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458.01 Introduction

[Section 109\(h\) of the Federal Aid Highway Act](#) requires an assessment of the “adverse economic, social, and environmental effects relating to any proposed project on any Federal-Aid system” under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Social and community effects analysis is prepared for projects that require a NEPA, Environmental Assessment (EA), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to examine how the proposed transportation improvement affects the people who live, work, and play in the vicinity of the project. Projects classified as a NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) are not required to conduct a Social and community effects analysis.

Generally, those working on the Social and community effects analysis will closely coordinate with the project’s communications team, Office of Equity and Civil Rights and the preparers of Noise, Air Quality, Section 4(f), Hazardous Materials, Public Services and Utilities, and Transportation and Visual Impact analyses. This information is also used to inform the project’s environmental justice (EJ) analysis to determine whether adverse impacts to a community are high and disproportionate. Refer to [Chapter 460](#) and WSDOT’s [Environmental justice](#) webpage for information on complying with EJ, including compliance with the State’s Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act ([RCW 70A.02](#))

The purpose of the Social and community effects analysis is to: Gather community input, summarize the community’s existing conditions, and disclose the proposed project’s impact on residential and commercial properties, public services, and community connectivity.

Displacement of people and businesses to make room for a transportation project affects both the social network and the economy of a community. WSDOT follows a standard, systematic process for relocation in compliance with the [Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970](#) as amended. The legal requirements and relocation process are described in our *Right of Way Manual* [Chapter 12](#).

Public services include schools, churches, community centers, day care facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, medical and dental clinics, fire stations, police stations, cemeteries, and social service providers. Utilities include publicly and privately owned electric, power, gas, oil and petroleum products, steam, chemicals, communication, cable television, water, sewage, drainage (other than those used for highway drainage), irrigation, fire or police signal systems, and similar lines.

Transportation projects have both negative and positive effects on public services. Often there are short-term impacts on public services and utilities during construction. In some cases, a project may temporarily impact a community's access to essential services, which may result in equity impacts. Public services and utilities often benefit from transportation projects through improved access or travel time.

458.02 Applicable statutes, regulations, and executive orders

458.02(1) *Federal*

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), [42 USC 4321](#) and federal implementing regulations [23 CFR 771](#) (FHWA) and [40 CFR 1500-1508](#) (CEQ).
- Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (as amended). See [49 CFR 24](#) for USDOT implementing regulations. WSDOT *Right of Way Manual Chapter 12* includes additional Relocation Assistance information.
- Environmental Justice Presidential Executive Orders (see [Chapter 460](#) of this manual).

458.02(2) *State*

- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), [RCW 43.21C](#). State SEPA Rules are codified in [WAC 197-11](#). WSDOT's agency SEPA Procedures are in [WAC 468-12](#).
- Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act, [RCW 70A.02](#)
- [RCW 8.26](#) *Relocation assistance – real property acquisition policy* and [WAC 468-100](#) *Uniform relocation assistance and real property acquisition*.
- [RCW 47.04.280](#) Transportation system policy goals
- WSDOT's [Community Engagement Plan](#)

458.03 Social and community considerations during project development

458.03(1) *Planning*

For planning studies, refer to the [Land Use and Transportation](#) webpage for HQ Multimodal Planning and Data Division contact information or see WSDOT's [Planning and Environmental Linkages \(PEL\)](#) webpage.

458.03(2) *Scoping*

If the project is scoped as a NEPA EA or EIS, determine the potential impacts to the community through community engagement activities.

458.03(3) *Design*

Document your outreach and analysis by following the requirements in Section 458.04 below and our agency Community Engagement Plan. Develop a project specific Community Engagement Plan for EA and EIS level projects. Refer to WSDOT's [Social and Community](#) webpage or contact the [NEPA-SEPA Program](#) for additional information and guidance.

458.03(4) *Construction*

Track commitments made to the community to ensure they are carried out.

458.03(5) Maintenance and Operations

Track commitments made to the community to ensure they are carried out.

458.04 Analysis and documentation requirements

458.04(1) Right size to classification (CE, EA, EIS)

WSDOT's policy is to follow FHWA guidance relative to Title VI, EJ, and FHWA's Technical Advisory [T 6640.8A](#). The Social and Community Effects analysis described in this manual summarizes the Technical Advisory's guidance and examines the effect of transportation improvements on four areas:

- The distribution of benefits and burdens of the project.
- Impacts to the social network.
- Impacts to the local and/or regional economy.
- The effect of residential and commercial relocations.

