperator.** An individual or entity that is a party to an investment sharing agreement or is granted an easement for acquisition, construction, or maintenance of an NFS road pursuant to Title 16, United States Code, section 535. (FSM 7730.5) *Investment share is the proportion of acquisition, construction, and maintenance costs associated with an NFS road that is assignable to a cooperator, a commercial hauler, or the Forest Service for purposes of investment sharing (16 U.S.C. 535).*

**Deferred Maintenance.** Maintenance activities which can be delayed without critical loss of facility serviceability until such time as the work can be economically or efficiently performed. Deferred Maintenance cost is the amount of funding necessary to restore a constructed asset to a condition substantially equivalent to the original design, efficiency, or capability; maintenance not performed when it otherwise should or would have been scheduled.

*Critical Deferred Maintenance includes maintenance and repair activities that if not performed will pose a serious threat to public health or safety, a natural resource, or the ability to carry out the mission of the organization. Noncritical Deferred Maintenance includes maintenance and repair activities that if not performed will pose a potential risk to public or employee safety or health ( e.g. compliance with codes, standards, or regulations) or potential adverse consequences to natural resources.*

**Designated road, trail, or area.** A National Forest System road, a National Forest System trail, or an area on National Forest System lands that is designated for motor vehicle use pursuant to 36 CFR [212.51](#) on a motor vehicle use map. (36 CFR 212.1)

*The following seven categories of motor vehicle use may be **designated** on an MVUM: (FSM 7711.3)*

*a. Roads Open to Highway Legal Motor Vehicles Only. These roads are open only to motor vehicles licensed under state law for general operation on all public roads within the state.*

*b. Roads Open to All Motor Vehicles. These roads are open to all motor vehicles, including smaller off-highway vehicles that may not be licensed for highway use, but not vehicles that are oversized or overweight under state traffic law.*

*c. Trails Open to All Motor Vehicles, including both highway-legal and non-highway-legal vehicles.*

*d. Trails Open to Motor Vehicles 50 Inches or Less in Width.*

*e. Trails Open to Wheeled Motor Vehicles 50 Inches or Less in Width.*

*f. Trails Open to Motorcycles Only. Sidecars are not permitted.*

*g. Special Vehicle Designation. This category includes any classes of vehicles that are not listed in a through f.*

**Easement.** A special use authorization (usually granted for linear rights-of-way) that is utilized in those situations where a conveyance of a limited and transferable interest in the National Forest System land is necessary or desirable to serve or facilitate authorized long-term uses, and that may be compensable according to its terms. (36 CFR 251.51)

*Compare to dictionary definition of easement: a right held by one property owner to make use of the land of another for a limited purpose, as right of passage.*

**Emergency Relief Federally-Owned (ERFO) Roads Program.** A program administered by the Federal Highway Administration that provides funding for repair and reconstruction of federally-owned roads and trails damaged or destroyed by natural disasters over a wide area or by catastrophic failures from external causes (23 U.S.C. 125). (FSM 7730.5)

**Federal Lands Access program.** A program administered by the Federal Highway Administration under the new MAP-21 *Highway Bill* that provides funding for repair and reconstruction of public roads operated and maintained by States and Counties that are upon or provide access to federally owned land.

**Federal Lands Transportation program.** A program administered by the Federal Highway Administration under the new MAP-21 *Highway Bill* that provides funding for repair and reconstruction of primary NFS roads. *Primary roads are a subset of NFS public roads, operated for passenger car use, that provide access to high use recreation sites or economic generators.*

**Forest road or trail.** A road or trail wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving the National Forest System that the Forest Service determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources. (36 CFR 212.1)

*Forest road has been used generally to describe any road in the forest; however, Forest road really is a term of art used to describe all designated NFS roads and other public roads deemed necessary for the continued use and enjoyment of the National Forests.*

**Forest transportation atlas.** A display of the system of roads, trails, and airfields of an administrative unit. (36 CFR 212.1) Components of a forest transportation atlas may include a road atlas, trail atlas, and other specialized maps, and do not include inventories of temporary roads. (FSM 7711.2)

**Forest transportation facility.** A forest road or trail or an airfield that is displayed in a forest transportation atlas, including bridges, culverts, parking lots, marine access facilities, safety devices, and other improvements appurtenant to the forest transportation system. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Forest transportation system.** The system of National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and airfields on National Forest System lands. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Functional classification.** The process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. *Different classifications include arterial, collector, or local road. Arterial and collector NFS roads are usually more important, support higher volumes of traffic and are operated and maintained at higher maintenance levels.*

