



Revised Section 404/NEPA Interagency Merger 01 Process

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Presentation Outline

- Why Was the Merger 01 Process created?
- What is the Merger 01 Process?
- What benefits result?

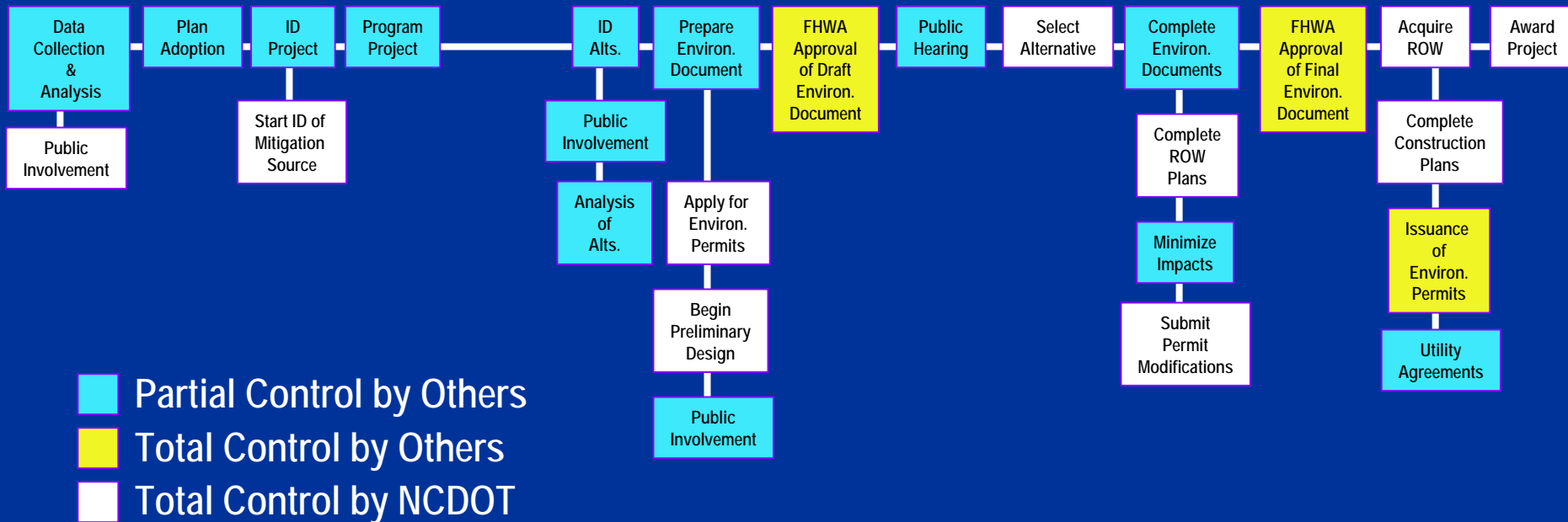
Project Development Process

- Preparation of NEPA document/Design
- Develop design from which right of way will be purchased.
- Purchase Right of Way
- Obtain Permit
- Let Project

Pre-Construction

Transportation Decision-Making Process

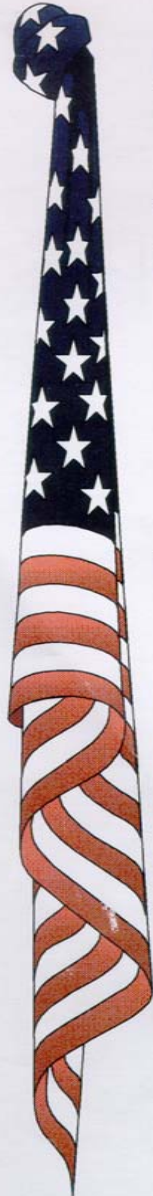
Systems Planning ✦ Identify Project ✦ Begin development of NEPA document ✦ Document Completion and R/W design ✦ Acquire R/W and Let project



Goal: To ensure a transportation improvement meets need in the least environmentally damaging practical way

Why was the Merger Process Created? (Letting Dates were not being met!)