The Social and community effects analysis is prepared for projects that require a NEPA EA or EIS to examine how the proposed transportation improvement affects the people who live, work, and play in the vicinity of the project. Projects classified as a NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) are not required to conduct a Social and community effects analysis.

The level of environmental documentation required for a Social and community effects analysis for an EA or EIS can vary greatly depending on the scale of the project, the severity of the potential impacts, and the level of public controversy. In addition, the name used for the analysis should be tailored to your project. For example, some project teams elect to combine socioeconomic or Social and Community effects with EJ, while others feel the public will prefer to see a separate EJ report. While there is flexibility in the format and titles, the methods of analysis and the documentation of conclusions must follow the direction of the federal NEPA Lead and WSDOT policy.

458.04(2) Analysis and Methodology

The Social and community effects analysis in a NEPA EA or EIS evaluates the transportation project's impact on the ability of the community to function. It describes both positive and negative effects. The level of discussion should reflect the severity and extent of the impact. If an analysis is required, focus the analysis on issues of greatest interest to the local community. Use information from the public scoping meetings, interviews with local officials and leaders, and the public involvement process to identify focus areas. At a minimum, the analysis should include a discussion of the following issues for each alternative including the no build:

- Changes in community cohesion (splitting or isolating areas, generating new development, and separation from services).
- Changes in travel patterns, travel time and accessibility for all modes.
- Direct and indirect impacts to social services caused by displacing households (school districts, churches, law enforcement, fire protection, and recreation areas).
- Highway, traffic, bicyclist, and pedestrian safety, and changes in overall public safety.
- Impacts to human health.
- Project benefits to the community.
- Project effects on elderly, disabled, and transit dependent populations within the study area.

Although some of these elements are measurable and can be drawn directly from analysis of other disciplines (Air, Noise, Transportation, Public Service and Utilities), the analysis requires consideration of the affected community's perception of the severity of the impacts and proposed mitigation measures. Therefore, the analysis will, by nature, be qualitative and require early, continuous, and meaningful engagement with the community. A robust system for recording and tracking issues is essential for project success.

Health

Use the [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) (EHD Map) to determine the 'Environmental Health Disparities' ranking value for your project area's Census tract. See WSDOT's [Social & community webpage](#) to learn more about using the map. Use the data in the EHD Map to inform your description of the community's context and help inform community engagement strategies to assess potential impacts from the project. Summarize the negative environmental impacts that are already burdening the community and potential benefits to help inform the EJ analysis (see [Chapter 460](#)). Summarize the potential community health benefits associated with the transportation project. Benefits can include improved transit, safer bicycle and pedestrian connections, improved air quality, or anything perceived by the community to improve their quality of life.

Economic effects

If economic development is listed as a primary goal in the project purpose and need, the EA or EIS should include the following elements in addition to those listed above.

- Overall effect of the project on the regional economy and compatibility with regional economic development and transportation plans.
- Agreements reached for using the transportation investment to support both public and private economic development plans.
- Opportunities to minimize or reduce impacts on established business districts by private or public means.

The environmental document should discuss economic effects if the transportation project is likely to have a substantial adverse effect on a large segment of the economy or creates land use changes that are not part of an approved local or regional plan. Clearly explain the compatibility of the project with adopted comprehensive plans and coordination with local officials and any impacted business owners.

Economic benefits and impacts can include:

- Changes in the type of development and its effect on government revenues and expenditures.
- Changes in employment opportunities.
- Changes in business vitality due to retail sales, changes in access, visibility, or competition from new business development resulting from the project (e.g., development of a new shopping mall at a new interchange location).
- Impacts to existing highway related and drive-by businesses in the study area (such as motels, gas stations and convenience stores).

Consult FHWA's Technical Advisory ([T 6640.8A](#)) and the [NCHRP Report 456 - Guidebook for Assessing the Social and Economic Effects of Transportation Projects \(Part A\)](#) ([trb.org](#)).

