

**VALIDITY OF AASHTO SIGHT DISTANCES IN  
GEOMETRIC DESIGN OF EXPRESSWAYS IN  
SRI LANKA**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this thesis/dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text. I retain the right to use this content in whole or part in future works (such as articles or books).

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The above candidate has carried out research for the Masters thesis/dissertation under my supervision. I confirm that the declaration made above by the student is true and correct.

Name of Supervisor: Prof. W. K. Mampearachchi

Signature of the Supervisor:



Date: 02.07.2025

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R. A. D. Perera

## ABSTRACT

Sight distance is a critical design parameter in the geometric design of highways, directly influencing their operational efficiency and safety, particularly under nighttime conditions. Stopping sight distance is a fundamental requirement for all types of highways, playing a key role in horizontal curves, crest vertical curves, and sag vertical curves, which are essential components of highway geometry.

This research evaluates the validity of AASHTO sight distance criteria in the geometric design of expressways in Sri Lanka. The study involved analyzing accident data from the Southern Expressway to identify critical locations and reviewing their design compliance with AASHTO guidelines. Additionally, sight distance variations were compared with geometric design standards of other guidelines, such as Japan, Australia, Austria, Britain, United States, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, South Africa, Sweden, and Switzerland, to highlight key differences.

The analysis was conducted using accident data from a 126 km section of the expressway. A preliminary assessment was performed at 10 km intervals using accident frequency data, followed by an advanced analysis at 1 km intervals using the 85<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile accident values. The most critical sections were further examined at 100 m intervals, where accident distribution percentiles were considered to pinpoint high-risk locations.

To enhance the analysis, questionnaire responses from general public, mainly drivers and road users were collected through online surveys, telephone conversations, and in-person interviews at toll booths and bus stations. These responses provided insights into real-world driving experiences, visibility challenges, and safety concerns related to sight distance.

Accident-prone locations were evaluated for compliance with AASHTO sight distance and object height criteria. Crest and sag vertical curves were assessed for specific driver eye and object heights, including nighttime headlight sight distance. Passenger comfort was analyzed based on a 0.3 m/s<sup>2</sup> centripetal acceleration limit, while drainage control was reviewed for Type III vertical curves. The general appearance of vertical curves was examined using the rule-of-thumb method, and horizontal curves were assessed for lateral clearance at a 120 km/h design speed.

The study found that the Southern Expressway's design meets AASHTO sight distance and object height criteria at critical locations. However, differences in stopping sight distance and vertical curve length compared to international standards were observed (0+600, 5+900, 87+300, 93+000), primarily due to variations in friction coefficients, deceleration rates, and object height assumptions. The current standard for expressways in Sri Lanka specifies an object height of 0.6 m (2 feet) for visibility assessments. Considering the height of animals crossing the road, record of animal collisions, questionnaire responses suggest that maintaining an object height of 0.15 m (6 inches) improves safety and helps reduce the risk of animal collisions.

**Keywords:** Stopping sight distance; Geometric design parameter; Horizontal curve; Vertical curve; Headlight sight distance; Questionnaire responses.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                        |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Declaration .....                                      | i    |
| Acknowledgement.....                                   | ii   |
| Abstract .....                                         | iii  |
| Table of Contents .....                                | iv   |
| List of Figures .....                                  | vi   |
| List of Tables.....                                    | viii |
| List of Abbreviations.....                             | ix   |
| List of ANNEXES .....                                  | x    |
| Chapter 1 .....                                        | 1    |
| Introduction .....                                     | 1    |
| 1.1 Background .....                                   | 1    |
| 1.2 Problem statement .....                            | 2    |
| 1.3 The area of study .....                            | 2    |
| 1.3 Objective of the Study .....                       | 4    |
| Chapter 2 .....                                        | 5    |
| LITREATURE REVIEW.....                                 | 5    |
| 2.1 Introduction .....                                 | 5    |
| 2.2 Sight Distance.....                                | 5    |
| 2.2.1 General Considerations .....                     | 5    |
| 2.2.2 Important Sight Distances .....                  | 6    |
| 2.2.3 Comparison of AASHTO with Other Guidelines ..... | 9    |
| 2.3 Horizontal curve .....                             | 11   |
| 2.3.1 Checking Lateral Clearance .....                 | 11   |
| 2.4 Vertical Curves.....                               | 12   |
| 2.4.1 Crest Vertical Curves .....                      | 13   |
| 2.4.2 Sag Vertical Curves.....                         | 14   |
| 2.5 Road Safety, Blackspot and Accident Analysis ..... | 17   |
| Chapter 3 .....                                        | 19   |
| Methodology .....                                      | 19   |

