

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.