Relocations

To evaluate relocation impacts, use the process described in our [Right of Way Manual](#). WSDOT Real Estate Services can develop generalized relocation data for use during the environmental documentation phase of a project. The information is developed by visual inspection of the study area and from readily available secondary and community sources. Generalized data may include:

- An estimate of the number of households to be displaced and family characteristics (minorities, income levels, age, family size and owner/tenant status).
- An estimate of the divisive or disruptive effect of relocations on the community, such as separation of residences from community facilities or separation of neighborhoods.
- An estimate of the impact on the families likely to be displaced.
- An estimate of the number of businesses to be displaced and the general effect of the dislocation on the community's economy.
- A general description of the housing available for sale in the area and the ability of WSDOT to provide replacement housing for the type of families likely to be displaced.
- A general description of special relocation advisory services that will be necessary for identified unusual conditions.
- A description of the actions proposed to remedy insufficient replacement housing, including housing of last resort.
- A description of the types of transportation (all modes) used by those being relocated to reduce a decrease in their mobility.
- Results of consultation with local officials, social agencies, and community groups regarding the impacts on the affected community.

Parcel specific information, such as the names and addresses of potential displacements, is not available at this stage of the process and should not be included in the environmental document. However, the Social and community effects analysis must give the number and type of businesses that are impacted and in addition to the race/ethnicity of the business owner and employees. The relocation information should be summarized in sufficient detail to adequately explain the relocation situation, anticipated problems, and proposed solutions. Aerial exhibits showing the relationship of the proposed alignments and proposed right of way boundaries to parcel boundaries clearly identifies possible impacts. A table identifying parcels, value, and generated tax revenue may assist in identifying the magnitude of the impacts. The environmental document must include a statement that:

- The acquisition and relocation program will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.
- Relocation resources are available to all people being relocated without discrimination in compliance with WSDOT's Limited English Proficiency Plan.

Coordination with local governments, organizations, and affected parties to reduce relocation impacts is encouraged by FHWA for large projects with a substantial number of displacements. The environmental document should explain the process used and how affected parties helped develop options to minimize adverse effects in the environmental document.

Public services and utilities

Under FHWA's NEPA implementing regulations, impacts to public services and utilities are considered in the Social and community effects analysis. At a minimum the analysis should identify public services and utilities within one-half mile of the project center line and:

- Document direct impacts due to right of way acquisition.
- Describe anticipated changes in emergency service response times based on changes in travel time or access. Discuss positive and negative effects based on the project's traffic analysis.
- Determine if the anticipated changes in service demand are consistent with adopted comprehensive plans (for public services and utilities) based on the project's anticipated residential and/or commercial relocations.
- Describe potential utility relocations (temporary and permanent) for each alternative and their anticipated short-term and long-term impacts.
- Describe how short-term (construction) impacts will be addressed (public outreach, notification of power cuts, detours, delay of emergency response etc.).

Both long- and short-term impacts should be considered for all the alternatives including the no-build. These impacts may include relocation or in place accommodation of utility lines, service outages, or delayed response time of emergency services due to detours. If an EJ population has been identified in the study area, access to public services and utilities should be included in the determination of "disproportionately high and adverse impacts."

WSDOT project environmental documentation and permitting may include an analysis and discussion of utility impacts. Inclusion of the utility in the project permitting documentation avoids delays to the project schedule by eliminating difficulties the utility may encounter when acquiring separate environmental permitting. [Utilities Manual Section 600.09\(4\)](#) provides for guidance, procedure, and a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of including utility relocation impacts in the project's environmental documentation and permits.

State (No federal nexus)

There are no state requirements to conduct a Social and community effects analysis. Under SEPA, impacts to public services and utilities are considered as part of the analysis of a project's effect on the built environment.

[RCW 47.04.280](#) lists Economic vitality as a transportation system goal to, "promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy". State multimodal transportation projects often support planned developments and regional economic strategies.

New state EJ requirements took effect July 1, 2023 by the passing of the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act ([RCW 70A.02](#)). WSDOT is developing procedures to comply with the HEAL Act, including conducting Environmental Justice Assessments (EJAs) for significant agency actions. An EJA can include information from a Social and community effects analysis. Refer to [Chapter 460](#) and WSDOT's [Environmental justice](#) webpage for information on EJ and the HEAL Act.

458.05 External engagement

Public involvement is a critical element of the Social and community effects analysis that is completed for an EA or EIS. It is used to define the scope of the social analysis, evaluate the effect of alternatives on the community, and develop mitigation. WSDOT's commitment to inclusive community engagement should be carefully considered during project development. WSDOT's strategic plan contains policy direction on developing and maintaining relationships, both traditional and with under-represented, under-served communities. The goal is to engage interested parties before, during and after projects, and in general outreach.