**Level of service.** The expected traffic characteristics and operating conditions of a road. (FSH 7709.56)  
*Levels of service A through F are described within the AASHTO guidelines for roads with average daily traffic (ADT) greater than 400, while Forest Service handbook describes levels G through J for low volume roads.*

**Jurisdiction.** The legal right to control and regulate the use of a transportation facility. (23 CFR 660.103 and FSM 7705)

*Roads on National Forest lands are under the control of the Forest Service, except for public roads established under the Act of July 26, 1866, private roads, roads for which the Forest Service or the U.S. Department of Transportation has granted rights-of-way to private landowners or public road agencies, and roads whose use and rights pre-date the National Forest. Other factors may affect jurisdiction on acquired lands or easements. There are roads on the transportation system where the Forest Service has limited rights of use and jurisdiction over the traffic, such as private road systems and many state, county, or township roads. (FSH 7709.59 ch21)*

**Maintenance.** The upkeep of the entire forest transportation facility including surface and shoulders, parking and side areas, structures, and such traffic-control devices as are necessary for its safe and efficient utilization. (36 CFR 212.1)

*Other terms that may be used for road maintenance and road maintenance Best Management Practices include: road restoration, road reconditioning, storm damage risk reduction, and storm-proofing. Road maintenance activities may include brushing, blading, signing, surfacing, and drainage improvements.*

*Prior definition of Road Maintenance: Expenditures in the restoration and upkeep of a road necessary to retain the road's approved traffic service level. (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*

**Maintenance Level.** The level of service provided by, and maintenance required for, a specific National Forest System road.

The *Guidelines for Road Maintenance Levels* publication thoroughly details Forest Service road classification, <http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/pdf/11771811.pdf>, 7700-Transportation Management 1177 1811-SDTDC, June 2012.

*Forest Service Road Maintenance levels 1-5 are described as follows: (FSH 7709.59 sec. 62.32)*

*a. Maintenance Level 1. These are roads that have been placed in storage between intermittent uses. The period of storage must exceed 1 year. Basic custodial maintenance is performed to prevent damage to adjacent resources and to perpetuate the road for future resource management needs. Emphasis is normally given to maintaining drainage facilities and runoff patterns. Planned road deterioration may occur at this level. Roads receiving level 1 maintenance may be of any type, class, or construction standard, and may be managed at any other maintenance level during the time they are open for traffic. However, while being maintained at level 1, they are closed to vehicular traffic but may be available and suitable for nonmotorized uses.*

*\*\*Another previously used term for maintenance level 1 is **Intermittent Service**: A road developed and operated for periodic service and closed for more than one year between periods of use. (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*

*b. **Maintenance Level 2.** Assigned to roads open for use by high clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic, user comfort, and user convenience are not considerations. Warning signs and traffic control devices are not provided with the exception that some signing, such as W-18-1 “No Traffic Signs,” may be posted at intersections. Motorists should have no expectations of being alerted to potential hazards while driving these roads. Traffic is normally minor, usually consisting of one or a combination of administrative, permitted, dispersed recreation, or other specialized uses. Log haul may occur at this level.*

*c. **Maintenance Level 3.** Assigned to roads open and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in a standard passenger car. User comfort and convenience are not considered priorities. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is applicable. Warning signs and traffic control devices are provided to alert motorists of situations that may violate expectations. Roads in this maintenance level are typically low speed with single lanes and turnouts.*

*d. **Maintenance Level 4.** Assigned to roads that provide a moderate degree of user comfort and convenience at moderate travel speeds. Most roads are double lane and aggregate surfaced. However, some roads may be single lane. Some roads may be paved and/or dust abated. Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices is applicable.*

*e. **Maintenance Level 5.** Assigned to roads that provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience. These roads are normally double lane, paved facilities. Some may be aggregate surfaced and dust abated. Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices is applicable.*

*\*Operational maintenance level describes the current condition on a road, while objective maintenance level suggests the desired future condition.*

**Maintenance plan.** An annual plan of maintenance activities to be performed on NFS roads based on Road Management Objectives (RMOs), travel analysis, expected traffic, and available funding. (FSM 7732.11)

**Minimum Road System.** The minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection National Forest System lands. (36 CFR 212.5(b)(1))

**Motorized Mixed Use.** The designation of an NFS road for use by both highway-legal and non-highway legal motor vehicles. (FSM 7715.77) *This, Roads Open to All Motor Vehicles, mixed use designation may be informed by; the engineering judgment of, or an engineering analysis performed by a qualified engineer. Guidelines for Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on National Forest System Roads, EM-7700-30, December 2005, is a good reference. <http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/pubs/pdf/EM7700-30.pdf>.*