|                                                                                                          |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Chapter 4 .....                                                                                          | 26 |
| Data Analysis .....                                                                                      | 26 |
| 4.1 Analysis for identification of blackspot locations .....                                             | 26 |
| 4.1.1 Basic data Analysis .....                                                                          | 26 |
| 4.1.2 Analysis for identification of blackspot sections .....                                            | 27 |
| 4.1.3 Analysis for identification of blackspot locations.....                                            | 32 |
| 4.2 Review of design by considering blackspot locations.....                                             | 35 |
| 4.2.1 Details for near most critical locations.....                                                      | 35 |
| 4.2.2 Review the design for most critical locations. ....                                                | 37 |
| 4.2.3 Comparison of Stopping Sight Distance with other Design guidelines                                 | 41 |
| 4.2.4 Questionnaire Responses on Driver Visibility and Accident Risk for the Southern Expressway. ....   | 44 |
| Conclusion .....                                                                                         | 46 |
| References .....                                                                                         | 48 |
| ANNEXES .....                                                                                            | 50 |
| Annexes A: Accident Details of near Critical Locations .....                                             | 50 |
| Annexes B: Review the design for most critical locations .....                                           | 61 |
| Annexes C: Questionnaire Survey Form.....                                                                | 72 |
| Annexes E: Driver Visibility and Accident Risk Questionnaire Responses for Southern Expressway Road..... | 81 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| <b>Figure</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                           | <b>Page</b> |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Figure 1. 1   | Typical cross section of Southern Expressway .....                           | 1           |
| Figure 1. 2   | Study section of EO-1 road from Kottawa to Godagama .....                    | 3           |
| Figure 2. 1   | Stopping Sight distance for Crest and Sag curves .....                       | 7           |
| Figure 2. 2   | Passing manoeuvre given by AASHTO Green Book (AASHTO, 2001)<br>9             |             |
| Figure 2. 4   | Diagram Illustrating Components for Determining Horizontal Sight<br>Distance | 12          |
| Figure 2. 5   | Types of vertical curves .....                                               | 13          |
| Figure 2. 6   | Components for Determining the Length of a Crest Vertical Curve .            | 14          |
| Figure 2. 7   | Components for Determining the Length of a Sag Vertical Curve....            | 15          |
| Figure 2. 8   | Sight Distance at Under crossings.....                                       | 17          |
| Figure 4. 1   | Year wise Accident details.....                                              | 27          |
| Figure 4. 2   | Accidents data analysis 0 to 204 km section.....                             | 27          |
| Figure 4. 3   | Accidents data analysis 0 to 21 km section.....                              | 29          |
| Figure 4. 4   | Accidents data analysis 21 to 41 km section.....                             | 29          |
| Figure 4. 5   | Accidents data analysis 41 to 61 km section.....                             | 30          |
| Figure 4. 6   | Accidents data analysis 61 to 81 km section.....                             | 30          |
| Figure 4. 7   | Accidents data analysis 81 to 101 km section.....                            | 31          |
| Figure 4. 8   | Accidents data analysis 101 to 126 km section.....                           | 31          |
| Figure 4. 9   | Accidents analysis for 0.0 to 3.0 km Critical Section .....                  | 32          |
| Figure 4. 10  | Accidents analysis for 3.1 to 6.0 km Section.....                            | 32          |
| Figure 4. 11  | Accidents analysis for 10.0 to 14.1 km Section .....                         | 33          |
| Figure 4. 12  | Accidents analysis for 69.7 to 72.7 km Section .....                         | 33          |
| Figure 4. 13  | Accidents analysis for 82.0 to 86.9 km Section.....                          | 34          |
| Figure 4. 14  | Accidents analysis for 91.0 to 95.2 km Section .....                         | 34          |
| Figure 4. 16  | Crest vertical curve section of 00+600 Critical location.....                | 38          |
| Figure 4. 17  | Horizontal curve section of 00+800 critical location.....                    | 39          |
| Figure 4. 18  | Sag Vertical curve section of 02+400 critical location .....                 | 61          |
| Figure 4. 19  | Horizontal curve section of 04+200 critical location.....                    | 62          |



