

458.01	Introduction
458.02	Applicable statutes, regulations, & executive orders
458.03	Social and community considerations during project development
458.04	Analysis & documentation requirements
458.05	External involvement
458.06	Internal roles & responsibilities
458.07	Mitigation
458.08	Applicable permits and approvals
458.09	Abbreviations and acronyms
458.10	Glossary

458.01 Introduction

Section 109(h) of the Federal Aid Highway Act requires an assessment of the “social, economic, and environmental impacts” under NEPA. The Social and community effects analysis is prepared for projects that trigger 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.

Generally, those working on the Social and community effects analysis will closely coordinate with the project’s communications team, Office of Equal Opportunity and the preparers of Noise, Air Quality, Section 4(f), Hazardous Materials, Public Services and Utilities, Transportation and Visual Impact analyses. This information is also used to inform the project’s Environmental justice analysis to determine whether adverse impacts to a community are high and disproportionate.

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, community connectivity.

New in the 2021 Manual, Title VI and Environmental Justice analyses have moved out from under this chapter, into a new [Chapter 460](#).

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 impacts 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, & 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.

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](#).
- [RCW 8.26](#) *Relocation assistance – real property acquisition policy* and [WAC 468-100](#) *Uniform relocation assistance and real property acquisition*.
- [RCW 47.04.280](#)
- WSDOT's [Community Engagement Plan](#)

458.03 Social & community considerations during project development

458.03(1) *Planning*

Contact the HQ Multimodal Planning and Data Division for direction.

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.

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 & documentation requirements

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

WSDOT's policy is to follow FHWA guidance relative to Title VI, Environmental Justice, and FHWA's [Technical Advisory T 6640.8A](#). The Social and Community Effects analysis described in this manual summarizes the TA 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.

Projects classified as a NEPA Categorical Exclusion are not required to conduct a Social and community effects analysis. EAs and EISs require a Social and community effects analysis.

The level of environmental documentation required for a Social and community effects analysis for an EA/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 environmental justice, while others feel the public will prefer to see a separate environmental justice 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 & Methodology*

Federal

The Social and community effects analysis evaluates the transportation project's impact on the ability of the community to function as a whole. 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 (see 12-Step Social and community Effects Analysis Process).
- 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 our [Social & community](#) web page 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 determine the level of community engagement 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 Environmental justice 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 & 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 of 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.

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 stakeholder relationships, both traditional and with under-represented, under-served communities. The goal is to engage stakeholders 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 \(PDF 2.1MB\)](#) 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 stakeholders to engage in the project development process and work with project Communicator to identify additional interested or affected parties.

The [WSDOT LEP 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.

NEPA, SEPA, the federal Environmental Justice Executive Order and the Secretary's Executive Order (E 1018.03) all provide policy direction that support mitigating project impacts – this includes mitigating impacts to the human environment (community mitigation) in addition to the natural environment.

458.08 Applicable permits & 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*.

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](#).

Relocation Assistance – When the acquisition of right of way requires the displacement of any family, individual, farm, business, nonprofit organization, or their personal property, that party or organization may be entitled to payments, separate and distinct from the acquisition compensation, in order to alleviate the costs of moving and replacement housing. Such payments and matters pertaining to eligibility are the subject of See [Chapter 12](#) of the *Right of Way Manual M 26-01*.

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