

What is NEPA?

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The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a federal law requiring agencies that receive federal funding to consider the impacts to environmental, cultural and social resources from their proposed projects.

How does NEPA apply to this project?

As a federally funded project, Columbia River Crossing (CRC) must meet NEPA requirements and study the environmental impacts of all potential actions before making decisions. CRC is studying five project alternatives and the effects of those alternatives on the natural and built environment. As part of this process, the CRC project must consider input from the public, tribal governments, and permitting and planning agencies.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An environmental impact statement is a comprehensive report that compares the positive and negative impacts of each project alternative on the natural and built environment. An EIS is required for projects expected to have significant effects on the environment. The report also will outline ways to mitigate any unavoidable effects. Projects where no effects or no significant effects are expected must follow different requirements.

The NEPA Process: Step by Step

1. Define the purpose and need for a project

Once a problem or problems are identified, an agency writes a Purpose and Need statement that identifies the problems and explains why the project is needed. The Purpose and Need statement helps with the identification and evaluation of alternatives that could solve the problems.

2. Seek public input

Early in the process, agencies ask the public for information about community and environmental issues related to the project. The project informs potentially



affected residents, tribal governments, and public agencies about the proposal, explains how studies will be conducted, and seeks their input on solutions to consider.

3. Identify potential options

The project uses public input and information from the previous stage to identify an initial range of options that address the project's needs. These options, called preliminary alternatives, are often conceptual. The project also must consider a No Build alternative, which establishes a baseline to compare with the other alternatives. Sometimes, a project's decision makers choose the No Build option. CRC has included a No Build option among its alternatives.

4. Analyze the preliminary alternatives

The project compares its preliminary alternatives to the goals identified in the Purpose and Need statement to select the best options for further study. Some alternatives drop out at this stage, and the most promising move forward for analysis in the Draft EIS.

5. Study the environmental impacts

The project researches and analyzes all of the potential environmental impacts associated with each alternative. The CRC Draft EIS will describe potential impacts on areas such as cultural and historic resources; air, soil and water quality; and land use in 23 technical reports.

6. Prepare and issue the Draft EIS

The Draft EIS is published for public review and comment. CRC is expected to release its Draft EIS in spring 2008.

7. Hold a public meeting

The project must hold a public meeting on the Draft EIS to receive public comment. The meeting is advertised locally and is often held partway through the public comment period. CRC will host two public hearings and will use additional methods to obtain public input, such as meetings with project area residents and stakeholders.

8. Finalize the EIS and the Locally Preferred Alternative

After the public meeting and Draft EIS comment period, project staff prepares the Final EIS. The Final EIS responds to all public comments received on the Draft EIS. It also identifies the final Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and explains why it was chosen. The Final EIS commits to mitigation measures for environmental impacts and adds more construction and design details to the project's plans.

9. Publish decision on locally preferred alternative

The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration are the lead federal agencies for the CRC project. At the end of CRC's NEPA process, they will review the Final EIS and LPA and decide if they agree with the outcome. Their decision will be published in the Federal Register and is called the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD describes the alternatives considered and states whether the project has taken the necessary steps to minimize natural and built environmental effects. It also includes responses to some public comments and summarizes the project's mitigation measures. Once the ROD is published, construction can begin. However, this step does not guarantee funding or force an agency to act.

Environmental Impact Statement Process Overview



How can I get involved?

- Visit the website at www.ColumbiaRiverCrossing.org to learn about the project and sign up for updates
- Attend an advisory group meeting
- Invite CRC staff to an event or meeting to discuss the project

How can I comment on the project?

E-mail: feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org

Mail: 700 Washington Street, Suite 300
Vancouver, WA 98660

Phone: 360-737-2726 or 503-256-2726

Fax: 360-737-0294

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