|              |                                                                    |    |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 4. 20 | Crest Vertical curve of 05+900 critical location.....              | 63 |
| Figure 4. 21 | Horizontal curve section of 05+900 critical location.....          | 64 |
| Figure 4. 22 | Horizontal curve section of 21+000 – 21+100 critical location..... | 65 |
| Figure 4. 23 | Horizontal curve section of 70+100 critical location.....          | 66 |
| Figure 4. 24 | Google image of 70+100 location.....                               | 67 |
| Figure 4. 25 | Crest Vertical curve section of 87+300 Critical location.....      | 67 |
| Figure 4. 26 | Horizontal curve section of 87+300 critical location.....          | 69 |
| Figure 4. 27 | Google image of 87+300 location.....                               | 70 |
| Figure 4. 28 | Crest vertical curve section at 93+000 critical location.....      | 70 |

## LIST OF TABLES

| <b>Table</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                              | <b>Page</b> |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Table 3. 1   | Distribution of the survey sample .....                                                                                                         | 25          |
| Table 4. 1   | Accidents data of southern expressway .....                                                                                                     | 26          |
| Table 4. 2   | Statistical Parameters of Accident data Analysis.....                                                                                           | 28          |
| Table 4. 3   | Tabulation summary of accident details for near most critical locations according to the EOM&M division accident records. ....                  | 36          |
| Table 4. 4   | Animal details at most critical locations .....                                                                                                 | 36          |
| Table 4. 5   | Design review details for most critical blackspot locations.....                                                                                | 40          |
| Table 4. 6   | Comparisons of Criteria for Longitudinal Friction Coefficients Used in Stopping Sight Distance Design (Harwood et al., 1998), (RDA, 1998) ..... | 42          |
| Table 4. 7   | Comparison of Minimum Required Stopping Sight Distance for Level Terrain Used in Selected Countries (Harwood et al., 1998) .....                | 42          |
| Table 4. 8   | Comparison of Criteria for Driver Eye Height and Height Used in Vertical Curve Design (Harwood et al., 1998) .....                              | 43          |

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Description                                                        |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AASHTO       | American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials |
| EOM&M        | Expressway Operation Maintenance & Management                      |
| RDA          | Road Development Authority                                         |
| EO-1         | Southern Expressway                                                |
| EO-1-1       | Kottawa to Godagama Road Section                                   |
| EO-1-2       | Godagama to Mattala Road Section                                   |
| SSD          | Stopping Sight Distance                                            |
| C/L          | Center Line                                                        |

## LIST OF ANNEXES

| <b>Annexes</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                                          | <b>Page</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Annexes A      | Accident Details of Near Critical Locations                                                 | 50          |
| Annexes B      | Review the design for Most Critical locations                                               | 61          |
| Annexes C      | Questionnaire Survey Form                                                                   | 72          |
| Annexes D      | Questionnaire Survey Data                                                                   | 76          |
| Annexes E      | Driver Visibility and Accident Risk Questionnaire<br>Responses for Southern Expressway Road | 81          |