More than any other discipline, the social analysis relies on interaction with the affected communities. The analysis should focus on issues of the most concern to the people who live, work, and play in the vicinity of the project. Public outreach can be used to:

- Collect descriptive information about the community.
- Identify key issues for analysis to support scope and budget decisions.
- Communicate WSDOT proposed efforts to avoid and minimize adverse effect and collect public perception of a project's impact (or lack of impact) to the social network.
- Collect public input on project design and mitigation and demonstrate WSDOT response to community concerns.
- Demonstrate and document compliance with federal requirements for public input into the decision-making process.

WSDOT policy requires staff to follow the [Model Comprehensive Tribal Consultation Process](#) when working with tribal governments. See Chapters 400 and 530 for more information on Tribal Coordination. Contact the [WSDOT Tribal Liaison Office](#) for assistance.

Refer to our [Community Engagement Plan](#) for engagement best practices.

458.06 Internal Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities in this subject area overlap with those in several other subject areas depending on the specifics of the proposed project.

458.06(1) *Project Engineer*

Identify local leaders and interested parties to engage in the project development process and work with project Communicator to identify additional interested or affected parties.

The [WSDOT LEP Accessibility Plan](#) is found on WSDOT's [Title VI/Limited English Proficiency webpage](#). The Plan requires project managers to:

- Make every effort to provide services, either through translation or interpreter, prior to scheduled meetings, such as public hearings, or project meetings.
- Pay for the translation of vital documents and interpreter services including summary newsletters, brochures, public notices for meetings and summary documents for open houses or environmental hearings. Interpreter services should be provided upon request for open houses and hearings.

458.06(2) *Environmental Coordinator/Consultant*

Conduct the Social and community effects analysis.

458.06(3) Communicator

Work with the Project Engineer to develop community engagement strategies and a project-specific community engagement plan, if needed.

458.06(4) WSDOT HQ Environmental Services Office

Review the Social and community effects analysis.

458.07 Mitigation

WSDOT uses community input when considering appropriate mitigation measures to address the transportation impacts as required by federal and state laws. The project team then pursues and negotiates reasonable project related mitigation in good faith with the community.

Federal and state law, including NEPA, SEPA and the HEAL Act, provide policy direction that support mitigating project impacts – this includes mitigating impacts to the human environment (community mitigation) in addition to the natural environment. Additional information about community-identified mitigation may be found in the *Design Manual Chapter 950*.

458.08 Applicable permits and approval process

There are no associated permits or approvals associated with Social and community effects.

458.09 Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations and acronyms used in this chapter are listed below.

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CEP	Community Engagement Plan
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
Title VI	Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
WAC	Washington Administrative Code

458.10 Glossary

Community Cohesion – The ability of people to communicate and interact with each other in ways that lead to a sense of community, as reflected in the neighborhood’s ability to function and be recognized as a singular unit.

Public Service – Public services include, schools, churches, community centers, day care facilities, hospitals, nursing homes, medical and dental clinics, fire stations, police stations, cemeteries, and social service providers.

Utility – Privately publicly, or cooperatively owned lines, facilities, and systems for producing, transmitting, or distributing communications, cable television, electric power, light, heat, gas, oil, crude products, water, steam, waste, stormwater not connected with highway drainage, and other similar commodities, including fire or police signal systems, street lighting systems, and traffic control systems which directly or indirectly serve the public. See *Utilities Manual Chapter 2*.

Relocation Assistance – When a program or project results in the displacement of any person, WSDOT must fully inform the displaced person of their rights and entitlements to relocation assistance and payments. WSDOT will pay the displaced person for actual, reasonable, and necessary moving expenses for individuals, families, businesses, farm operations, or other personal property. These payments are separate and distinct from the acquisition compensation. Projects that include displacements must follow a standard, systematic process for relocation in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended (Uniform Act). See *Right of Way Manual Chapter 12* for more information.

Utility Relocation – The adjustment or replacement of utility facilities required by a highway project, including removing and installing facilities, acquiring necessary property rights in the new location, moving or rearranging existing facilities, or changing the type of facility to provide any necessary safety and protective measures. See WSDOT *Utilities Accommodation Policy M 22-86*.

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