

Significant Projects

The concept of a significant project was introduced to encourage agencies to identify projects that will have major impacts on traffic so that they can focus more of their impacts mitigation efforts on projects expected to have a relatively high level of impacts. Agencies are also encouraged to evaluate alternative methods of handling traffic to see if these impacts can be reduced or eliminated altogether. The earlier significant projects are identified, the easier it is to look at different alternatives and possibly incorporate funds into the project to accomplish these alternatives. They may not always be more expensive, but if they are identified too late in the project development process, they will be rejected since there were not sufficient funds. Each agency was to determine a definition of “significant project” in their policy based upon regional factors and expectations and the guidelines in the Work Zone Safety and Mobility Rule.

This Process Review should assess the concept of the significant project to determine if the criteria established in the agency’s policy are identifying all projects correctly. Some sample questions follow. The responses to these questions should give you an indication if the process is working or what needs to be improved, and can help the agency determine whether a more in-depth review of its significant projects identification process is warranted.

- Is there a well-defined process for identifying significant projects?
 - Is it being implemented as envisioned?
- Is the significant project identification process becoming institutionalized or is it a struggle for each project?
- When are significant projects identified?
 - Is it early enough in the project development process to allow for adequate planning and budgeting to address impacts?
- Have the operational performance goals set by the agency been met on most projects?
- How are the operational effects of the project being measured?
 - Are the measurements accurate and the correct values?
- Have there been projects that had significant road user impacts that were not categorized as “significant” during the development phase?
- Should the parameters for identifying “significant projects” be adjusted based upon performance or changing conditions?