



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

J.R. "JOEY" HOPKINS  
SECRETARY

DATE: March 7, 2024  
TO: NC Public General Aviation (GA) Airports  
FROM: NCDOT Division of Aviation  
SUBJECT: Guidelines for Advancing an Environmental Assessment (EA)

Pursuant to meeting the one-year time limit for completing Environmental Assessments (EAs), which was established under Section 1501.10(b)(1) of the amended Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations, the FAA has issued internal guidelines for determining and documenting the agency's decision to begin preparation of an environmental document under NEPA. In documenting the decision to advance an EA, it must be determined that project planning is sufficiently mature to allow for the purposeful evaluation of the proposed action's environmental effect and that timing is appropriate to begin preparation of the EA.

In consideration of the FAA's internal guidelines, and pursuant to meeting the time limits established under Section 1501.10(b)(1), NCDOT Division of Aviation will require the items outlined below in documenting the decision to advance an EA. Completion of these items will be required prior to NCDOT Aviation approving the scope of work for a proposed EA under NEPA. This requirement applies regardless of project funding type and regardless of if the project meets federal justification criteria. It is a requirement for receiving federal approval of the environmental document and any other federal approvals that may be required such as new or modified flight procedures.

1. Completion of all FAA planning requirements for the subject project. This may include but is not limited to studies such as a Project justification study, Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) Alternatives Evaluation, ALP/Master Plan Update, Benefit-Cost Analysis, or Tower Siting Study. If additional details are needed on the planning requirements of a specific Project, please work with your Airport Project Manager (APM) and the NCDOT Aviation Planning & Environmental Program Manager to determine outstanding requirements and recommended sequencing for completion.
2. NCDOT Division of Aviation determination that the timing is appropriate to begin preparation of an EA. This determination will consider project funding availability and other criteria that may affect the project schedule.

*Mailing Address:*  
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF AVIATION  
1560 MAIL SERVICE CENTER  
RALEIGH, NC 27699-1560

*Telephone:* 919-814-0550  
*Fax:* 919-840-9267

*Location:*  
1050 MERIDIAN DRIVE  
MORRISVILLE, NC 27560

*Website:* [ncdot.gov/aviation](http://ncdot.gov/aviation)

3. Preparation of a NEPA Study Scoping Memo that contains all items listed below. Please work with your Airport Project Manager (APM) and the NCDOT Aviation Planning & Environmental Program Manager if project-specific information is needed. The NEPA Study Scoping Memo will be reviewed and approved by the NCDOT Aviation Planning & Environmental Program Manager prior to NCDOT Aviation approving the scope of work for advancing the NEPA study. Once the NEPA study advances, the memo will be used in project scoping activities with coordinating agencies.

The NEPA Study Scoping Memo will contain the following:

- A preliminary project description.
- A project justification/purpose and need statement that explicitly identifies whether the Project meets FAA justification criteria at the time of Project initiation. Depending on the Project type, this may require completion of a study by NCDOT to evaluate the Project against FAA justification criteria.
- The full range of alternatives to be evaluated in the NEPA document.
- The likely/potential permit requirements.
- Identification of all participating and coordinating agencies (in addition to the FAA).
- Potentially impacted environmental resources and mitigation strategies for any potentially significant effects.
- Community and local stakeholders affected by the proposed project. Include the type and extent of public involvement to be conducted.
- A schedule mapping out completion of the EA within one year, including milestones for all formal coordination, field reviews/concurrences, specialized studies such as protected species surveys, and other authorizations that will be required. The schedule should account for the requirement that impact analysis in the EA must be based on a minimum of 30% preliminary project designs.

We hope this guidance is useful as you plan to move your projects forward. As always, please coordinate with your regional APM if additional information is needed.

Thank you for your continued efforts to enhance North Carolina's aviation system and economy.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
C1CE6F0F9F7A430...

Becca Gallas, P.E.

Director, NCDOT Division of Aviation

CC:

Rachel Bingham, P.E., Aviation Development Manager/ Deputy Director  
Airport Project Managers, Aviation Development

Martha Hodge, AICP, PMP, Aviation Planning & Environmental Program Manager