

## APPENDIX C

## **Interagency Consultation**

The Key Toward Collaborative State and Local  
Decision Making in the Conformity Process

### **Executive Summary**

Since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAA), legal requirements have challenged transportation and air quality planners to better integrate their planning processes. Interagency consultation serves as a vital tool for building new partnerships through collaborative decision making as part of the transportation planning and conformity process. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT- Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), as well as State and local transportation and air quality agencies have worked collaboratively over the past three years to develop effective interagency consultation processes.

The FHWA's Office of Environment and Planning conducted a review of interagency consultation processes, through nine regional offices of FHWA, for the purpose of determining how well State and local agencies are implementing effective consultation procedures as part of the transportation planning and conformity process. This nationwide review was completed to fulfill an important environmental milestone as part of the FHWA's FY 1996 National Strategic Plan. The findings of this review only reflect the views of the FHWA field staff, and are not intended to represent the views or findings of organizations external to the FHWA.

Successful federal, State, and local interagency consultation processes have been shown to provide: 1) the latest planning information to decision makers; 2) an ongoing forum for effective State and local decision making; 3) early incorporation of air quality objectives in the transportation planning process; 4) a better understanding of the implications and potential ramifications of interagency decisions; 5) improved streamlining of decision making by building upon the "3-C" metropolitan planning process; 6) early identification of key issues; and 7) opportunities for continual improvement to the existing interagency consultation process.

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Federal Highway Administration  
October 31, 1996