

TPB Project Scoping Guidance

The guidance below supplements the Scoping Guidance that is being developed by PDEA, and TPB's *Scoping Assistance – PDEA Procedure*.

Triggers to Initiate Coordination

Identification of Projects (10-year Program and Resource Plan)

- The TPB Regional Unit Head will review the 10-year Program and Resource Plan for any new projects or projects that have advanced. For a new or upcoming project, if there is not an up-to-date Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), the TPB Regional Unit Head will review current CTP study assignments and will initiate a CTP study, if possible. All projects in the 10 year plan should have a problem statement available as part of their submittal in the project prioritization process. **For projects submitted for funding in the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories, if the project did not come from an adopted CTP/MTP, there should be a recommendation from TPB that the project be removed from the prioritization process.**
- An appropriate analysis tool would be developed or refined as part of the CTP study. This tool (which may or may not be a travel demand model) would be used to provide CTP Traffic Data and analysis for Scoping and would ultimately be used to develop the project level Traffic Forecast. Once developed, the North Carolina Statewide Transportation Model (NCSTM) may also be used for projects on the Statewide and Regional Tiers if a local/ MPO/ Regional travel demand model/tool is not available or up to date (non-MPO area).

Project Initiation – Request for Aerial Photography (approximately six to eighteen months prior to initiating the NEPA study)

- Once a project is scheduled and a STaRS schedule is developed, one of the first work tasks by the PDEA Engineer is to request aerial photography from Photogrammetry. TPB is included as a cc: on these requests and they will be forwarded to the appropriate TPB Regional Group Supervisor who will then determine if information from the CTP documentation and/or project file is sufficient to provide the *CTP Traffic Data* and the Problem Statement.
- Once the Regional Group Supervisor receives the Project Initiation letter, the Regional Group Supervisor, in coordination with their Regional Unit Head, will determine if an existing tool (including the NCSTM) is adequate to provide the *CTP Traffic Data* and analysis for Scoping and, ultimately, a project level Traffic Forecast. If an adequate tool is not available, TPB will develop a tool (which may or may not be a travel demand model) to be used to provide the *CTP Traffic Data* and analysis for Scoping. This tool would ultimately be used as the basis to develop the project level Traffic Forecast. This decision occurs 6-18 months prior to the internal scoping meeting, so there is sufficient time identify and develop the appropriate tool to provide the CTP Traffic Data.

Project Coordination Between TPB and PDEA

PDEA has changed the way they handle scoping for TIP projects. There are now two scoping meetings: an Internal Scoping Meeting and an External Scoping Meeting. The Internal Scoping Meeting is for transportation staff and is intended to rely on data and analysis completed during the long range planning process. The External Scoping Meeting will be for the Agency Partners. In general, it is

intended that CTP data (CTP Traffic Data, Problem Statements, etc.) will be used in the early project development process. Once the range of alternatives have been narrowed (after Concurrence Point 2), PDEA will request a project level Traffic Forecast.

CTP Traffic Data (provided by TPB Regional Planning Group)

The notices for the Internal Scoping Meeting will be sent directly to the TPB Regional Group Supervisor. This notice may or may not explicitly request *CTP Traffic Data*; however, this data should be prepared and presented at the initial Internal Scoping Meeting. Part of the discussion that should occur during the Internal Scoping process is whether the existing CTP Traffic Data and information is adequate as the project moves forward in the project development process (Scoping, Purpose and Need, Alternatives Analysis, etc.). The TPB Engineer needs to determine if the existing traffic data adequately demonstrates and supports the transportation problem. It is also important to anticipate and strategize around what additional traffic information may be needed, why it will be needed, and when it will be needed. For example, data may be needed to help evaluate the project alternatives and for future detailed design. Questions that should be asked include: What traffic data is needed for specific upcoming decisions? How will it be used to inform the decision? What existing data would meet those needs? What additional data will we need? Why? When? *For example, would turning movements be needed before final design? How would the information be used? If data is needed, when is it needed?*

It is also critical that a record of the CTP Traffic Data provided during the Scoping process be kept so that it may be used once a Traffic Forecast (preliminary and/ or final) is requested. CTP Traffic Data provided during Scoping should be combined in one .pdf file and placed in the "Misc." folder under *LongRangePlanning* in Project Store by the Regional Group Supervisor. An electronic copy should be uploaded to the shared drive (<s:\shared\TPB Reference\CTP Traffic Data>) by the TPB Project Engineer. The file should include the TIP Project Number followed by the date and the CTP Study Name (e.g. R-2300_2013 July04_LocustCTPStudy).

Internal Scoping

- Internal scoping consists of a range of communications, coordination and collaborative actions conducted to orient transportation personnel to a transportation project and serve as the framework for strategically planning the efficient and effective development of the project. Transportation personnel typically include representation from NCDOT, FHWA, MPOs/RPOs, and transportation planning personnel from local governments.
- Objectives/ Outcomes – The purpose of the Internal Scoping meeting is to orient transportation personnel within NCDOT, FHWA, and local planning organizations (i.e. MPOs/RPOs) to a project. Internal Scoping is a critical component of overall project scoping and should be conducted, in some form, on all centrally managed projects (R, U, I, and W projects) except bridge replacement projects. It occurs before substantial investment of time and money has been made and provides the opportunity to verify the need and viability of the project in support of NCDOT's efforts to deliver a prioritized program of projects. Internal Scoping also sets the tone and pace for the project's development. It operates under the ground rule that project development is a decision-making process that needs to be conducted efficiently, making the wisest use of our time, effort, technology and skills while also being committed to making effective decisions. Internal Scoping, as well as other scoping meetings and activities that follow should help ensure that relevant issues are identified early and a proactive plan is developed for properly addressing those issues.

