# Improving Collaboration and Quality Environmental Documentation
## (eNEPA and IQED)

**Shortening the time necessary for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) project approval is a core need for the transportation community. The Every Day Counts-3 (EDC-3) initiative supports tools to enable collaborative, concurrent, timely and transparent interagency reviews that will reduce the amount of work and resources required, save considerable time and money, and improve the quality of NEPA documents.**

The implementing quality environmental documentation (IQED) effort that began under EDC-2 promotes current recommendations and best practices for simplifying and expediting the development of environmental documents. The focus is on ensuring that the three core principles of IQED – tell the story, keep the document brief and ensure legal sufficiency – form the foundation of the NEPA document and that the good efforts for project purpose and need, consideration of alternatives, and impacts are appropriately documented and included.

The EDC-3 effort builds on EDC-2 by incorporating eNEPA, an online workspace and collaboration forum for major projects that require an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA).

The eNEPA tool allows state departments of transportation (DOTs) to share documents, track comments, schedule tasks with participating agencies, and perform concurrent reviews for their EIS and EA projects. This will reduce the agency workloads required to collaborate, maintain schedules, and manage the project record.

When combined with IQED, eNEPA helps agencies transition to an electronic review process that can be done concurrently with more effective interagency dialog in real time. Long-term, this results in better, more detailed information and, as more projects are completed in eNEPA, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) can use this data to identify possible improvements in the project development process, including new opportunities for programmatic agreements to expedite project delivery.

## What is eNEPA?

**eNEPA is a web-based interagency collaboration and development tool for projects that need an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment. It gives project managers centralized user access control for individual projects and reviews, and all members of a project team can participate, including Federal, state and local agencies and contractors. There are several benefits to using this secure, web-based portal:**

- Share documents and comments faster.
- Provide real-time schedule status and tracking.
- Simplify concurrent agency reviews.
- Obtain quick, clear and transparent issue resolution.
- Reduce paper, printing and mailing costs.

## BENEFITS

▶ **Improved Efficiency.** IQED and eNEPA can help ensure that the product of the NEPA review process is improved and delivered in less time. The eNEPA tool allows concurrent document reviews by multiple agencies at each stage in the process, including mutual resolution of issues in draft documents. An internal commenting and discussion feature helps facilitate and track these decisions. The result is faster project development and completion.

▶ **Better Outcomes.** Enhanced collaboration provides higher quality documents and a stronger administrative record, leading to improved environmental outcomes. The enhanced program-level data can be used to identify future opportunities for process improvements and programmatic agreements.

## CURRENT STATE OF THE PRACTICE

Several DOTs have expressed interest in implementing the IQED principles, with Ohio and Washington emerging as the lead agencies. Other state DOTs are on the verge of changing their EIS and EA documentation practices.

There are several states that have tested eNEPA as part of a pilot program to improve project delivery and enhance the environmental review process. Other DOT modes, such as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), are also participating in eNEPA and using the tool for selected projects. The FTA is also preparing eNEPA training for all staff working on environmental reviews and grantees involved in the projects that are added to the tool.

eNEPA was selected for the FHWA Research and Technology Evaluation Program. Staff at FHWA headquarters and the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center are working to design short- and long-term performance measures for the tool.

## SUPPORT AND AVAILABLE TOOLS

▶ FHWA EDC-2 and EDC-3 Web pages for Implementing Quality Environmental Documentation: *http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/everydaycounts/edctwo/2012/doc.cfm* and *http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/everydaycounts/edc-3/documentation.cfm*

▶ The U.S. Department of Transportation FHWA eNEPA portal: *https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/enepap/home/main*

▶ The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) practitioner's handbook, "Preparing High-Quality NEPA Documents for Transportation Projects" (July 2014), relates recommended best practices to EIS and EA document examples from around the country. *http://www.aashtojournal.org/Pages/082214cee.aspx*

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*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*

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