

## Problem Statement Development Tips

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- Succinctly state the problem/ need at the beginning of the Problem Statement (PS) then give the supporting information later. For a Full PS, don't put any information about possible solutions or the CTP project proposal in the 'Identified Problem' section. For Minimum PS's, try to separate information about the problem from information about the proposed project, such as by using separate paragraphs (as shown in the guidance and example for minimum PS's).
- Be sure to use appropriate supporting information and data. Refer the Problem Statement Guidance for detailed lists of possible data that may be used for each section.
- If the termini for the project proposal are outside the given CTP planning area, reference the ultimate termini in the "Project Description and Overview" section. The relation of the given Problem Statement to the entire project proposal should be discussed in the "Linkages to Other Plans Section," as the coordination with these other plans is described.
- Include the actual year (20xx) used for the base year and the future year (at least once, then can just use the terms 'base year' and 'future volume/capacity').
- At least once, state whether volumes are "annual average daily traffic (AADT)", and then can just use the term "volume"; use a number followed by 'vpd' for volumes/ capacities. Also, state at least once the LOS the capacities are based on.
- If you are trying to determine the primary purpose for a CTP Project Proposal, first make sure you researched the history of the proposal and discussed the origin of the recommendation with the local area. Also, the FHWA guidance, '[Purpose and Need Guidance for FHWA-funded Projects in North Carolina](#)', is helpful in considering the various possible purposes. Particularly if the purpose is something other than congestion, refer to Appendix B for the types of data to consider including.
- The fact that a facility is a SHC can't be the justification of need. Refer to the following excerpt from the PS Guidance. For SHC's with no other deficiencies, only a minimum PS should be written.  
**\*Note that Strategic Highway Corridors (SHC) should be referenced in the problem statement, but the underlying problem or need must also be described.** Meeting the SHC vision is not the identified problem- the identified problem is the core need or issue (congestion or safety or system linkage, etc.- see the '[Purpose and Need Guidance for FHWA-funded Projects in North Carolina](#)', FHWA NC Division, Version 2, February 2009). Refer to the '[SHC Concept Development Report](#)' for the criteria used in designation of SHC
- For project proposals where the identified problem is that the facility is approaching capacity (but it won't be over capacity in the future analysis year), a full PS is not required, even if the project proposal has a TIP number.

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- Don't include safety in the 'Identified Problem' section without supporting data. However, it can be included in the 'CTP Project Proposal- Project Description and Overview' section. Refer to the following excerpt from the PS Guidance.
  - Safety/ crash data and analysis (includes fatality data) \*Note: Based on the initial safety screening conducted as part of the CTP Study, contact the NCDOT Safety Planning Group to request a crash analysis for location(s) requiring further evaluation. Refer to the 'Collection and Presentation of Crash Data' procedure. Include safety data in the 'Identified Problem- Justification of Need' section of the problem statement only if the analysis reveals crash rates greater than the critical crash rate and there are potential transportation countermeasures; otherwise the information may be included as supporting data in the CTP Project Proposal- Project Description and Overview' section.
- If the CTP project proposal is on new location, provide information to explain why new location was selected, even if it is not a full Problem Statement (whether or not a full alternatives analysis was conducted).
- Don't forget to reference Appendix I in the Problem Statement if an alternatives analysis was conducted for the given project proposal. Remember, information related to the alternative selected to be shown on the CTP, the CTP Project Proposal, is provided in the PS; information about the other alternatives is provided in the appendix.
- Terms to avoid:
  - 'mitigate' - Don't say the recommendation is 'mitigating' the problem, because environmental mitigation is such a separate and distinct issue in NEPA.
  - 'encourages economic development' – Don't discuss projects encouraging economic development unless growth/ economic development is the purpose for the CTP project proposal and the local area has clearly defined this and is taking other actions to support growth in the specific project area.
  - 'will impact' - In discussing possible impacts, always use language such as 'may potentially impact' or 'the project proposal is in the vicinity of' since specific impacts have not been definitively quantified at this stage in the process.
- In the 'Natural and Human Environmental Context' section, describe the type/ level of environmental screening that was conducted. Explain how the consideration of the environment affected the CTP decision-making. For example, "Available GIS data and other information (*if appropriate, describe what type of other information*) was used to consider environmental features as CTP project proposals were being developed. Efforts were made to balance meeting the transportation needs, while avoiding and minimizing potential impacts to the natural and human environment. Based on a planning level environmental assessment using the available GIS data, the (*project proposal*) is in the vicinity (*define vicinity, such as 300ft from centerline*) of (*resources/ estimated impacts*)." Or, if there are no known significant environmental issues related to the project proposal, state that.
- Problem statements may be developed even when there is no CTP project proposal that results. In this case, the unaddressed deficiency is being

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documented, as well as any considered solutions and why they were not included in the CTP.

- Remember background information about the history of the problem goes in the 'Identified Problem- Community Vision and Problem History' section; the history of the project goes in the 'CTP Project Proposal- Linkages to Other Plans and Proposed Project History' section.
- Each PS should be written specifically for the given need and project proposal. Don't try to use another PS as an example and just change some information to fit your area. Do not use "boilerplate" or generic language in each PS in the CTP report.