- Pre-Planning – PDEA and TPB will act as joint leads for the Internal Scoping meeting, since one of the main goals of the meeting involves educating participants on what is already known about the problem and the area in which the problem exists. Holding an effective Internal Scoping meeting will require some pre-meeting planning and coordination with TPB and the Division. The PDEA Project Engineer (PDEA Engineer) will contact the TPB Regional Group Supervisor responsible for the project area to identify the TPB Engineer who will serve as the point of contact for the project. A preliminary meeting between the PDEA Engineer and the TPB Engineer assigned to the project is recommended to discuss the information available from the CTP/MTP. The TPB Engineer will be responsible for including the MPO/RPO representative as appropriate in any preliminary meetings; however, **it remains the TPB Engineer’s responsibility to provide information for the Internal and External Scoping meetings**. Available information might be limited initially, but will continue to increase as Integration is implemented.
- Products provided by TPB Engineer (for Internal Scoping)
 - *CTP Traffic Data* for Purpose and Need and Alternatives discussion (**not a Traffic Forecast**). *CTP Traffic Data* will be provided by the TPB Engineer for discussion at the Internal Scoping meeting. This should be information that is readily available from the CTP or Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and **may** include:
 - Future AADT with CTP/MTP for a facility or facilities that have been identified as a project based upon existing data or data from a CTP/MTP study;
 - Future AADT on existing highway network that only includes facilities open to traffic in the base year;
 - Future AADT for Existing Plus Committed (E+C) Network; this would include projects that are listed in NCDOT’s 10-year work plan that have committed resources for construction.
 - Problem Statement
 - The TPB Engineer should complete the [Air Quality Checklist](#) and submit it as part of the TPB Scoping information. Among the information that needs to be provided is the current air quality status including whether or not the project is located within an air quality nonattainment or maintenance area and the current horizon year for the project?
 - Additional information as available. It is anticipated that as the Integration of Long Range Planning and Project Development is fully implemented, there should be documentation concerning topics such as: the local community, the area’s environmental and human features, the planning alternatives considered, possible indirect and cumulative effects screening, and public input. All of this information should be made available by the TPB Engineer to the PDEA Engineer for scoping the project.

External Scoping

- External Scoping consists of a range of communication, coordination and collaboration actions conducted to orient and involve personnel and organizations outside of the transportation discipline to a transportation project. These personnel represent agencies that, by their organization’s mission, have a stake and role in the transportation project. Like Internal Scoping, this phase of the scoping process serves to incorporate their input and expertise into the plan for a project’s development. Typically this audience includes state and federal resource agencies, especially those engaged in the Merger Process. This audience does not include the general public; they are engaged through a project’s public involvement activities and through

NCDOT, MPOs, and RPOs as part of the Internal Scoping Process.

- Objectives/ Outcomes – The purpose of the External Scoping process mimics that of the Internal Scoping process except that the makeup of the attendees includes the appropriate resource agency representatives and other key transportation staff determined at the Internal Scoping meeting. During external scoping, the TPB Engineer may be asked to help explain the project problem, context and other relevant background from planning. The TPB Engineer may be asked to provide additional information, present the information, or conduct some analysis of the transportation system between Internal and External Scoping. This will depend on the project but may include:
 - Updates to information provided at the Internal Scoping meeting;
 - Sensitivity analysis for various alternatives;
 - CTP Traffic analysis for different alternatives;
 - Documentation/ clarification of land use assumptions.

Project Level Traffic Forecast (provided by TPB Regional Planning Group or Forecasting Group)

The process for requesting, assigning, and delivering traffic forecasts is not changing. The Traffic Forecast request should result from discussions between the requestor (typically PDEA Engineer) and the TPB Engineer about what data is needed and what type of forecast is needed. There are two types of forecasts that may be requested.

- Preliminary Traffic Forecast – mainline traffic (along the project and some Y-lines or cross streets) may be requested after External Scoping (before CP 1 and CP 2) or after CP 2. The Preliminary Traffic Forecast is more refined than the *CTP Traffic Data* provided for Scoping (Internal and External). It should be based on the same assumptions as all traffic forecasts (using a fiscally constrained network). Design factors and truck percentages should also be provided; this information may be derived from classification counts. *Since turning movements should not typically be needed for the preliminary traffic forecast, there should not be a need to request turning movements from the Traffic Survey Group.* As always, before requesting the collection of new traffic data, the TPB Engineer should check with the Traffic Survey Group to see if there is adequate existing data.
- Final Traffic Forecast – consistent with the current product provided for Traffic Forecasts (including turning movements, design hour factors, truck percentages, etc.) that would be requested after Concurrence Point 3 (CP3) for the LEDPA (Least Environmentally Damaging and Practicable Alternative).
- When there is a substantial difference between the *CTP Traffic Data* provided in Scoping and the Project Level Traffic Forecast (preliminary or final), the documentation for the Traffic Forecast will need to explain why. “Substantial” is defined as a difference that would necessitate a change in scope of the project (eg., 6-lane vs 4-lane). It is therefore extremely important for there to be coordination between the TPB Traffic Forecaster (TPB staff or consultant) providing the Traffic Forecast and the TPB Engineer that provided the CTP Traffic Data for Scoping.