- **Tip schedules set without regard to time requirements for planning, design, regulatory approvals and right-of-way acquisition**
- **Permit applications being held up due to lack of minimization or mitigation**
- **Major re-design work required due to inadequate coordination that resulted in additional project delays.**
- **Bridges were not considered early enough and were added very late in the project stage.**



An Interagency Agreement Integrating Section 404/NEPA

**Wilmington District,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**



**US Army Corps
of Engineers.**
Wilmington District

The Federal Highway Administration



**North Carolina Department of
Transportation**



Merger 01 Process Goals & Objectives

- Integrate NEPA and Section 404 procedures (makes permitting process concurrent with NEPA).
- Incorporate regulatory requirements into NEPA decision-making process
- Improve interagency coordination
- Effort to streamline project development and permitting process

Merger 01 Process

Process is based upon

- Project Teams
- Designated Concurrence Points at key intervals within the project development process

Merger 01 Team

Regular Participants

- * US Army Corps of Engineers
- * FHWA
- *NCDOT
- US EPA
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- * NC DENR, Division of Water Quality
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
- North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

- Primary signatories for Merger 01 Process

Other Team Members

- NC DENR/Division of Coastal Mgmt.
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- National Park Service
- US Coast Guard
- US Forest Service
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- US Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge

Concurrence Points

- Team members concur at major points in process.
- Team members agree on decisions and pledge to abide by decisions (unless profound change).
- Concurrence is sequential.
- Concurrence is documented by signature.
- Issue Resolution Process is invoked if concurrence cannot be reached.

Concurrence Point 1

Purpose and Need

- Sets Criteria, boundaries, or basis for identification of alternatives
- Defines Project Study Area

After Concurrence Point 1

- Alternatives are developed for the project.
- “Functional” Designs are developed for the project alternatives.

Concurrence Point 2

Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Study

- Alternatives for detailed study are selected.
- Alternatives should meet the purpose and need of the project

After Concurrence Point 2

- Environmental Field Delineations Begin
- A preliminary design is developed for each Alternative that was selected for detailed study

Concurrence Point 2A

Bridging Decisions

- Bridge locations are determined
- Length of Bridges are Determined
- Is the resource high quality or can it be avoided?

After Concurrence Point 2A

- Environmental Assessment is completed.
- Section 404 initial permit application is submitted
- Project goes on public notice
- Public Involvement/Hearings

Concurrence Point 3

Selection of “LEDPA”

- Select the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative.

Concurrence Point 4A/Avoidance & Minimization

- Vertical and Horizontal alignment decisions are reviewed for minimization of impacts.
- *Should occur in close timeframe to Concurrence Point 3.

After Concurrence Point 4A

- Final Environmental Document is completed.
- Final design begins on selected alternative.

Concurrence Point 4B/30 % Hydraulic Design Review

- Review preliminary hydraulic design
- Review layout of proposed drainage
- Review proposed stormwater BMP devices
- Bridges and Culvert locations will be discussed.

After 4B

- 4B comments are incorporated within Hydraulic Design.
- Right of Way plans are completed and right of way acquisition begins.

Concurrence Point 4C

Pre-Application Review

- Review of 100 % complete hydraulic design
- Review of permit drawings prior to permit application being sent.

After 4C

- Permit Application is sent.
- Permits obtained.
- Let project to construction
- Adhere to permit conditions and environmental commitments.

Primary Benefits of “Merger 01”

- Fully supports Environmental Stewardship Goal
- Removes permit issuance from Critical Path
- Integrates planning, design, and permitting
- Reduces/eliminates re-do loops

Primary Benefits of Merger 01

- Less questions regarding permit application and permit drawings
- Faster turnaround time of permit application from time of submittal

Current Status

Implementation of “Merger 01” has begun:

- **Merger 01 Implementation Team formed to guide process development, issues, etc.**

Questions ??