

RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDENCE

MOUTAINLAND & UTAH COUNTY PROGRAMMED PROJECTS

1.0 | Purpose and Process

Mountainland Association of Governments and Utah County manage a program of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) funded projects. Based off the awarded funding type of the programmed projects, Mountainland or Utah County act as the Project Manager. The local jurisdictions, UDOT, UTA, and other eligible transportation agencies (Project Sponsor) present to the MPO project concepts and are awarded funding through a biannual competitive selection process. Awarded programmed projects are managed by each Project Sponsor generally through the jurisdiction or agency or by a hired project consultant. Projects require various stages of environmental work. This document establishes recommended policy for the Program Manager so that environmental issues are addressed by the Project Sponsor in planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining awarded projects while promoting efforts to avoid or minimize harm to the environment.

2.0 | Policy

The Program Manager recognizes the impacts of transportation systems on the environment. The Program Manager also recognizes the importance of maintaining environmental quality for the citizens of Utah County. In performing environmental work, the Project Sponsor will hire a professional consultant that will use practical methods, technical expertise and financial resources prudently to perform environmental reviews. The environmental work will outline and recommend measures to minimize harm to the environment, impacted property owners and preserve important historic, cultural and natural resources for current and future generations.

This policy is to be used as guidance and as a recommendation to the Project Sponsor. The Project Sponsor should follow this policy, but can chose to use a different environmental process or no process at all. In all cases if NEPA is required, NEPA requirements must be followed.

3.0 | Background

The local jurisdictions of Utah County, UDOT, UTA and other transportation agencies are charged with providing transportation systems that are safe, effective and facilitate the movement of people and goods, while protecting and preserving Utah's unique environment. The Program Manager's goal is to provide sustainable transportation systems that will meet present and future mobility needs while minimizing adverse impacts to the natural and built environment.

RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDENCE

MOUTAINLAND & UTAH COUNTY PROGRAMMED PROJECTS

The intent of this policy is to guaranty that impacts from transportation projects are understood, disclosed, and where appropriate, avoided or mitigated.

The environmental review process adopted by the Program Manager on programmed projects provides decision-makers with the necessary information to make the good informed decisions while considering the anticipated benefits and impacts. The environmental review process allows decision-makers to balance the expected transportation benefits with likely impacts and planned mitigation measures.

Therefore, it is the policy and practice of the Program Manager that Project Sponsors:

1. Plan, design, construct, and maintain facilities that meet the transportation need, are an asset to the community, and are compatible with the natural and built environment.
2. Conduct appropriate public involvement activities to inform and engage the public and impacted individuals and groups.
3. Conduct appropriate studies and prepare impact analyses for proposed transportation projects and maintenance activities.
4. Establish reasonable mitigation measures to minimize adverse impacts.

4.0 | NEPA Applicability

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) applies to all funded transportation projects that require a federal approval or other federal action. The federal agency with jurisdiction would serve as the lead agency along with appropriate cooperating and participating agencies for this type of project. The NEPA document could be a Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement depending on project scope and anticipated impacts. Examples of projects that would likely require the preparation of a NEPA document include:

1. A new interchange on an interstate highway.
2. A project requiring the use of federal lands.
3. A project that would result in significant impacts to waters of the U.S, as determined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. NEPA would apply only to the actions described in the 404 Permit, not the entire project.

5.0 | Project Environmental Classification

Projects are classified as either “Level 1 Environmental Project and Level 2 Environmental Project”. Project classification is based on the overall scope, the Program Manager input, and the results of preliminary environmental reviews. Project documentation supporting Level 1 and Level 2

RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDENCE

MOUTAINLAND & UTAH COUNTY PROGRAMMED PROJECTS

classifications will be included in the project documentation. The Program Manager collaboratively with the Project Sponsor will make the final decision on the classification of a project. Environmental review procedures for Level 1 and Level 2 projects are described below:

6.0 | Level 1 Environmental Project Procedures

A Level 1 Environmental Project can be completed by the Project Sponsor without the need of hiring a consultant. The document preparer will perform appropriate environmental studies and document findings. The environmental study documents benefits, impacts, and applicable mitigation measures. Changes in project scope, new discoveries, or new information may require a project to change from Level 1 to Level 2 environmental.

