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New Guidance Aims to Speed Up Approval of Federally Funded Infrastructure Projects.

New and updated guidance has been published to help federal agencies expedite the permitting and environmental review of federally funded infrastructure projects.

The new guidance consists of an enhanced permitting dashboard system, along with the establishment of metrics for agencies to follow in conducting permitting and environmental review, and the first update in nearly three decades of the environmental review handbook, the “Red Book.”

The [Federal Infrastructure Permitting Dashboard](#) was launched in 2011 to track 52 high-priority projects’ permitting and environmental review progress with the goal of improving multi-agency coordination. Agencies will now be required to use this tool to set specific reportable permitting and review schedules and milestones for projects that meet specific criteria.

In October, the 11 federal agencies involved in permitting, reviewing, funding and developing infrastructure projects will start identifying new ones that are expected to undergo lengthy and complex permitting and review processes, for which milestones and coordinated schedules will be posted within 90 days. These types of projects include major transit and airport projects, capital improvements and major utility, energy or water projects.

The newly revised Synchronizing Environmental Review for Transportation and Other Infrastructure Projects handbook ([Red Book](#)) contains practical, authentic techniques, models and assistance agencies can use to coordinate and synchronize environmental reviews, permits and decisions that affect the siting and building infrastructure projects, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) said in a [press release](#). These sets of guidance are designed to help agencies turn best practices “into common practices” that have already been followed to accelerate the environmental review and permitting of more than 50 infrastructure projects. Examples of such practices include “running different reviews concurrently rather than sequentially and using the Administration’s online dashboard to promote accountability for a shared schedule.”

Following such “common sense” practices has led to the expedited permitting of more than half of those projects, including New York’s Tappan Zee bridge replacement, which took just a year and a half, USDOT said.

NCPPP

By Editor

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