



February 9, 2007

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Subject: WSDOT/ACEC Structures Team Process Change Recommendation
Long-Term Issue No. 4: "Determination of Bridge Project Environmental Requirements
Proposal No. 3 of 6: "Document and track environmentally-related structural design
decisions in order to establish precedents for design of future projects."

Dear Sponsors:

Per our letter of October 13, 2006, the Washington State Department of Transportation/American Council of Engineering Companies (WSDOT/ACEC) Structures Team has identified six actions that can be taken to improve the current process for obtaining environmental approvals for projects. Attached is a detailed description of the third of these six recommendations.

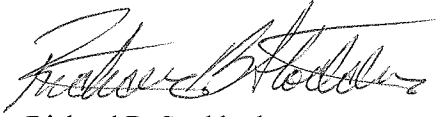
In most cases, the scope of the six recommended actions is beyond our committee's ability to implement directly. These recommendations are offered for improvements to be implemented by WSDOT on a broader scale. A key objective of the proposals is to improve the structural design team input to, and support of, the project team design and permitting processes.

We ask for your support and guidance to move these recommendations forward to become standard practice. You can indicate your concurrence by signing in the space provided on the last page of the proposal. We appreciate your continued support of our efforts.

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Sincerely,



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WSDOT Bridge & Structures Office



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Attachments

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Process Change Recommendation Proposal No. 3

“Document and track environmentally-related structural design decisions in order to establish precedents for design of future projects.”

Proposal No. 3 Problem Statement:

The process and reasoning used to meet project-specific environmental and engineering requirements are not adequately documented in the early scoping process. Inadequate documentation results in the following problems:

1. The lack of good historical data makes it difficult to establish design precedents for future projects that may encounter the same design challenges in similar environmental situations, and it makes planning of projects inefficient.
2. It precludes revisiting design commitments at a later date when conditions have changed. Changed conditions may include changes to the environment, environmental regulations, design codes, and the scope of and budget for the project.
3. It results in the inability to evaluate the postconstruction performance, relative to the original intent, of past approaches to meeting environmental requirements.

Proposal Description:

The Environmental Performance Program of the WSDOT Environmental Services Office (ESO) has developed the Commitments Tracking System (CTS) to document and track contract requirements for environmental commitments made on projects. The ACEC Structures Team recommends:

- Expanding the CTS to include information on the project site requirements and project design and construction conditions that led to the environmental and engineering commitments.
- Making this information accessible to design groups and consultants for use as example solutions for future projects.

Implementation Recommendations:

1. Expand the CTS to include early project scoping agreements for design and environmental commitments.

2. Expand the CTS to record the quality performance metrics of the postconstruction environmental elements of the completed project.
3. Improve access to the CTS by internal and external customers.
4. Form a committee with appropriate agency representation to oversee implementation of the proposal.

Pros:

A standardized approach to tracking agreements has several advantages over the conventional project-by-project, bridge-by-bridge permit conditions tracking process:

- Supports the Government Management Accountability Performance (GMAP) goal of accountability and efficiency for multiple state agencies.
- Supports the development of Project Management plans.
- Permit conditions will be easier to write, understand, and enforce.
- Ensures greater, more comprehensive environmental protection and reduces the risk of violations due to misunderstandings.
- Reduces construction costs by minimizing bidder uncertainty and change orders associated with lost commitments, conflicting commitments, and design decisions that conflict with environmental commitments.
- Design engineers will be:
 - Better able to understand what is expected.
 - Able to use previous project records to anticipate design and constructibility needs on future projects.

Cons:

Implementation will create an ongoing demand for additional resources.

Implementation Challenges:

- Establishing a guiding committee with appropriate agency representation.
- Inputting, tracking, and maintaining the decision database.
- Improving access to the decision database and providing training for its use.

- Developing a performance tracking system for postconstruction monitoring.

Testing:

- Select several less complex in-house and consultant projects for trial implementation.
- Coordinate with Permit Agencies to agree on contract specification-type language that meets agency and WSDOT needs for early environmental design commitments.

Quality Performance Measures:

Distribute a before and after survey to Consultants and WSDOT Design Engineers.

Proposal Examples:

Currently, the start time for commitments tracking is typically concurrent with publication of the NEPA Record of Decision or Finding of No Significant Impact, or the SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (among others).

An example of how the CTS could be improved is to move the start time for tracking environmentally-related design decisions and commitments to the project scoping phase, where projects are classified for NEPA/SEPA Class I, II, or III during the preparation of the Environmental Review Summary (ERS) and Design Decision Summary (DDS).

It is the understanding of the ACEC Structures Team that the ability to track early scoping agreements is currently built into the CTS. The goal is to encourage regional use of the CTS.

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