

TSK 458–a: Define the Social, Economic and Environmental Justice Study Area

See also: [EM Chapter 458](#), [ESO Discipline Specialist](#)

Effective April 2011

Start task: Region Environmental Coordinator or Consultant receives demographic data showing presences of an EJ population and is asked to define the study area for the Environmental Justice analysis.

End task: Study area established and base map can be used to collect demographic data.

1. **Collect design data** from the Project Office. This should include, project limits and a basic description of the project (e.g., construct an additional lane, shoulder improvements, paving, and signal installation. A simple explanation of what will be built).
 - a. 30% design drawings are best.
 - b. Include location and project limits for all alternatives being considered in the environmental document.

2. **Set study limits** a minimum of ½ mile each side of centerline and ½ mile beyond the project limits.
 - a. Extend study limits the same distance each side of centerline for all alternatives

3. **Adjust study limits** by estimating the potential effect of the following and adjust the study limits accordingly. This will require judgment based on your knowledge of the project area or input from your stakeholders.
 - a. The types of impacts likely to be created by your project (noise, relocations, and potential changes in travel patterns). Make sure that the study area is large enough for the nature of the impacts so they are fully and fairly evaluated.
 - b. Consider changing the boundary so it conforms to geo-political boundaries (e.g. neighborhoods, city limits, parks, and census block boundaries). Be consistent and inclusive. Don't stop half a block short of the city limits, bisect neighborhoods, or exclude essential services such as schools.
 - c. Look at the study area as a whole – is the size of the study area consistent with the size of your project – not too big, not too small? Do the boundaries make sense? Are they reasonable and defensible?

- d. Consider asking stakeholders to endorse the study limits. Don't do this if you do not have the flexibility to expand the study limits to include their recommendations.
4. **Document** your assumptions and logic for the decisions you made in step 3.
- a. Be sure to document any instances where you expanded the study limits to include neighborhoods, or address potential EJ issues.
 - b. Document stakeholder endorsement. Include the venue, date, and who endorsed the plan (names and titles if public officials, number of participants if you got endorsement at a public meeting).
5. **Create a base map.**
- a. Outline the study area.
 - b. Show the project footprint and all alternatives.
 - c. Show jurisdictional and geographic features (highways, county roads, streams, city limits).
 - d. Scale the map so that the relationship between project improvement, and alternatives can be clearly seen and anticipated ROW purchases can be seen.
 - e. Consider using an air photo as the background for the base map. Air photo which show individual buildings are most useful.
6. **Use the base map to collect demographic information: TSK 458-b.**