

CHAPTER 8 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OR IMPACTS

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8. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OR IMPACTS

8-1 OVERVIEW

This chapter serves as a brief introduction concerning the preparation of the "Impacts" section in an Environmental Assessment (EA) and the "Environmental Consequences" section of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). **Chapters 9 through 30 in Part 2** contain information which is found in the "Impacts" section of an EA and the "Environmental Consequences" section of a DEIS. For the purpose of this chapter, both of these sections will be referred to as the "Impacts" section (**Part 1, Chapters 6 and 8 or Part 2, Chapter 1**).

In general, the "Impacts" section affords each topic the same level of detail; however, the detail provided in a DEIS may at times be more specific and precise due to the nature of the document. An EA is usually an assessment of a project's impacts leading to a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Hence, the detail provided to determine no significant impact is much different from the detailed requirement when there is a significant impact (Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]). An EIS, therefore, tends to contain more information, is larger in volume, and provides more in-depth discussion of environmental issues and impacts.

All major transportation projects should be evaluated through the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process using the Environmental Screening Tool (EST). During the ETDM process, the proposed project is entered into the EST by the ETDM Coordinator (see **ETDM Planning and Programming Manual**). The Purpose and Need for the project is identified, and logical termini are located on a GIS based map. The Advance Notification (AN) package is distributed electronically as part of the programming screening event on the EST (**Part 1, Chapter 3 Advance Notification**). At the completion of the Programming Screen evaluation, the Class of Action for the proposed project is determined. If this determination requires an EA or a EIS for the proposed action, pertinent information obtained from this process, such as discussion of impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects and their significance, shall be provided in the "Impacts" section of either the EA or the DEIS.

8-2 PROCEDURE

8-2.1 Content of Environmental Consequences or Impacts Sections

For both documents (EAs and EISs), the "Impacts" section forms the scientific and analytic basis for the comparison of alternatives, including the proposed action. The discussion contained in these sections must comply with **Sections 102(2)(c)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), and (v)** of the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**.

For an EIS, this means the "Impacts" section must include discussion of the following:

1. The environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action.
2. Any adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented.
3. The relationship between short-term effects of the project on the resources versus the overall long-term benefits of project.
4. The maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity.
5. Any irreversible or irretrievable commitments or resources which would be involved in the proposal should it be implemented.

Likewise, both environmental documents must ensure that the impacts discussion provides the following information:

1. Direct project effects and their significance.
2. Indirect project effects and their significance.
3. Cumulative project effects and their significance.
4. Possible conflicts between the proposed action and the objectives of Federal, regional, State, and local land use plans, policies, and controls for the area concerned.
5. The environmental effects of alternatives including the proposed action.
6. Energy requirements and conservation potential of various alternatives and mitigation measures.
7. Natural or depletable resource requirements and conservation potential of various alternatives and mitigation measures.
8. Urban quality, historic and cultural resources, and the design of the built environment, including the reuse and conservation potential of various alternatives and mitigation measures.
9. Means to mitigate adverse environmental impacts.

The specific content of these sections is found in the remainder of this Manual, **Part 2, Chapters 9 through 30**. Other useful tools for the content of these sections,

such as discussion of the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, the environmental impacts analysis, any associated findings and conclusions, and providing other information pertinent to this section are the ETDM process, Sociocultural Effects Evaluation, public involvement, and scoping process (see **ETDM Planning and Programming Manual, Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Handbook**, and **Part 1, Chapter 8** and **Part 2, Chapter 9**).

Information for this section may be obtained from the information included in the **AN Fact Sheet** which includes the results of GIS analysis for environmental issues using available GIS data and applicable maps. If the project went through a Planning Screen, a degree of effect is assigned and specific commentaries on various environmental issues are provided by resource agencies serving on the District's Environmental Technical Advisory Team. If available, a list of permits that may be required and a list of technical studies needed are provided. The AN also identifies the proximity of the proposed action to environmental resources and potential impacts to these resources.

Some of these determinations may have already been made for the project during the EST screening event and provided in the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report**. It is recommended that the District review pertinent information provided in the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** to facilitate development of the "Impacts" section.

In general, each topic (subheading) in the "Impacts" section must describe the impacts of the proposed action and its alternatives and determine the significance of the effect on the project area and the human environment (community) as a whole. Where impacts can be mitigated, this should be discussed.

As the analyst develops each topic (environmental issue), he/she should try to focus discussion of mitigation on a site-by-site basis with a final summary provided at the end of the topic section. In this way, the reader gains an understanding of the project's impact on each site and the extent of mitigation proposed to reduce the effect or compensate for the loss. By summarizing at the end of the topic section, the analyst provides the reader with a clear understanding of the cumulative effects of the proposed action and the type of mitigative measures required to reduce all adverse impacts for the respective topic.

In working out mitigation for an environmental issue, if the Department has committed itself to a monitoring program then the program must be described in detail in the appropriate section and reiterated in the Commitments and Recommendations section (**Part 2, Chapter 32**) of the EA / FONSI or Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Finally, the analyst must ensure in discussing impacts in an EA or EIS that the following are provided:

1. The documents provide sufficient information on the environmental studies undertaken and major assumptions made regarding impact analysis that a reviewer can determine the validity of the methodology.
2. The documents must provide sufficient information to establish the reasonableness of the conclusions reached regarding the alternative recommended and the impacts addressed.
3. The documents must provide for mitigation measures, where appropriate and feasible, so that a commitment can be included in the EA/FONSI or FEIS.

Both the EA and DEIS should make full use of charts, tables, maps, and other graphics illustrating comparisons between the alternatives and their respective impacts (i.e., costs, residential displacements, noise impacts, etc.).

8-3 REFERENCES

1. Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President, 1978. Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. Reprint 43 FR 55978-56007 and 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508.
2. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, October 30, 1987. Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents, FHWA Technical Advisory T6640.8A.
3. Federal Register, August 28, 1987. Volume 52, No. 167. Part 771 – Environmental Impact and Related Procedures. 23 CFR 650.
4. Florida Department of Transportation. Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Planning and Programming Manual. Topic # 650-000-002.
5. Florida Department of Transportation, Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Handbook.
6. Florida Department of Transportation. Public Involvement Handbook.