**Motor vehicle.** Any vehicle which is self-propelled, other than:

(1) A vehicle operated on rails; and

(2) Any wheelchair or mobility device, including one that is battery-powered, that is designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person for locomotion, and that is suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Motor vehicle use map (MVUM).** A map reflecting designated roads, trails, and areas on an administrative unit or a Ranger District of the National Forest System. (36 CFR 212.1) *acronym MVUM*

*An MVUM must display: Designated roads, trails, and areas on an administrative unit or ranger district; and components of designations, including vehicle class, time of year, and any designations for dispersed camping or game retrieval. (FSM 7711.3)*

**National Forest System.** As defined in the Forest Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, the “National Forest System” includes all National Forest lands reserved or withdrawn from the public domain of the United States, all National Forest lands acquired through purchase, exchange, donation, or other means, the National Grasslands and land utilization projects administered under title III of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (50 Stat. 525, [7 U.S.C. 1010-101 2](#)), and other lands, waters or interests therein which are administered by the Forest Service or are designated for administration through the Forest Service as a part of the system.

(36 CFR 212.1)

**National Forest System road.** A Forest road other than a road which has been authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a State, county or other local public road authority. (36 CFR 212.1)

*The term previously used to define an NFS road was **Forest Development Road**: A forest road under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. Forest Development Roads were not considered public roads (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*

**National Forest System trail.** A forest trail other than a trail which has been authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a State, county or other local public road authority. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Off-highway vehicle.** Any motor vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other natural terrain. (36 CFR 212.1)

*All-Terrain Vehicle: Any motorized, off-highway vehicle 50 inches or less in overall width, designed to travel on three or more low pressure tires, having a seat designed to be straddled by the operator and handlebars for steering control. (FSH 2309.18)*

*Prior definition of Off-Highway Vehicle: A general term describing vehicle types such as motorcycles, minibikes, trail bikes, snowmobiles, dunebuggies, all-terrain vehicles, and four-wheel drive high clearance vehicles. Synonym: Off-Road Vehicle. (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*



**Over-snow vehicle.** A motor vehicle that is designed for use over snow and that runs on a track or tracks and/or a ski or skis, while in use over snow. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Public Road.** A road that is: (FSM 7730.5)

- a. Available, except during scheduled periods, extreme weather, or emergency conditions;
- b. Passable by four-wheel standard passenger cars; and
- c. Open to the general public for use without restrictive gates, prohibitive signs, or regulation other than restrictions based on size, weight, or class of registration. (23 U.S.C. 101(a)(27); 23 CFR 460.2(c) and 660.103).

*A previous definition of **Public Road** was: Any road under the jurisdiction of and maintained by a public authority that is open to public travel (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*

**Qualified Engineer.** An engineer who is technically trained and qualified to perform the tasks specified through experience, certification, education, or license. (FSM 7721)

**Revised Statute 2477 road.** A road constructed across federal land for public use prior to the reservation of the National Forest.

*RS 2477 refers to a federal law passed in 1866 and repealed in 1976 that granted: “The right-of-way- for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses.” With RS 2477, Congress authorized roads to be built and used by the public without any survey, right of way permit, application, patent, deed, or other documentation. The validity of RS 2477 claims can often only be determined through an RS 2477 assertion in federal court.*

**Road.** A motor vehicle route over 50 inches wide, unless identified and managed as a trail. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Road construction or reconstruction.** Supervising, inspecting, actual building, and incurrence of all costs incidental to the construction or reconstruction of a road. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Road Decommissioning.** Activities that result in the stabilization and restoration of unneeded roads to a more natural state. (36 CFR 212.1)

*Road decommissioning includes reestablishing vegetation and, if necessary, initiating restoration of ecological processes interrupted or adversely impacted by the unneeded road. Decommissioning includes applying various treatments, including one or more of the following: (FSM 7734.1)*

- a. Reestablishing former drainage patterns, stabilizing slopes, and restoring vegetation;
- b. Blocking the entrance to a road or installing water bars;
- c. Removing culverts, reestablishing drainages, removing unstable fills, pulling back road shoulders, and scattering slash on the roadbed;
- d. Completely eliminating the roadbed by restoring natural contours and slopes; and
- e. Other methods designed to meet the specific conditions associated with the unneeded road.

