

Chapter 1 Purpose and Need for SEIS

Introduction

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the North Spokane Freeway (now known as the North Spokane Corridor, NSC) was approved April 3, 1997. The Record of Decision, in which the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) adopted Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) recommendation to select the Market/Greene Alternative with the North Option and the I-90 Collector-Distributor System, was signed on November 20, 1997.

The purpose and need for the project, summarized below, remain the same as stated in the FEIS Chapter 1.

The primary overall purpose of this project is to improve transportation safety and mobility through the City of Spokane and Spokane County between Interstate 90, Northeastern Washington, and Canada. The long-range plan for the Spokane region includes several projects intended to add to the development of a total transportation system. A more specific purpose for the action evaluated in this document is to improve the efficiency of the people- and freight-carrying capacity on and between city streets, county roads, and major northside transportation routes, particularly US 2 and US 395.

An evaluation of anticipated growth of the region, economic development objectives, transportation demand, transportation system capacity, transportation mode opportunities, and roadway safety was used to show the need for this project.

- The regional growth projection assumed the most rapid development will continue to occur in the northern suburban and Spokane Valley suburban areas (FEIS, p. 1-2).
- Economic Development elements of the City and County Comprehensive Plans pointed to the potential industrial and commercial development in and around Hillyard (FEIS, p. 1-4 through 1-5).
- The highest increase in traffic volume by the year 2020 is projected to be toward the east side of the city and the Spokane Valley (FEIS, p. 1-6).
- Focusing on the operation of arterial intersections within the study area, transportation system analysis found the existing system to be at or beyond capacity.
- Transportation facilities were found to be deficient in intermodal connections in both public transit and freight movement (interface between rail and truck).
- Existing transportation system capacity status and projected increases in traffic volumes were expected to result in increased accident rates and decreased roadway safety.

Purpose and Need for Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Under State and Federal environmental and transportation guidelines, WSDOT is charged with the responsibility of establishing this new limited access corridor from Interstate 90 to US 395 in the Wandermere vicinity with the least amount of environmental impact possible, while maintaining the overall operational integrity of the facility. A large part of this responsibility includes the continued evaluation of the proposed action as outlined in the FEIS. As the development of this corridor has proceeded with specific design, right-of-way, and construction details, WSDOT evaluated modifications which would potentially reduce adverse impacts associated with the proposal.

A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is required when (1) changes to the proposed action would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS; or (2) new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the EIS. A Supplemental EIS is developed using the same process as the original EIS, except that scoping is not required. (23 CFR Sec. 771.130.)

A Value Engineering (VE) Study is required for any federally funded National Highway System project with an estimated cost of \$25 million or more (CFR 23 Part 627). Value Engineering is a systematic process designed to focus on the major issues of a complex project. The primary objective of a VE study is value improvement. The VE process incorporates, to the extent possible, the values of the design engineer, construction engineer, maintenance engineer, contractor, state and federal approval agencies, local agencies, other stakeholders, and the public. Design decisions are formulated from the recommendations of the VE team. (WSDOT Design Manual, Sec. 315.)

Due to requirements of CFR 23 Part 627, WSDOT further examined the roadway alignment from the Spokane River to Hawthorne Road in a VE Study in July 1998. The Francis Avenue and Wellesley Avenue interchange areas were redesigned to minimize impacts on businesses, reduce costs, and improve functionality.

WSDOT then examined the North Option portion of the FEIS Preferred Alignment in light of changed conditions (additional residential development) within that area. In February 1999, a new alignment was presented to the public which was intended to move the facility beyond the recently developing residential community as well as to minimize the visual impact to the surrounding area. A VE Study followed in March 1999, which focused on the segment from Lincoln Road to US 395 at Wandermere. The study group developed and compared a northern alternative, "VE North," and a southern alternative, "VE South." The group's recommendation was to proceed with the VE North Alternative. Public input led WSDOT to continue to compare the VE North, VE South, and a third alternative which was a refined design of the FEIS North Option, called the "Modified FEIS." By June 1999, sufficient evaluation had been completed to select the VE North alternative.

This Supplemental EIS documents the evaluation of the changed conditions and the alignment and design revisions since the publication of the FEIS. Otherwise, the FEIS stands as the environmental impact evaluation of the selected corridor. The purpose and need for the NSC remains unchanged from the FEIS.

Study Area Limits

There are no changes in the termini of the NSC project. The Supplemental EIS covers all portions of the corridor in which changes have been made since the FEIS. The area discussed in this Supplemental EIS is between the Spokane River and US 395 at Wandermere. See **Vicinity Map, Figure 1.1**.

No changes have been proposed for the southernmost segment between I-90 and the Spokane River during this phase. VE studies and further review for refinements will be evaluated for the NSC south of the river and for the collector distributor system. Any changes to the project will be reevaluated for environmental impacts and documented appropriately at that time.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD FIGURE 1.1 \(1060k\)](#)

**Vicinity Map
Figure 1.1**