

## **Work Plan (SEPA Process)**

Overall, the project planning process can be divided into seven major steps. Currently NCDOT is in the early stages of Step 1.

The components of the six phases are as follows:

### **Phase 1: Identify the Purpose and Need for the Project (study is currently underway),**

The objective of this phase is to determine transportation alternatives that meet the purpose of and need for of the project. These alternatives will be evaluated in detail during the Environmental Impact Statement.

### **Phase 2: Develop Detailed Study Alternatives**

The objective of this phase is to determine transportation alternatives that completely or substantially meet the purpose of and need for of the project. These alternatives will be evaluated in detail in the DEIS.

The key components of this phase are:

- Develop potential transportation improvement concepts, including a new bridge across the Alligator River;
- Evaluate the merits of potential alternatives in terms of how well they could meet the project's purpose and need;
- Conduct detailed surveys of the community characteristics and cultural and natural resources that could be affected by the alternatives;
- Develop conceptual designs, operation plans, capital and operation cost estimates, and strategies for financing capital and operation costs for the most promising approaches to meeting the project's purpose and need, as well as prepare a general comparison of environmental impacts, costs, service provided, and other decision-making issues;
- Conduct Citizens Informational Workshops to involve citizens and others in the above processes; and
- Obtain concurrence from environmental resource and regulatory agencies on a list of recommended alternatives to be evaluated in the DEIS.

### **Phase 3: Analyze Impacts for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**

The objective of this phase is to assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the alternatives selected for detailed evaluation in the DEIS and present the findings in the DEIS, which will be distributed for stakeholder review.

An example of a **direct** impact would be the physical displacement of an existing man-made or natural feature (home, business, wetland, etc.) associated with the construction of the road. An example of an **indirect** impact is the loss of wildlife habitat to new development generated by a transportation improvement. **Cumulative impacts** analysis looks at both project related impacts and the impacts of all development in an area and asks whether long-term development trends are leading to a desirable future (e.g., natural resource quality, ecosystem function, and quality of life.)

The key components of this phase are:

- Prepare preliminary designs, operation plans, capital and operation cost estimates, and strategies for financing capital and operation costs for alternatives evaluated in the DEIS;
- Assess direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts and prepare a technical report documenting findings;
- Develop impact mitigation measures in coordination with local officials and resource and regulatory agencies; and

#### **Phase 4: Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Document**

The objective of this phase is to present the findings of Phase 3 in the DEIS, which will be distributed for stakeholder review.

#### **Phase 5: Conduct a Public Hearing**

The objective of this phase is to seek public feedback on the assessment of alternatives presented in the DEIS and to obtain feedback from environmental resource and regulatory agencies regarding selection of the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA).

The key components of this phase are:

- Conduct public hearing(s);
- Review comments from agencies and stakeholders and examine issues raised during the DEIS comment period;
- Identify the LEDPA and document the reasons for this selection; and
- Obtain concurrence on the LEDPA from environmental resource and regulatory agencies.

#### **Phase 6: Prepare a Final Environmental Document**

The objectives of this phase are to:

- Refine the selected alternative and minimize impacts to the human and natural environment.
- Obtain concurrence from environmental resource and regulatory agencies on the avoidance and minimization of impacts for the LEDPA and to document reasons for the selection of the LEDPA.
- Develop a Final Environmental Impact Statement and a Record of Decision

The key components of this phase are:

- Address issues raised during the DEIS comment period;
- Refine alternatives to further avoid, minimize, impacts and develop mitigation plans for the LEDPA;
- Obtain concurrence on the avoidance and minimization approach from environmental resource and regulatory agencies; and
- Finalize and distribute the FEIS.

**Phase 7: Prepare Record of Decision.**

A Record of Decision will be prepared that documents the characteristics of the LEDPA and the reasons for its selection. Once approved, the NCDOT can proceed with final design and construction of the project.