Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

Simplify and Enhance Environmental Review Process for Major Transportation Projects

Goal Leaders:

Office of the Secretary (OST): April Marchese, Deputy Director, Office of Policy Development, Strategic Planning, and Performance

Office of the Secretary (OST): Gerry Solomon, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Policy

Performance.gov

Fiscal Year 2019, Quarter 3
Overview

Goal Statement
DOT will maintain accountability by posting and tracking at least 90% of its funded projects for which environmental reviews are required by the end of FY 2018 from 70%. Long range, by the end of FY 2021, DOT will reduce the median time to complete those environmental reviews to 24 months.

Challenge
The average EIS (environmental impact statement) completion time for DOT’s EISs was slightly more than 6.5 years, based on the 2018 CEQ (Council on Environmental Quality) Report titled, “EIS Timelines.” On August 15, 2017, President Trump signed Executive Order 13807 “Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure.” The EO directs that the time for the Federal Government’s processing of environmental reviews and authorization decisions for new major infrastructure projects should be reduced to not more than an average of approximately two years, measured from the date a notice of intent is published to prepare an environmental impact statement.

Opportunities
Inefficiencies in current infrastructure project decisions, including management of environmental reviews and permit decisions or authorizations, have delayed infrastructure investments, increased project costs, and prevented the American people from enjoying improved infrastructure that would benefit our economy, society, and environment. More efficient and effective Federal infrastructure decisions could transform our economy. A more efficient environmental review process, to achieve a decision within the 24-month goal, will provide opportunities to accelerate project delivery, potentially decreasing overall project costs and accelerating the delivery of project benefits to the public.

Goal Structure & Strategies

### Percent of DOT Projects on the Permitting Dashboard that are On Schedule (FHWA, FTA, FAA, FRA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2018</th>
<th>FY 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of DOT Projects Posted on Permitting Dashboard that are on Schedule</td>
<td>Targets 90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actuals 70%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies to accomplish the APG include the following:

- Use provisions in the two most recent transportation reauthorizations, MAP-21 and the FAST Act, to streamline environmental review for major transportation projects. For example, DOT will increase the number of State DOTs assuming Federal responsibilities for environmental review via NEPA assignment (23 U.S.C. 327), which often reduces environmental review time.

- Use the Federal Permitting Dashboard to track large or complex projects throughout each stage of environmental review and permitting. This enhanced transparency will encourage Agencies to work concurrently, rather than sequentially. Sharing environmental documents and information will reduce duplicative environmental reviews and identify challenges early in the process, expediting resolutions and accelerating project delivery.

- Institutionalize best practices across the Department, including programmatic agreements, liaison positions, Planning and Environment Linkages, and Implementing Quality Environmental Documents.

- Work closely with the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council and the Council on Environmental Quality to root out inefficiency; clarify lines of authority; and streamline Federal, State, and local procedures so the review process can be as efficient as possible while still improving environmental and community outcomes.

- Explore ways to create more flexibility in the review process to ensure that transportation projects do not spend years languishing in a cumbersome and ineffective process.
For Q3, DOT had a total of 108 EISs on the Federal dashboard\(^2\), with 38 EISs in progress. Of those, 28 projects are on schedule (76%). A project was determined to be “on schedule” if the anticipated target date for the record of decision (ROD) had not passed or the completed date entered was earlier or on time relative to the anticipated ROD date. DOT will continue to work with Operating Administrations (OAs) to publish these projects and provide updated completion dates for existing projects.

In Q3 of FY19, DOT continued its outreach to OAs and attended conferences and other venues to continue outreach on One Federal Decision (OFD). The OFD guidance was published on August 23, 2019. This guidance will outline how DOT will implement OFD.

DOT added a major infrastructure project in Q3. DOT continues to make progress on the major infrastructure projects identified to ensure they remain on schedule. DOT will continue to identify future major infrastructure projects.\(^3\)

\(^2\) Available at https://permits.performance.gov
\(^3\) A list of major infrastructure projects are available on the permitting dashboard at https://www.permits.performance.gov/projects
Key Indicators

Percent of DOT Projects Posted on Permitting Dashboard that are on Schedule

Q1 (Oct - Dec 2017): 55%
Q2 (Jan - March 2018): 55%
Q3 (April - June 2018): 59%
Q4 (July - Sept 2018): 70%
Q1 (Oct - Dec 2018): 68%
Q2 (Jan - March 2019): 68%
Q3 (April - June 2019): 76%
Q4 (July - Sept 2019): 90%
## Key Milestones

Create a more efficient environmental review process to help accelerate project delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Milestone</th>
<th>Milestone Due Date</th>
<th>Milestone Status</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop DOT One Federal Decision Implementation Guidance for major infrastructure projects*</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>DOT completed an initial draft for the DOT OFD Implementation Guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit OFD Elevation Process</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>DOT submitted the OFD Elevation Process to OMB pursuant to the OMB Accountability Memo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit OFD Cost Methodology</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>DOT submitted the Cost Methodology Process for calculating Federal costs for major infrastructure projects pursuant to the OMB Accountability Memo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish DOT One Federal Decision Guidance in Federal Register as Interim Guidance</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>The One Federal Decision Policy was published in the Federal Register on August 23, 2019.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A major infrastructure project is an infrastructure project for which multiple authorizations by Federal agencies will be required to proceed with construction, the lead Federal agency has determined that it will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq., and the project sponsor has identified the reasonable availability of funds sufficient to complete the project. (E.O. 13807)
Key Milestones

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<tr>
<td>Review and address any public comments received on the DOT One Federal Decision Guidance and publish as final guidance</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>Pending until public comments have been received on DOT’s One Federal Decision Guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Dashboard Updated to reflect DOT current projects and timetables.</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>DOT will work with OAs to ensure all applicable projects are posted to the federal dashboard and project schedules are updated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Sources and Methodologies

Methodologies

DOT Operating Administrations, in coordination with other Federal agencies, are required to enter a range of environmental review and permitting data through an online data entry system for all projects posted on the Permitting Dashboard. These data include target and actual dates for environment review and permitting milestones required for each project. These data will be used to assess the on-schedule status of DOT project posted on the Dashboard to support this APG.

More detailed statistical analysis of the data, including accounting for delays that may propagate through the environmental review and authorization process, will allow DOT to identify common sources of delay and support policy recommendations to address any necessary process changes to improve performance.

Data Sources

Permitting Dashboard
https://www.permits.performance.gov

Environmental Impact Statements:
https://data.permits.performance.gov/Permitting-Project/DOT-EISs-In-Progress/sgra-wju6

Environmental Assessments:
https://data.permits.performance.gov/Permitting-Project/DOT-EAs-In-Progress/u8ka-qa7z
Data was pulled from the Federal permitting dashboard to determine the number of DOT projects on the Federal dashboard. Federal Register notices were compared with the entries on the Federal dashboard to determine if there were any projects that were not incorporated into the dashboard.

Data is entered by each OA and should be updated within 10 days of a completed milestone. A project was considered on schedule if the ROD date had been updated or the anticipated ROD milestone had not passed. A project where the anticipated ROD date had passed without being updated was considered to be delayed. However, this may have more to do with failure to update the milestone rather than the project actually being delayed.
Additional Information

Contributing Programs

Organizations
• Federal Highway Administration
• Federal Transit Administration
• Federal Railroad Administration
• Federal Aviation Administration

Policies
• Executive Order 13807, Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure, August 15, 2017
• DOT Federal Permitting Dashboard Reporting Standard, July 3, 2017

Other Federal Activities
• One Federal Decision Memorandum of Understanding, signed by 13 federal agencies, April 9, 2018.