



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

February 2, 2024

Dear Colleague:

Last year President Biden signed into law amendments to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Sec. 321 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, Public Law 118-5, June 3, 2023). The changes included timeframes for projects that are evaluated with environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs), requiring completion in one year and two years, respectively. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is taking these timeframes seriously and is coordinating NEPA schedules across the agency to ensure FTA's projects achieve timely environmental reviews.

These new timeframes for EAs and EISs will require close coordination between project sponsors and FTA regional offices. To ensure timely completion of the NEPA process, project sponsors should develop projects sufficiently prior to formal initiation of the EA or EIS to be able to complete an [annotated outline](#) of the document. Developing an annotated outline is a best practice that creates a framework for an environmental document. This includes setting goals for document length to meet statutory page limits and identifying the most important environmental impacts for a focused environmental review.

To support efficient environmental reviews, FTA is providing a [new template for notices of intent and a new funding availability template](#) to assist FTA in making timely "major project" determinations, a process required for EISs and certain EAs, as explained more fully [here](#).

The new timeframe requirements do not apply to projects that qualify for categorical exclusions ([CEs](#)). CEs account for about 99 percent of environmental actions, and FTA will continue looking for additional uses of its expansive list of CEs, where appropriate, as one of the best ways to expedite the environmental review process. This advances our shared goal of expanding public transportation. Project sponsors should work with their Regional Office to determine the appropriate [class of action](#) for their projects.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact FTA's Director of Environmental Programs Megan Blum (202-366-0463 or megan.blum@dot.gov). As always, please contact your FTA Regional Office as the lead for project-specific matters.

Sincerely,

Nuria I. Fernandez