The primary functions of the Highway Design Manual (HDM) are to: (1) provide requirements and guidance on highway design methods and policies which are as current as practicable, and (2) assure uniformity of design practice throughout the New York State Department of Transportation consistent with the collective experience of the Department of Transportation, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and the Federal Highway Administration. The objective of our process is the design of attractive highways which provide adequate safety and convenience to all highway users while maintaining proper balance among highway functional classifications, environmental concerns and fiscal restraints.

This manual does not eliminate the need for other references. Instructions from the main office, directives from the Federal Highway Administration, books, publications and other related material may need to be referred to for further details, clarification, or interpretations. Portions of the material in this manual may be specifically superseded by subsequent Official Issuances of the Department.

Variations from this manual will be necessary for special or unusual conditions, or between the issuances of new or revised source documents and any corresponding updates of the HDM. Consequently, instructions in this document are not intended to preclude the exercise of individual initiative and engineering judgment in reaction to site specific conditions or application of current state of the art practices. Rather, such initiative and judgment is encouraged when it is appropriate and there is a rational basis for deviation. However, it is equally important that there be consistency statewide in the application of this manual. The objective is uniformity of design for the same or similar conditions. To promote this objective, provide a record for decision makers and help defend the state if litigation should occur, the rationale for variations from this manual are to be documented as appropriate. The degree of documentation depends on the exact nature of the deviation and its degree of importance in respect to safety and good design. Most chapters contain additional information on documentation requirements or recommendations. Note that certain items, such as design criteria (Chapter 2) require specific approvals before deviations are allowed.