The document preparer will attach any supporting documentation in PDF format such as maps, typical sections, drawings, agency correspondence, public involvement efforts, stakeholder comments, and the Program Manager and Project Sponsors responses to comments.

The Program Manager and Project Sponsor will review and collaboratively approve the final environmental document. The completed document will be stored electronically in PDF format.

7.0 | Level 2 Environmental Project Procedures

The environmental review process for Level 2 Environmental Projects provides decision-makers with the necessary information to make the best project decision while considering the anticipated benefits and impacts. This process allows decision-makers to balance the expected transportation benefits, impacts, and planned mitigation measures. Level 2 Environmental Project studies include the following elements and characteristics:

7.1 | Interdisciplinary Approach – Implement an interdisciplinary study approach early in the environmental study process. Involve project team members with special expertise in transportation design, natural resources, and social sciences to work collaboratively on proposed projects. The Program Manager, Project Sponsor and any hired consultant will work collaboratively to develop the scope of the Level 2 Environmental.

7.2 | Scoping - Provide opportunities early in the process for public and agency stakeholders to gain information about the proposed project and to submit comments. Invite the participation of the general public, state agencies, local communities, interested organizations, and federal agencies if applicable.

7.3 | Purpose, Need, and Goals – Identify the purpose and need of the proposed project with stakeholder input. Describe current and future deficiencies and specific needs and goals the

RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDENCE

MOUTAINLAND & UTAH COUNTY PROGRAMMED PROJECTS

project is intended to address. Deficiencies may include issues related to demand, capacity, legislation, economic development, safety, pavement condition, roadway standards, or structural sufficiency. This information is used along with environmental resource data in developing alternatives to be studied in detail.

7.4 | Stakeholder Coordination and Public Involvement – Conduct public involvement activities to identify, inform, and solicit feedback from stakeholders including agencies with jurisdiction about the project’s purpose and need, potential alternatives and impacts, mitigation options, and project schedule. Public involvement is vital to adequately determine if a proposed project will meet the intended need, be an asset to the community, and minimize environmental impacts.

7.5 | Affected Environment – Describe the existing natural and human environment in the project study area.

7.6 | Impacts Analyses – Appropriate studies will be performed in accordance with the Utah Department of Transportation Environmental Process Manual (if applicable for the project type) of Instruction to analyze and document such impacts if project alternatives have the potential to cause adverse impacts.

7.7 | Alternatives and Environmental Consequences – Describe the alternatives studied and provide details on those that were studied but eliminated. Include an analysis of impacts, likely benefits, and proposed mitigation measures for each alternative studied in detail.

Describe each build alternative including the no-build alternative. Build alternatives studied in detail must satisfy the project needs, or they are not considered reasonable alternatives. The no-build alternative should also be studied in order to establish a baseline for comparing alternatives. Evaluate alternatives according to how well they meet the project purposes and needs, provide an asset to the community, and compatibility with the natural and built environment. Build alternatives not meeting the project purpose and need will be eliminated.

7.8 | Mitigation Measures – Efforts will be made to avoid adverse impacts during the environmental study process. Investigate measures to minimize impacts and determine measures to mitigate adverse impacts with input from applicable agencies and stakeholders if impacts can’t be avoided.

7.9 | Draft Environmental Study – The completed Draft Environmental Study will be made available to the public and all stakeholders for review and comment in accordance with the Project Sponsors public notification procedures and review time frames.

RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDENCE

MOUTAINLAND & UTAH COUNTY PROGRAMMED PROJECTS

7.10 | Public Hearing – A public hearing or opportunity for public hearing on the proposed project will be provided in accordance with the Project Sponsors public involvement procedures following the publication of a Draft Environmental Study.

7.11 | Final Environmental Study – The Final Environmental Study will include modifications where applicable and will list and respond to comments provided on the draft document. The Project Sponsor will consider stakeholder comments, along with the outcome of the environmental study process. The Project Sponsor will recommend the selected alternative for approval based on the information and findings contained in the Final Environmental Study.

7.12 | Decision Document – A formal decision document will be prepared that describes the basis for the project decision which will include a description of the selected alternative, reasons for selection and mitigation measures to be included in the project.

7.13 | Timing of Activities – The decision document will be collaboratively approved by the Project Sponsor and the Program Manager prior to final design activities or property acquisition with the exception of hardship and protective buying.