Getting a Head Start on Your NEPA/SEPA Document

March 27, 2019
Agenda

• Overview
• Express Design Evaluation
• Project Scoping
• Questions
Overview

NCDOT Existing Process

1. PROJECT PLANNING
   - MPO/RPO/NCDOT TPD
   - NCDOT Strategic Prioritization Office
   - NCDOT STIP
     - Systems Planning/CTPs & MTPs
     - STI/SPOT Project Prioritization
     - STIP Development
     - NCDOT Feasibility Studies Unit
     - Project Scoping Process
   - Express Design Evaluation

2. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT
   - STIP Development
   - Environmental Documentation
   - Design

3. CONSTRUCTION
   - NCDOT PMU, Technical Services Units, Highway Divisions
   - LET
   - Construction
   - NCDOT Construction Unit, Highway Divisions

4. O&M
   - Operations & Maintenance
   - NCDOT Maintenance & Operations Sections, Highway Divisions
Overview

What the process IS:

- Initial step in the planning and design process for a candidate project
- Describes the project, estimates preliminary costs, and identifies any potential problems
- Investigates conceptual design option(s) and prepares costs needed for the prioritization process (SPOT)

AN alternative, not THE alternative
Overview

What the process is NOT:

- Detailed engineering
- In-depth data collection or field studies
- NEPA/SEPA compliance documentation
DISCLAIMER:
The Project Scoping Process is NOT intended to satisfy NEPA/SEPA requirements for a project, not be an exhaustive investigation of design and environmental issues. Appropriate NEPA/SEPA documentation must be completed during the project development phase of a project before the project will be approved for right of way acquisition or construction.
Overview

Express Design Evaluation
- Project Initiation
- Conceptual Designs & Quantities
- Cost Estimates

Express Design Submittal

SPOT

Project Scoping
- Stakeholder Coordination
- Environmental Screening
- Technical Report

Project Scoping Report
Express Design Evaluation

- Project Initiation
- Conceptual Designs & Quantities
- Cost Estimates

Express Design Submittal
Project Initiation

• Data Collection & Environmental Features Map
• Preliminary Coordination with Key Stakeholders
  - Division and MPO/RPO
  - NCDOT-PMU & EPU
  - Others NCDOT Units as appropriate
Conceptual Design & Quantities

- Based on input from preliminary coordination, develop conceptual design option(s)
  - Horizontal Design
  - Vertical Design
  - Slope Stakes
  - Right of Way
  - Maintenance of Traffic
Mapping Limits

- Develop initial mapping limits based on the express design concept

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<td><strong>Intersections</strong></td>
<td>• 25’-50’ outside outer limits of existing/proposed Right of Way</td>
<td>1”=50’ Final Surveys</td>
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<td>• 200’ beyond proposed project termini</td>
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<td><strong>Interchange Projects</strong></td>
<td>• 100’ outside outer limits of proposed/existing Right of Way</td>
<td>1”=50’ Shell Plan Sheets</td>
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<td>• 500’ beyond proposed project termini</td>
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<td><strong>Widening Projects</strong></td>
<td>• 500’ outside outer limits of existing/proposed Right of Way for all options</td>
<td>1”=100’ Topographic Mapping (with multiple options) or 1”=50’ Shell Plan Sheets (with selected corridor)</td>
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<td><strong>New Locations Projects</strong></td>
<td>• 1000’ beyond proposed project termini</td>
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Cost Estimates

- Construction, Utilities, & ITS
- Right of Way
- Other major cost items
Express Design Evaluation

• Express Design Evaluation deliverables:
  – Summary – 1-page summary with information for decision-making and record of findings
  – Conceptual design(s) on environmental features mapping
  – Cost estimates
  – Conceptual maintenance of traffic narrative
  – Initial mapping limit CADD file
  – Communication log and preliminary stakeholder coordination documentation
Project Scoping Site
(NCDOT Connect Scoping Team Site)
SPOT Evaluation

• Ideally an *Express Design Evaluation* has been completed
• The project may now be entered into the SPOT process for prioritization and possible inclusion in the STIP
• If the project scores well, and is funded into the STIP, the project will move into *Project Scoping*
Project Scoping

- Stakeholder Coordination
- Environmental Screening
- Technical Report

Project Scoping Report
Environmental Screening

- **Project Scoping Screening Checklist**

  - Complete the Screening Checklist using best available data
# Technical Report

## Technical Report Table of Contents

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| Maintenance of Traffic | |
|------------------------| |
Project Scoping Summary

- Project Scoping Summary
  - a one-page summary including general project information
  - Recommended document type
Project Scoping Report

• Compile the Project Scoping Report:
  – Project Scoping Summary
  – Project Scoping Technical Report
  – Project Scoping Screening Checklist
  – Stakeholder comments and coordination documentation
  – Express Design Evaluation Submittal
  – Traffic Forecast Request

• Coordinate with ATLAS and STIP staff
Next Steps

• Determine if other requests should be submitted
  – Pro-Active Traffic Forecast and/or Analysis
  – Preliminary hydraulics
  – Others as needed

• NOTE: We anticipate a major revision to our guidelines this year to incorporate ATLAS into the process.
Questions?

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Environmental Policy Unit
Lessons Learned
Project Funding and Environmental Documentation

Derrick Weaver
2nd Annual Preconstruction Conference – March 28, 2019
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

PROJECT SCOPING REPORTS

• Produced by Feasibility Studies Unit
  – Environmental Documentation Type
  – State or Federally funded guidance
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

YOUR BASIC FACTS

- State Fund Preliminary Engineering
- Most projects processed as CE/MCDC
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

DID YOU KNOW

• Documentation Type Not Required Decision at Project Initiation
• Invite FHWA to Project Initiation All Projects
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

YOUR FIRST STEPS

• Know your Project Before you Decide
  – CE/MCDC
  – EA/EIS

• Determine Lead Federal Agency
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

CHANGING YOUR MIND

- MCDC to CE
- State EA or FONSI to Federal EA or FONSI
- State EIS to Federal EIS
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

• Federal Documentation on State Project
  – No Problem

• State Documentation on Federal Project
  – Big Problem
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

FEDERAL FUNDS FOR YOU

• Consider Federal Documentation when…
  • Tribal Consultation
  • Endangered Species Consultation
  • Coast Guard Involvement
  • Interstate Project
  • MPO has DA funds to use on project
  • Project may be consider for Federal Grant or Funding
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

STATE FUNDS FOR YOU

• Consider State Documentation when…
  • Public Interest not to limit alternatives
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

YOUR FUNDING BASICS

- Projects Funded State & Federal Funds
- Interstates use most of the Federal Funds
- STIP Initially Sets Programs Funds
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

HOW DO YOU PROCEED

• Listen to STIP folks
• Guidance for new start projects
• Underway, Continue with MCDC
• Ask EPU Staff
• Coordinate with relevant staff
Project Funding & Environmental Documentation

YOUR TAKE AWAYS

• Do CE’s as Rule of Thumb
• Continue to use Type III CE checklist as a screening tool
• Ask FHWA to be the Lead Federal Agency
• Preliminary Engineering State Funded