



Integration of NEPA and permitting processes enables concurrent, synchronized environmental and permitting reviews that save time and cost for the agencies involved.

Several challenges can arise during environmental review and permitting of transportation projects, leading to project delay or halting the project altogether. These challenges can result from:

- lack of early engagement with resource agencies that have permitting roles, responsibilities, or authorities
- delayed identification of key environmental and permitting issues
- duplicative efforts that use time and resources inefficiently

Integrating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and permitting processes allows the various environmental reviews and permitting procedures to be performed concurrently. The resulting synchronization provides for more effective and efficient regulatory reviews, leading to projects with reduced impacts on the environment as well as savings of time and money.

A synchronized NEPA and permitting process delivers an environmental analysis and determination that satisfies the needs of all agencies with statutory or regulatory responsibilities in approving Federal-Aid highway projects. Experience has shown concurrent agency reviews and early coordination significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of project delivery.

To help increase this interagency coordination, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will leverage the recently completed *2015 Red Book: Synchronizing Environmental Reviews for Transportation and Other Infrastructure Projects*, which provides a how-to guide for synchronizing environmental reviews through proven best practices, data management, and tools for navigating Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements. The *Red Book* was a collaborative effort among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Integrating NEPA and Permitting Focus Areas:

- Scalable approach for different NEPA classes of action
- Flexible project delivery process
- Increased communication among agencies and dedicated liaisons
- Web-based project delivery tools



Employing a project delivery process that integrates environmental reviews and permitting can help achieve effective and efficient delivery of transportation projects.



Integrating NEPA and Permitting

During this fourth round of Every Day Counts (EDC-4), the implementation effort for integrating NEPA and permitting will be conducted through a full suite of outreach, training strategies, and technical assistance to state departments of transportation (DOTs). The outreach and training efforts will target several focus areas, including synchronizing low-level informal agreements to formal agreements, using dedicated liaisons, and using FHWA's online collaboration tool, eNEPA.

eNEPA is now capable of facilitating preparation of the permit application package for the USCG and USACE. This new functionality in eNEPA supports early, timely, and consistent coordination among agencies to complete necessary permitting processes.

Strategies for Integrating NEPA and Permitting:

- Promote process synchronization
- Support development of programmatic approaches
- Facilitate early and frequent interagency coordination
- Leverage existing communication networks
- Leverage existing integration practices

STATE OF THE PRACTICE

More than 20 state DOTs currently use a form of synchronization process. While some processes have yet to be fully utilized, others have been incorporated into standard practice. The EDC-4 implementation team is promoting synchronization processes through technical assistance and targeted training, including webinars, case studies, regional peer exchanges, and coordination with other DOT modes.

EDC-4 Support:

- Targeted technical assistance
- Case studies highlighting best practices and lessons learned
- Synchronization library with example agreements and templates
- *2015 Red Book* techniques

BENEFITS

- ▶ **Increases Efficiency.** Synchronization improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the project development, mitigation, and decision-making process.
- ▶ **Shortens Delivery.** Integrating NEPA and permitting reduces the time and complexity of project development while ensuring projects receive the appropriate coordinated review.
- ▶ **Saves Resources.** A synchronized review process reduces duplicative efforts, leading to predictability and cost savings.

RESOURCES

EDC-4 Integrating NEPA and Permitting:
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_4/nepa.cfm

FHWA Environmental Review Toolkit:
<https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/index.asp>

2015 Red Book: Synchronizing Environmental Reviews for Transportation and Other Infrastructure Projects
https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/stirling/Redbook_2015.asp

EDC-4 Summit Breakout Session: Fall 2016
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZa84sfQwbY>

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Every Day Counts (EDC), a State-based initiative of FHWA's *Center for Accelerating Innovation*, works with State, local and private sector partners to encourage the adoption of proven technologies and innovations aimed at shortening and enhancing project delivery.

