

Guide to the Environmental Assessment (EA)

How is the EA Organized?

The EA is organized into chapters, starting with overall information like need for the project and alternatives, and progressing into chapters dedicated to project impacts. Chapters toward the end of the document focus more on the process, including public and agency involvement.

Impact chapters include subsections for specific impact categories such as air quality, floodplains, or transit. Each impact subsection includes:

- **Regulatory Context and Methodology** – the laws governing the particular resource and the methods used for evaluation
- **Study Area** – defines the area studied for the particular resource. This can change based on the resource, i.e. the area studied for cultural resources is greater than the area studied for wetlands.
- **Affected Environment** – existing conditions within the study area
- **Environmental Consequences** – anticipated impacts to the resource as a result of the proposed project
- **Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures** – identified ways to decrease or avoid impacts to the resource

What Topics are Covered in the EA?

Acquisitions

Parcels proposed to be acquired

Aesthetics

Impacts to the way things look in the project area

Air Quality

How the project impacts air quality

Aviation

Local airports

Bicycles

Discussion of impacts to bicycle movements and facilities

Businesses

Economic impacts due to loss of parking, displacements, or other changes

Community Facilities

Inventory and evaluation of community facilities (schools, churches, etc.) in the project area

Cultural Resources

Archaeological (below ground) and architectural (above ground) resources evaluated for historical and cultural significance

Cumulative Effects

Effects of the project in combination with other past, present, and future projects in the vicinity

Endangered Species

Plant and animal species protected under state or federal law

Energy

Changes in regional energy consumption

Environmental Justice

Minority and low-income populations and potential disproportionate impacts

Floodplains

Potential for impacts to 100-year floodplain and flood storage areas

Freight Rail

Impacts to existing freight rail infrastructure

Geology

Bedrock, rock formations

Hazardous Materials Contamination

Presence and potential disturbance of existing contamination

Historic Structures

Historic (above ground) structures, including buildings and bridges

Indirect Effects

Effects caused by the proposed project, but occurring later in time and/or proximity

Land Use

Compatibility of the proposed project with local land use plans

Low-Income Populations

Impacts to persons considered low-income

Migratory Birds

Minority Populations

Impacts to persons considered minorities

Noise

Effects of noise generated by the project on nearby resources

Parking

Loss of or changes to existing parking as a result of the project

Parks

Inventory of parks and discussion of potential effects

Pedestrians

Discussion of impacts to pedestrian movements and facilities

Relocation

Residents or businesses to be relocated as a result of the project

Right-of-Way

Anticipated permanent and temporary impacts to land parcels

Safety/Security

Description of safety and security features

Section 4(f)

Full evaluation of park and historic properties protected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act

Soils

Soil types in the project area

Stormwater

Effects of change in impervious surface

Traffic

Impacts to the function of roadway intersections

Transit

Changes to existing transit service

Utilities

Water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, electric, gas, fiber optic

Visual Resources

Views of the project and views from the project

Water Quality

Status of impaired waters

Wetlands

Water bodies classified as wetlands by the state or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Wildlife

Habitat and area wildlife