Arizona Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

November 2017

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

FOR EXPEDITING PROJECT DELIVERY OF LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY (LPA) FEDERAL-AID PROJECTS

ADOT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This guide was developed by the Arizona Department of Transportation in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration as a SHRP2 product for Expediting Project Delivery

ACRONYMS USED THROUGHOUT THIS GUIDE:

AA	ADOT Adminstration
ADOT	Arizona Department of Transportation
AEP	ADOT Environmental Planner
APM	ADOT Project Manager
CA	Certification Acceptance
CAA	Clean Air Act
CE	Categorical Exclusion
CEP	Consultant Environmental Planner
COG	Council of Government
CPM	Consultant Project Manager
CWA	Clean Water Act
EA	Environmental Assessment
ECS	Engineering Consultant Services
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAHP	Federal-Aid Highway Program
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement
LPA	Local Public Agency
MPD	Multimodel Planning Division
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NTP	Notice to Proceed
PARA	Planning and Rural Assistance
PE	Preliminary Engineering
PS&E	Plans, Specifications, and Estimates
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
RFQ	Request for Quotation
ROW	Right-of-Way
SA	Self-Administration
SHRP	Strategic Highway Research Program
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TRACS	Transportation Accounting System

OVERVIEW:

THIS LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY (LPA) QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

This guide was developed by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) with a grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to implement the second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2). This guide serves as an additional tool in **expediting LPA project delivery**, in particular environmental review in steps leading up to and through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

This guide focuses on the following key points:

- ✓ **ADOT's Environmental Planning** plays a key role in obtaining project NEPA approval and should be involved early in the development process to provide input on **scope, schedule and budget**.
- ✓ **Good communication** between the LPAs, the ADOT Project Manager, the ADOT Environmental Planner, and consultants is essential to **efficient and effective project development**.
- ✓ The three types of LPA project administration have different procedures for **procuring consultants**.
- ✓ **Manage the critical path** means accounting for the "other environmental laws" such as the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 4(f), Clean Air Act (CAA), etc. that typically dictate the environmental component of a project schedule.
- ✓ **Strong Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Control (QC)** are important to prevent problems, as well as identify and correct problems early.
- ✓ ADOT staff should strive to provide **exceptional customer service** by having a **proactive approach to communication**.

THE ADOT LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY PROJECTS MANUAL

ADOT is tasked with administering the Federal-Aid Highway Program (FAHP) for LPAs. The **ADOT Local Public Agency Projects Manual** provides information and guidance to assist LPAs with projects funded under the FAHP, from planning to final acceptance. The manual outlines the ADOT and FHWA policies and procedures that federally-funded LPA projects must follow and provides references to contacts and resources throughout the project development process. Chapters of that manual are referenced in this guide for additional information.

KEY POINT: ADOT does not administer the development of all LPA projects but is responsible for all NEPA compliance for federally funded LPA projects.

DELEGATION AUTHORITY:

The FHWA Arizona Division **delegates authority** to ADOT to administer federally-funded LPA projects through the FHWA and ADOT Stewardship and Oversight Agreement for Arizona. ADOT and FHWA follow the provisions and oversight responsibilities outlined in the Agreement to implement the FAHP. ADOT either administers the project (AA) or delegates administration of FAHP Projects to LPAs either through a Self-Administration Agreement (SA) or Certification Acceptance Agreement (CA).

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

KEY POINT: The Stewardship Agreement is the over-arching authority for the FAHP administered in Arizona.

TYPES OF PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

1. **ADOT Administration (AA):** ADOT manages the project development and administers construction
2. **Self-Administration (SA):** LPA is authorized to manage one or more development activities of a specific project; however, ADOT administers construction
3. **Certification Acceptance (CA):** LPA is authorized to manage most aspects of the development of the project and construction

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:

NEPA APPROVAL AND ADOT ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE:

NEPA Approval and the **ADOT Environmental Clearance** for final approval of environmental actions are separate approval steps.

NEPA Approval is the completion of the federal NEPA process as indicated by the approval of a CE, Environmental Assessment (EA), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NEPA Approval date is also the date after which FHWA can authorize design, right-of-way (ROW) acquisition and construction funding.

Environmental Clearance is an internal ADOT approval document sent from Environmental Planning to ADOT Contracts and Specifications Section for an ADOT construction administered project, to certify that the environmental process and documentation is complete, has been approved by the responsible agencies, and that the project is ready to advertise for bid. There is no separate Environmental Clearance for CA Agency projects as the CA Agency is responsible for ensuring there are no changes that affect the NEPA Approval and that all requirements are met before authorization for construction.

The Environmental Clearance can be issued concurrently or after the NEPA Approval date. For CE projects, the dates are usually concurrent. For EA and EIS projects, NEPA Approval will be in advance of final design, and the Environmental Clearance will be issued before advertisement for construction.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING:

ADOT Environmental Planning involvement can begin as early as preliminary scoping in **planning** and **programming**.

ADOT encourages LPAs to scope projects as thoroughly as possible to evaluate cost estimates before projects are included in a regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to ensure that sufficient funding is secured. The ADOT Multimodal Planning Division (MPD) provides assistance to LPAs with preliminary scoping utilizing Planning and Rural Assistance (PARA) funds for qualifying rural LPA projects.

