EDC Overview

It is a commonly held perception that it takes an average of 13 years to deliver a major highway project (from planning through completion). However, several opportunities exist in the current project delivery process where innovative approaches will improve project delivery times. Consequently, in the summer of 2010, Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez launched the *Every Day Counts* (EDC) Initiative. Specifically, this initiative is designed to identify and deploy innovation aimed at enhancing the safety of roadways and protecting the environment, while ultimately shortening the transportation project development.

What are Programmatic Agreements?

Programmatic agreements (PAs) offer an innovative approach to handling routine environmental requirements on commonly encountered project types.

In general, PAs set procedures for consultation, review, and compliance with Federal laws. PAs allow repetitive actions to be handled on a program basis rather than on a project-by–project basis.

A programmatic agreement reduced the time required to clear this Euro-American-tradition archaeological site on the Olympian Drive project, north of Champaign and Urbana, IL.

Contact Information

For training or more information on this Every Day Counts Initiative, please contact your local FHWA Divisions Office.

To learn more about EDC, visit:
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/everydaycounts

About Every Day Counts

Every Day Counts is designed to identify and deploy innovation aimed at shortening project delivery, enhancing the safety of our roadway, and protecting the environment.

innovation ingenuity imagination invention
Every Day Counts

Expanding the Use of Programmatic Agreements

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Why do PAs Need to be Expanded?

Though PAs have been available for many years, not everyone takes advantage of them. Expanding the use of PAs can improve and expedite transportation project delivery processes across the Nation.

As part of this EDC initiative, the FHWA is working with State partners to develop and use a wider range of PAs to shorten project processing and enhance project delivery. States that continue to develop and revise their PAs can offer best practices and new insights into the approaches that work best for particular situations.

Which PAs are Available?

Successful PAs include those for:

- Section 4(f) evaluation,
- Section 106 review on a program basis,
- Categorical exclusion documentation and approval,
- Coastal zone management,
- Culvert replacement,
- Tribal consultation, and
- Those that define types of projects that have little or no potential to affect historic properties, endangered species or wetlands.

Can PAs be Used on a Regional Level?

Yes. Division offices and State departments of transportation (DOTs) should explore how they can benefit from using PAs on a regional scale as many species and their habitats do not follow state lines.

By creating multistate and/or regional PAs, consistent conservation measures can be applied to entire habitats that in turn offer a greater benefit to impacted species.

What are the Benefits of PAs?

PAs reduce project delivery time by specifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. PAs also standardize coordination and compliance procedures, facilitates trust relationships between DOTs and regulatory agency staff, and helps limited staff and resources to be more focused and effective by facilitating better project decisions and more positive outcomes.

The use of PAs also improves compliance efficiency by establishing consistent expectations for review times and processing options. This tool also improves communication and is instrumental in building cooperative relationships.

What Resources are Available to Assist in the Implementation of This Initiative?

The FHWA is working collaboratively with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Center for Environmental Excellence (CEE) to continually update the national inventory of PAs. Tools and documents are available on the EDC and CEE Web sites.

The FHWA can also provide technical and administrative support for regional PA efforts and explore innovative approaches and evaluate cost share opportunities with State DOTs.

The agency will work with stakeholders to establish PAs in regions where they are absent and strengthen existing agreements.

The Woodhouse Toad could benefit from a programmatic agreement regarding endangered species.

How can PAs Reduce Workloads?

Several States have found that PAs reduced the workload. For example:

Ohio's "Programmatic Biological Opinion for the Indiana Bat" brought about more efficient compliance with the Endangered Species Act by creating a tiered programmatic consultation approach to its Statewide Transportation Program. Other PAs have enabled agencies to fulfill the requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and NEPA concurrently.

A multi-party PA between the FHWA and Tribes in North Dakota reduced the workload for each party by determining what types of projects would be of interest in predefined geographical areas.

How Can I Initiate PAs and Their Use?

A good first step is to identify opportunities to establish new PAs. In addition, examine existing PAs; perhaps some might be revised and updated for maximum efficiency. Assess the potential for developing regional PAs.

Often PAs can be expanded to address multiple types of compliance and review. Engaging agency representatives in discussions about expanding the use of PAs is an excellent way to uncover these opportunities. In addition, explore successful PAs used in other States and regions.

What Will This Initiative Accomplish in the Long-term?

Expanding the use of PAs is expected to stimulate the dynamic development and ongoing application of programmatic agreements. It will lead to approaches that are broader in scale and nationally consistent. This is a win/win situation for DOTs as well as regulatory agencies and local communities.