*A previously used term for road decommissioning was **Obliteration**: the reclamation and or restoration of land to resource production from that of a transportation facility. (FSH 7709.54, 1990) The terms partial obliteration or full obliteration have been used to describe treatments within the range of a. through e. above.*

**Road Management Objective.** An internal Forest Service documentation of the intended purpose, design criteria, operation and maintenance criteria, and traffic management strategy for each NFS road.

*RMO's are approved by the responsible official and included within the forest transportation atlas. RMO's should reflect travel management decisions and document management objectives for each designated area, including the intended uses and management constraints of the area. (FSM 7714)*

**Road Use Order.** An order that institutes or terminates traffic rules on NFS roads. (36 CFR 261.54; FSM 5330.13). (FSM 7730.5) *Orders may be written for individual roads, for a grouping of roads, for all roads in an administrative unit, or for all roads in a State. Issue road use orders to impose temporary, emergency restrictions and terminate road use orders when they are no longer needed. (FSM 7731.15)*

**Road Use Permit.** A written authorization permitting the use of NFS roads and associated transportation facilities for purposes of commercial hauling, or as an exception to traffic rules and use restrictions. (FSM 7731.17)

*Road use permits may authorize use of a road that is otherwise closed to access non-federal property; road use that is otherwise restricted by a road use order or a regulation; or motor vehicle use on NFS roads that are not designated for that use on a motor vehicle use map. Issue a road use permit using Forest Service form [FS-7700-41](#). When commercial hauling is authorized under a special use authorization (36 CFR part 251, Subpart B; FSM 2730; FSH 2709.11), include the applicable provisions of FS-7700-41 in the authorization.*

**Route.** A traveled way such as highway, road, or trail (FSH 7709.54, 1990)

**Specified Road.** Those forest development roads planned for future recurrent land management uses and for which the timber sale contract specifies the location, standards and specifications. (FSH 7709.54, 1990)

**Temporary road or trail.** A road or trail necessary for emergency operations or authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization that is not a forest road or trail and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas. (36 CFR 212.1) **Pioneer Road** is a term previously used to describe: *Temporary construction access built along the route of the project. (FSH 7709.54, 1990) Also from the outdated Forest Transportation Terminology Handbook, **Temporary Roads**: Any short-lived road not intended to be a part of the forest development transportation system and not necessary for future resource management. (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*



**Trail.** A route 50 inches or less in width or a route over 50 inches wide that is identified and managed as a trail. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Traffic rule.** A restriction placed on the operation of a vehicle on a road. (FSM 7730.5)

**Traffic control device.** A sign, signal, marking, or other device used to regulate, warn, or guide traffic, placed on, over, or adjacent to a street, highway, private road open to public travel, pedestrian facility, or shared-use path by authority of a public agency or official having jurisdiction. (MUTCD, 2009)

[http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno\\_2009r1r2.htm](http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_2009r1r2.htm)

*The Forest Service supplements MUTCD direction for traffic signs with additional Sign and Poster Guidelines @ [http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/eng/roads\\_trails/sign\\_guidelines/](http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/eng/roads_trails/sign_guidelines/).*

**Travel analysis.** A science-based process to assess the forest transportation system that identifies issues, risks, and benefits related to the identification of a minimum road system per 36 CFR 212.5(b)(1) and which is used to inform future travel management decisions per 36 CFR 212.51. (FSM 7712)

*Travel analysis is not a decision-making process. Rather, travel analysis informs decisions relating to administration of the forest transportation system and helps to identify proposals for changes in travel management direction.*

*Travel analysis and travel management are current policy and processes similar to past **Transportation Planning**: The identification of the transportation network through interdisciplinary analysis needed to effectively and efficiently meet the land and resource management direction on a defined area for a specified planning period. (FSH 7709.54, 1990)*

**Travel management atlas.** An atlas that consists of a forest transportation atlas and a motor vehicle use map or maps. (36 CFR 212.1)

**Unauthorized road or trail.** A road or trail that is not a forest road or trail or a temporary road or trail and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas. (36 CFR 212.1) *other terms that may have been used to describe unauthorized routes include: non-system road, user-created route, ghost road, pioneer road.*

*Unauthorized Routes may be identified through travel analysis and considered within the travel management process. If unauthorized routes are not designated by the travel management decision, motor vehicle use of these routes is prohibited (36 CFR 261.13). Travel management decisions often consider restoration and decommissioning of unauthorized routes. (FSM 7715.78)*

*The term “unauthorized” describes the absence of a maintenance level classification or use designation on a road, not the authority or previous management policy under which it may have been created. Travel management decisions may “authorize” the use of previously “unauthorized” routes by adding them to the road or trail system; however, these routes are more often recommended for some level of decommissioning treatment.*