THE LEVEL OF PROJECT SCOPING DURING PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING SHOULD:

- ✓ Identify needs through local programming process
- ✓ Be commensurate with the complexity of the proposed project
- ✓ Identify any environmental issues that will take time and funding to address
- ✓ Define project cost and budget sufficiently to allow the project to be programmed
- ✓ Be sufficient to support the environmental analysis required during the design phase

IMPORTANT PLAYERS IN PRELIMINARY SCOPING

- LPA
- MPO/COG Staff
- ADOT LPA Section
- ADOT MPD
- ADOT Environmental Planning
- ADOT District and Technical Staff

LPA sends letter to ADOT LPA Section Program Manager to initiate project

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

Preliminary Scoping (Pre-Design)
LPA Project Manual Chapter 7

→

Project Listed in TIP and STIP
LPA Project Manual Chapter 6

→

TRACS and Federal Aid Number Assigned

→

INITIATING ADOT ADMINISTERED PROJECT:

The LPA initiates the project with ADOT by sending a letter to the ADOT LPA Section Program Manager. The ADOT LPA Section Program Manager coordinates the assignment of the TRACS and Federal-Aid Number and project name with the ADOT Project Manager and the ADOT Environmental Planner. A letter containing the project information and its assigned personnel is sent back to the LPA.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

- ADOT
- LPA
- FHWA
- Consultant

ADOT LPA Section Program Manager:

- Assigns TRACS and Federal Aid Number
- Contacts Project Management Group for Assignment of a Project Manager
- Contacts ADOT Environmental Planning Project Delivery Manager for assignment of an Environmental Planner

ADOT LPA Section Program Manager sends letter back to LPA with:

- TRACS and Federal Aid Number
- Name of ADOT Project Manager
- Name of ADOT Environmental Planner

(cc ADOT Project Manager and ADOT Environmental Planner)

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

IGA[1,2] Developed

LPA Project Manual Chapter 2

Federal Aid Authorized and Obligated for Preliminary Engineering (PE)[3]

LPA Project Manual Chapter 8

Development/Design (Final Scoping and PE)

LPA Project Manual Chapter 8

[1] IGA = Intergovernmental Agreement
[2] LPA that is CA operates under CA Agreement
[3] LPAs can self fund the PE and still request Federal-aid for construction

IGA AND CONSULTANT PROCUREMENT:

An **intergovernmental agreement (IGA)** needs to be in place for AA and SA LPA projects. The IGA defines the budgetary obligations of all parties involved in a project. IGA development provides an opportunity for **collaboration** and **coordination** between an LPA and ADOT on defining scope and outlining responsibilities. Consultant procurement is dependant on the type of project administration.

KEY POINT: **CA Agencies** do not have an IGA and operate under their own consultant procurement process as approved by ADOT. Responsibilities are outlined in their **CA Agreement**.

[1] LPA desiring to pursue SA must apply with ADOT prior to initiating the consultant procurement process.

KEY POINT: In addition to the ADOT PM and LPA PM, ADOT Environmental Planners can review proposals from an environmental perspective.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY

- ADOT
- LPA
- Consultant

SCOPING - PLANNING/PROGRAMMING AND PRELIMINARY DESIGN:

The **ADOT Environmental Planner** should be involved early in the process to provide knowledge and insight on the project's scope, schedule and budget. The earlier that potential issues are identified, the more predictable the project development process will be.

DURING PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING (Pre-TIP)

- ✓ Environmental Planning can be contacted during preliminary scoping to assist the LPA prior to a project being programmed in the TIP.
- ✓ Environmental Planning can review the scope and budget as early as possible to avoid a project being under or over scoped.
- ✓ Environmental Planning contact information can be found at http://azdot.gov/business/environmental-planning/contact-us

DURING PROJECT SCOPING (Post-TIP)

- ✓ The ADOT Project Manager and ADOT Environmental Planner attend the field review and kickoff meeting.
- ✓ The ADOT Environmental Planner can be contacted early and often to provide assistance on NEPA requirements.

KEY POINT: Timing of getting funding in place is critical. The process involves many steps, so financial planning is imperative to a project development schedule.

LPA Project Manual Chapter 6

DEVELOPMENT/DESIGN PHASE:

* NEPA approval should normally be attained by 60% for projects processed as a CE. But, this may not always be possible. Proceed cautiously to 95% only with Environmental Planning approval. Discussions with Environmental Planning should be ongoing throughout the project. Environmental Planning can make a "risk assessment" for proceeding past 60% based on the impacts and relevant environmental issues. The goal is to avoid re-design that is the result of determinations made in the environmental review process.

▲ Environmental Clearance required by this time (AA and SA projects only)

Preliminary Engineering (PE), the environmental review process, and NEPA approval occur within the Development/Design Phase.

