

Environmental Assessment (EA) Checklist for Local Agencies

Last Update - July 2019

This checklist is to be used for all Local Agency Environmental Assessments requiring Federal Highway action.

Project requiring EA is identified in the Regional Transportation Plan/Long Range Plan and in a fiscally constrained portion of the TIP (construction phase)

Letter of Initiation is sent to MDOT for FHWA concurrence of EA limits and scope - limits of the EA are not necessarily the same limits as the project

- Letter of initiation includes:
 - EA limits
 - project limits
 - proposed improvements
 - other relevant project information (i.e. maps)
 - any public involvement that has taken place to date
 - preliminary issues
 - request for FHWA concurrence of limits and initiation of EA

FHWA concurrence with Letter of Initiation received

Early coordination letters sent to cooperating agencies and other environmental resource agencies (can be done concurrently with Letter of Initiation)

Request MDOT to send Letters to Tribes

Develop Draft EA document

- Document includes:
 - description of proposed action
 - purpose and need
 - alternatives considered (must include a no-build alternative)
 - impacts regarding air quality, noise and the natural and human environment (environmental justice and title VI, wetlands, historical/cultural, 4(f)/6(f))
 - mitigation
 - public involvement

Draft EA sent to MDOT (3 hard copies and 1 electronic copy) for review

- Allow for a minimum of 4 weeks for review

MDOT comments received

Comments addressed and returned to MDOT for FHWA review (MDOT will forward draft EA with a cover letter for FHWA review and title sheet signature)

- Road owner is on the title sheet with FHWA
- 2 hard copies and 1 electronic copy
- Allow for a minimum of 4 weeks for review

FHWA comments or title sheet/permission to print and proceed to public hearing is received

FHWA comments addressed and returned to MDOT for re-submittal, if required

FHWA signature on title sheet received with permission to print and proceed to public hearing (if re-submittal was required)

Final EA with signed title sheet is sent to cooperating agencies and other resource agencies identified in early coordination (EPA must receive a copy)

Local Agency holds Public Hearing - Entire process is 30 days (45 days for 4(f))

- 15 days prior to public hearing - post notice of hearing in newspaper, mail postcards to nearby residents, post on social media
- Have copies of the Final EA (with signed title sheet) at locations where the public can easily obtain and read - post Final EA online
- Post information a second time in the newspaper one week prior to public hearing (have newspaper certify that both notices ran and include in final submittal)
- Hold public hearing – times and location for public hearings should be at an accessible location and at a convenient time
- Provide a sign in and comment sheet at public hearing
- Public hearing must be recorded/transcribed by a certified court reporter - including questions and answers
- Allow 15 (30 for 4(f)) more days for the public to comment after the public hearing is held

Local Agency includes information/responses from public hearing in errata to final EA

- Include all information regarding public comments (including any phone questions or emails received) - errata will also include any changes, corrections or mitigation required due to public involvement

Local Agency sends FONSI Request Packet to MDOT (or determination for Environmental Impact Statement (EIS))

- FONSI Request packet includes Request for FONSI, Final EA and Errata
- Send 2 paper copies and an electronic copy to MDOT

MDOT sends letter to FHWA requesting a FONSI (or determination for EIS) with Final EA and Errata

FHWA FONSI signed or Move to EIS

- If FONSI issued, project will move to design phase