

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING DIVISION
Environmental Studies Branch

ENVIRONMENTAL STREAMLINING AND PAPERWORK REDUCTION IN
WRITING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DOCUMENT

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Planning Division through the Environmental Studies Branch has the responsibility of ensuring every highway project with Federal funding has the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance before design plans can be finalized, right-of-way can be purchased, and construction begun. There are three levels of documentation possible in this process: Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment (EA), and Environmental Impact Statement.

Through coordination with the local FHWA Division Office, procedures were developed to abbreviate the EA document focusing in on the environmental issues relevant to each project and eliminating "canned" statements about each impact potential and the accumulation of extraneous background data. All issues are documented through a "Checklist of Environmental Issues" as shown in the attachment. Simply, those issues marked "yes" on the checklist are discussed in further detail in the EA and those issues marked "no" are simply explained away or detailed studies are done and retained in project files to support the decision. This format follows FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A and CEQ Regulations Part 1500 concerning paperwork reduction.

Those reading the abbreviated EA document would know that the evaluation of all environmental impacts had been considered and the real environmental issues are addressed

in clear and concise language. Many EA's following this format have been completed and accepted by the regulatory and resource agencies within our State. ODOT has developed a sense of trust with these agencies and they are assured that we are sincere in our assessment of impacts. In many instances, these agencies participate in the early assessment of potential impacts through early field meetings followed by continuous contact throughout the documentation process.

Because each highway project has areas of environmental concern that may need closer examination, the abbreviated EA document is more dynamic in form, more usable by Design Divisions in the preparation of construction plans, and more understandable by the general public. The use of the abbreviated EA has resulted in reductions in document preparation time and review time by FHWA. ODOT Planning Division is more able to meet the project schedules and to avoid project delays. As FHWA and ODOT continue to refine the abbreviated EA, the whole environmental process benefits because the focus is on the real environmental issues potentially needing mitigation or special construction attention. The final result has been faster approval of EA documents, a focus on real environmental needs and concerns, and better use of taxpayer funds in the planning and timely construction of our State's roads and bridges by reducing project delays.

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

County: _____ Highway: _____ Job Piece No.: _____ Project No.: _____

Proposed Improvement: _____

Engineer: _____ Preliminary plans/aerials received: _____ Alternatives: _____ E.C. Date: _____ Let Date: _____

	YES	NO	Initiated	Completed	Comments
ODOT Scoping Implemented					
Accident Analysis/ Safety Concerns					
Hazardous Waste/LUST Review:					
Hazardous Waste Sites					
LUST Sites					
<u>Wildlife Biologist Review:</u>					
Endangered Species					
Wildlife Impacts					
Wetland Impacts					
<u>Cultural Resources Review:</u>					
Archaeological Impacts					
Historic Properties Impacts					
<u>Other Water Resources Concerns</u>					
Navigable Waterway					
Wild or Scenic River					
Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer					Johnson, Murray, Pontotoc Counties only
Floodplain Impacts					
Rechannelization					
Water Quality Impacts					
<u>Section 4(f) Resources</u>					
Public Park					
Wildlife/Waterfowl Refuge					
Historic Resource					
Recreation Area					
<u>Section 6(f) Involvement</u>					
Air Quality Impacts					
Airport Involvement					
Bicycle/Pedestrian Issues					
Economic Impacts					
Environmental Justice Issues					
Farmland Impacts					
Land Use Impacts or Visual Impacts					
Noise Impacts					
Relocation Impacts					
Social Impacts					
<u>Public Involvement:</u>					
Meetings					
Solicitation Letters					