

August 8, 2000

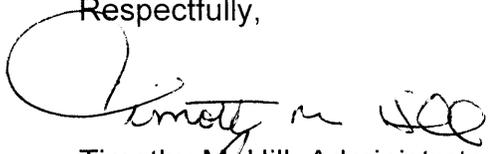
A majority of environmental documents processed for transportation projects throughout the state of Ohio are approved as Categorical Exclusions (CE). Maintaining a balance of transportation and environmental issues as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is critical even with the smallest of projects. Efforts to streamline project criteria in the new Programmatic Categorical Exclusion Agreement of May 2000 have offered opportunities for ODOT to make systematic changes and improve environmental processes.

In order to provide a consistent and high-quality CE that meets the requirements of NEPA and addresses the concerns of Ohio's citizens, the *Categorical Exclusion Confirmation Handbook* originally released in October 1998 has been revised. The revised handbook contains new information on the May 1, 2000 Programmatic Categorical Exclusion Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration and the Ohio Department of Transportation, the CE process, the CE form, and the standard CE Gantt chart.

To aid in the availability of this document, a compact disc version of the document is being provided. The CE handbook has been saved with an Adobe Acrobat reader for purposes of viewing the document from the compact disc. Additionally, the CE handbook is available on the ODOT web page at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/oes/forms.htm>. The Office of Environmental Services also intends to print hard copies of the document and make them available at a later date.

The Office of Environmental Services is hopeful that this revised handbook will serve as guidance to consultants, local officials, ODOT staff, and others in preparation of Categorical Exclusions. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for future revisions of the CE handbook, feel free to contact me at 614-466-7100 or Andrea Stevenson, Assistant Environmental Administrator, Policy Section, at 614-466-7880.

Respectfully,



Timothy M. Hill, Administrator
Office of Environmental Services
Ohio Department of Transportation