

Key components of the NEPA process

Planning Process

The Corridor Study identified the study area problems and issues, transportation needs and possible strategies which will lead to alternatives in the NEPA process.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need is a key factor in determining the range of alternatives considered in an EIS. The “needs” statement describes the problems that the proposed action is intended to address and, to the extent possible, explains the underlying causes of those problems. The “purpose” statement defines, as sharply as possible, the fundamental reasons why the project is being proposed based on meeting the transportation needs. The NEPA scoping process provides the opportunity for public input into the purpose and need and reasonable range of alternatives.

Analysis of Alternatives

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

- The “no-build” alternative is the baseline for comparison of alternatives.
- A reasonable range of alternatives can be studied when the number of potentially reasonable alternatives is very large. Therefore it is permissible to study a “reasonable range” of alternatives in an EIS, covering the “full spectrum” of potential reasonable alternatives. Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint.
- The preferred alternative is the alternative which the agency believes would fulfill the purpose of the project.



I-81, Downtown Syracuse; photos courtesy of SMTC