

How has my input been used?

In the past, you have told us:

- Your problems, issues, and concerns related to I-81**
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- What is important to you for our transportation system**
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- What you hope *The I-81 Challenge* will achieve**
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- Your ideas and visions for our highway, our city, and our region**

We have listened and used what you told us to:

- Clarify the issues and problems that *The I-81 Challenge* needs to resolve**
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- Develop a set of goals and objectives that will guide our process**
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- Identify a set of possible future strategies that solve the challenges of I-81, incorporate your ideas, and make progress towards our future goals**



What's next?

**Your input today
will help us:**

**Verify that we will be moving forward
with the most appropriate set of
strategies for our region**

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**Elaborate on these strategies by
adding, subtracting and refining
specific components**

**What you can expect from
us in the coming months:**

**Your ideas and input
reflected in our work**

–

**Results of our analysis of these
strategies and a limited number of
specific viable options for each**

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**Additional opportunities for
you to provide input**

Environmental review

The I-81 Challenge still has a long way to go. In the longer term, you can expect to see increasingly refined and detailed analysis of strategies and an effort to build consensus around the limited number of strategies that will progress to a formal environmental review.

The National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 was the first major U.S. environmental law and establishes national environmental policy and goals for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the environment.

For transportation projects receiving federal funding, NEPA requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other transportation agencies to consider potential impacts to the social and natural environment and to make this information available to the public for comment before the implementation of the proposals.

In addition to evaluating the potential environmental effects, FHWA must take into account the transportation needs of the public in reaching a decision that is in the best overall public interest.



Key components of the NEPA process

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need statement is a full and honest explanation of why an agency, or project sponsor, is considering an action and is essential in establishing a basis for the development of the range of reasonable alternatives that will be considered (strategies). It is a statement of the problem and evidence that supports that the problem exists.

Alternatives (Strategy) Analysis

The alternatives analysis is a basic requirement of NEPA and describes the process that was used to develop, evaluate, and eliminate potential alternatives to addressing the problem identified in the purpose and need. Agencies are not required to consider every potential alternative; however, they are responsible for developing the full range of alternatives. Agencies must provide opportunities for the involvement of participating agencies and the public in developing the alternatives and must consider the input provided by these groups.

- The “no-build” alternative is included as a benchmark against which the impacts of other alternatives can be compared.
- The preferred alternative is the alternative which the agency believes would fulfill the purpose needed.

Environmental Assessment

NEPA requires consideration of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of a proposed action and its alternatives on the environment. Potential measures to mitigate adverse environmental effects also must be considered.

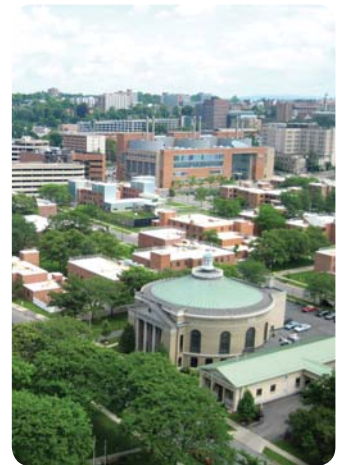
Interagency Coordination

The NEPA process includes requirements for interagency coordination and cooperation. The lead federal agency works cooperatively with other federal and state agencies during the environmental review process.

Public Involvement

Handled correctly, public participation in the NEPA process will improve acceptance of the final decision and, at minimum, provide agencies with the best information possible for making a decision. The amount and type of public involvement will vary depending on the complexity and degree of controversy involved in a project. Elements include:

- Scoping meetings and public hearings.
- Early and continuing opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts, as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions.
- Reasonable notice to the public of public information meetings, a public hearing or the opportunity for a public hearing.



Three routes through NEPA

1

Categorical Exclusion

Under NEPA, transportation projects that do not individually or cumulatively have significant environmental effects are classified as categorical exclusions (CEs).



The Spencer Street bridge is an example of a project subject to the Categorical Exclusion process.

2

Environmental Assessment

Where the significance of environmental impacts are unknown, a federal agency may prepare an environmental assessment (EA). An EA is meant to provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

FONSI – Official document that briefly explains why the project will not have significant impacts and identifies the selected alternative.



Route 281 in Cortlandville, NY is an example of a project subject to the Environmental Assessment process.

3

Environmental Impact Statements

NEPA requires a federal agency to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) when there is a proposal for a major federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. An EIS includes a detailed evaluation of the proposed action and alternatives. The purpose of an EIS is to serve as a tool to promote environmentally sensitive decision making.

Notice of Intent and Scoping

Notice of Intent (NOI) – Official notice published in the *Federal Register* to notify and involve cooperating and participating agencies and individuals about the proposed action and to identify the issues that will be analyzed.

Scoping – An early and open process involving the public and other stakeholders to review a project's purpose and need statement and to identify alternatives and significant issues to be analyzed.

Draft EIS

Draft EIS – Official document with a detailed description of the proposal, the purpose and need, reasonable alternatives, the affected environment, and presents an analysis of the anticipated beneficial and adverse environmental effects of the alternatives. A preferred alternative can be identified at the Draft EIS stage.

Public Comment

Public Comment – Once a Draft EIS is published, the public has an opportunity to review and submit official comments. The typical comment period is 45 - 60 days from the date of public notice in the *Federal Register*.

Final EIS

The final EIS includes responses to any issues raised through review of the Draft EIS. The Final EIS must identify the preferred alternative. After responding to comments, the agency must circulate the Final EIS for review. Agencies cannot make a final decision until 30 days after the Final EIS is filed.

Record of Decision (ROD)

The ROD is the final step in the EIS process. It documents the preferred alternative, presents the basis for the decision, identifies other alternatives considered and why they were not selected, lists and identifies all environmental commitments, and adopts and summarizes a monitoring and enforcement program, if applicable, for any mitigation.



The Tappan Zee Bridge is an example of a project subject to the Environmental Impact Statement process.

The NEPA process

