



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration



PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENTS AS PART OF THE ENHANCED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON STALLED EIS INITIATIVE

Module: 1

Level of Audience: Environmental Related Professionals, Engineers

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Duration: 30 min

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Agenda

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Introduction

- Enhanced Technical Assistance on Stalled Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) is part of the National Every Day Counts (EDC) initiatives.
- The purpose of this initiative is to provide additional FHWA technical assistance to identify major challenges on ongoing EIS projects and implement solutions to resolve project delays where feasible.
- PRHTA is working, as part of this initiative, in the interagency collaboration to resolve outstanding issues through the use of agreements.



Objectives

- Present the progress of the initiative
- Streamline the documentation process with the state and federal regulatory agencies through the use of agreements



Background

- All projects that are federally funded or require a federal action need to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- There are three categories of environmental documentation in order to comply with NEPA:
 - Categorical Exclusion (CE)
 - Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact (EA/FONSI)
 - Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision (EIS/ROD)



Background

- Actually, most of the projects delivered in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program classify under the Categorical Exclusion.
- A Categorical Exclusion is provided for proposed projects that historically have little or no significant environmental impacts.



Motivation

- Why are we participating in this initiative?

That the efforts for the CE documents may also require agencies coordination and therefore, also benefits for a streamline process.



Description of EDC Initiative

- The following initiatives will be developed and implemented to eliminate time-delays:
 - Update existing and explore opportunities for new agreements between agencies.
 - Creation of standard procedures and improvements in environmental processes and practices.



Benefits of Agreements

- The use of agreements is very effective in saving time and resources because the procedures are standardized and agreed upon previously.
- The goal of this initiative is to streamline the documentation process with the state and federal regulatory agencies.



Initiative Status

- What have we done so far?
 - We started coordination meetings with some federal and state regulatory agencies to present the initiative.
 - Started to work with the agencies identifying categories of projects that have similar scopes in which we can standardized the process through one of these documents.



Examples of Agreements

| Agency | Signed | Purpose or Objective | Approximately Saved Time |
|--|------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) | August 4, 2008 | Authorization to conduct Section 106 consultation on behalf of FHWA for projects requiring FHWA approval . | 2 to 4 months |
| Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) | October 7, 2010 | Authorization for all minor highway reconstruction and rehabilitation under the existing right of way. | 3 to 6 months |
| Puertorican Cultural Institute (ICP) | January 28, 2011 | Authorization for all minor highway reconstruction and rehabilitation under the existing right of way. | 1 to 3 months |
| Environmental Quality Board (EQB) | March 9, 2011 | Concurrence for all improvements, repavement and repairs of highways islandwide under the existing right of way. | 30 days |
| Environmental Quality Board (EQB) | March 28, 2011 | Concurrence for all improvements and repairs of existing structures on highways in all Municipalities of Puerto Rico. | 30 days |



Agreements in Process

| Agency | Purpose |
|---|---|
| State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) | Provide expedite review of those activities that have no effect on historic properties. |
| US Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) | Provide a authorization for categories of activities that are similar in nature and would have only minimal individual or cumulative adverse environmental effects. |



Expected Benefits

1. Better focus on primary issues of the projects
2. Time Saving
3. Human Resources
4. Save Money
5. Quality Control
6. Common goals are accomplish through partnership
7. Improve relationship between agencies



Conclusion

What we want from you?

- Promote win-win partnership inviting the agencies to be part of the initiative.
- Promote ideas between agencies to continue the streamline process.



Questions?