- ✓ Various **environmental analysis** may be required for NEPA approval. Coordination and communication between disciplines is essential in identifying the environmental resources and evaluating the project impacts on these resources. See Chapter 9 of the LPA Project Manual for discussion of the roles and responsibilities of various technical disciplines and their requirements.
- ✓ When there is a **change in scope and/or limits**, communicate this as soon as possible to address the consequences earlier rather than later. Changes in scope and/or limits may require additional studies/ analysis that could be time sensitive which in turn may require additional funds to complete the work.
- ✓ If the budget changes and additional funds are needed, be aware that **securing additional funding can be complicated and take time**.

Local Public Agency Project Manual
Chapter 8: Development/Design
Chapter 9: Environmental Clearances

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION:

APM - ADOT Project Manager
CEP - Consultant Environmental Planner
AEP - ADOT Environmental Planner
CPM - Consultant Project Manager

There are many different stakeholders that make up the project team, and each play a key role throughout the LPA project development process. **Communication between all players is essential in order to stay on schedule and within budget.**

Coordination and communication between all key players should be constant and ongoing throughout project development. When a project requires a change of scope or an environmental issue arises, notify the design team. These issues may affect schedule, budget, and/or scope.

ENGINEERING/TECHNICAL DISCIPLINES

A variety of engineering/technical disciplines are involved in LPA projects. These disciplines include specialized personnel with expertise in areas including but not limited to: roadway design, structures, drainage, geotech, utilities, cultural resources, biology, water resources, socioeconomic impacts, hazardous materials, etc.

PROJECT-SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS:

- ✓ **Create communication protocols upfront for all projects, so all project team members know the communication chain**. When sending out emails, letters or other written correspondence, keep appropriate parties in the loop. For example, the protocol may be that the ADOT Environmental Planner emails the consultant on a project issue and copies the ADOT Project Manager and the LPA Project Manager so they are informed. Likewise, others should copy the ADOT Environmental Planner, especially with time-sensitive issues.
- ✓ **When Communication Breakdowns Occur:** If individuals are not responsive to communication attempts via email within a reasonable time frame, follow up with a phone call. If the non-responsiveness continues, contact a senior staff member in order to keep the project moving.
- ✓ **NEPA decisions on LPA projects are communicated by the ADOT Environmental Planner assigned to the project.**

DOCUMENTATION:

Record keeping and documentation should be one of the most diligently executed tasks on federally funded projects. NEPA is a process-based law, and it is crucial that documentation of the activities and decision making throughout the process be complete.

- ✓ For **AA projects**, ADOT will maintain project records.
- ✓ For **SA and CA projects**, the LPA is responsible for maintaining project records but ADOT maintains the NEPA files.
- ✓ Files are to be maintained for **five years** following the project close out.

MANAGING THE CRITICAL PATH:
Regardless of the NEPA documentation for a project, there may still be required environmental analysis that must be performed and cannot be bypassed. A “c”-listed CE does not mean “no environmental work.”

- ✓ Work and approvals can include biological or cultural resource surveys, Section 106 consultation, Section 7 consultation, Section 4(f) evaluation, Section 404 permits, etc. (Unusual circumstances/other laws and regulations)

Consultation with outside agencies or permitting usually becomes the critical path.

Begin Environmental Work Early!

QA/QC AND CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Quality Assurance (QA):
System for ensuring a desired level of quality control in the development, production, or delivery of products and services.

→ **Preventing Problems**

Quality Control (QC):
System for verifying and maintaining a desired level of quality in technical analysis and documentation through careful planning and use of proper checking against standards and verification of products.

→ **Identifying and Correcting Problems**

The approach to projects should always be to keep quality in mind from their beginning. Strong QA/QC is important throughout project development in order to reduce or eliminate delays due to incomplete or inaccurate documents or the need to redo work to meet standards and design guidelines.

LPAs and consultants are encouraged to consult the ADOT Environmental Planning Quality Control Plan located on Environmental Planning's website.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In all contact with customers, **ADOT staff should aim to exceed the customers' needs while representing the agency** by achieving the following goals:

- ✓ Deliver products and services at the agreed upon time
- ✓ Listen to, accept, and act upon feedback
- ✓ Assist in defining needs and requests
- ✓ Provide courteous, prompt and professional customer service
- ✓ Deliver the highest quality products and service with the goal of exceeding customer expectations

Exceptional customer service requires both responding well when customers contact them, but also taking the initiative to contact customers.

Proactive communication anticipates questions before they are raised or before issues occur.

REFERENCES:

Federal-aid Essentials for LPAs

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/

ADOT LPA Section

https://www.azdot.gov/business/programs-and-partnerships/local-public-agency

ADOT Programs and Partnerships with LPAs (LPA Manual)

http://www.azdot.gov/business/programs-and-partnerships/LocalPublicAgency

Information on ADOT Environmental Planning

http://www.azdot.gov/business/environmental-planning

KEY CONTACTS

ADOT LPA Section

https://www.azdot.gov/business/programs-and-partnerships/local-public-agency/contact-us

ADOT Project Management Services

http://www.azdot.gov/business/ManagementServices

http://www.azdot.gov/business/ManagementServices/ProjectManagementGroup/contact-us

ADOT Environmental Planning

http://www.azdot.gov/business/environmental-planning/contact-us