

TSK 458-e: Determine Community Cohesion and Project Effect on Cohesion

For Social and EJ Analysis

Community cohesion applies to projects with residential impacts. The only exception is a project that creates a barrier between a residential community and social or commercial resources. **If your project has no residential effects or barrier effects stop here and document findings.**

See Also: EM Chapter 458, TSK 458-a, TSK 458-b, ESO Discipline Specialist

Start Task: Receive study area map (TSK 458-a) and demographic data (TSK 458-b) from project lead.

End Task: Determine the effect of the project on community cohesion.

NOTE: Community cohesion is the ability of people to communicate and interact with each other in ways that lead to a sense of community. Cohesion is reflected in the neighborhood's ability to function and be recognized as a singular unit. It is one of the primary measures of a transportation project's impact on social resources. Although some elements can be quantified, it is by nature a subjective measure and requires professional judgment. Results are expressed as high, medium, or low.

1. **Collect the study area map (TSK 458-a) and demographic data (TSK 458-b)** from project lead.
 - If the demographic map doesn't have an air photo background, transfer the study area boundary and demographic data to an air photo. Use the air photo instead of the map in steps 3, 4 and 5.
2. **Annotate the map to show the location of non-motorized transportation facilities.** At a minimum include the following features.
 - Sidewalks, signalized crosswalks, bike and pedestrian trails, free parking lots, traffic calming devices, bus stops and transit routes.
3. **Identify residential neighborhoods** on the map and determine level of community identity.
 - Outline distinct residential neighborhoods on the air photo
 - Estimate boundaries based on the geographic and demographic data.
 - Verify assumptions through discussion with city or county officials (planners, law enforcement, or social service providers).
 - Interview social service providers, community leaders, or city officials to determine if outsiders recognize the residential areas within the study limits as distinct neighborhoods.
 - Compile a list of community gatherings such as neighborhood block parties, cultural celebrations, or civic events. Document the frequency and history of events (e.g. annual event for the last 5 years).

- Ask attendees at one of your project public meetings to identify unique neighborhoods in the study area and describe their characteristics.
 - Rate each neighborhood's community identity as high, medium, or low.
4. **Determine how transient the neighborhoods identified in Step 4 are.**
- Use census block data to determine the percentage of housing units in each neighborhood that are rentals.
 - Collect turnover rates for a cross section of the rental units in each neighborhood.
 - If possible interview apartment complex managers to determine turnover rates. It is more difficult to determine turnover rates for renters of single family residences. Local police departments, social service providers, or real estate agents may be able to provide estimates. If data is unavailable, describe the steps taken to determine that fact and document your finding.
 - Using professional judgment assign each neighborhood a transience rating of high, medium, or low.
5. **Annotate the map to show social resources.** Include the following:
- Community gathering places such as grocery stores, ethnic markets, coffee shops and laundry mats.
 - Recreational facilities such as parks and play grounds.
 - Civic centers such as churches, schools, libraries, community centers, and social services.
6. **Determine the effectiveness of the non-motorized transportation network** described in Step 2.
- Rate the effectiveness of the non-motorized network for each neighborhood as high, medium, or low.
 - Estimate the percentage of the residential area that is connected by sidewalks.
 - Estimate how well the sidewalk system connects residential areas to bus stops.
 - Estimate how well the existing sidewalks, trails and transit routes connect the residential areas identified in Step 3 to the social resources identified in Step 5?
7. **Determine the existing community cohesion** before the project.
- Combine the ratings from steps 3, 4, and 5 into a single representative rating.
 - Ratings will be high, medium, or low and should reflect the results of your public involvement efforts.
8. **Determine project effect on community cohesion.**
- Estimate the positive and negative effects of each alternative on existing community cohesion rating from step 7 for each neighborhood. Consider:
 - Changes to the non-motorized transportation network
 - Changes in connectivity between residential neighborhoods and community resources

- Changes to community Identity
- Changes in traffic noise.
- Changes in air quality.
- Mitigation that could reduce adverse impacts.
- Public input.
- Rate the community cohesion after the project
 - Rate the effect of each alternative on each neighborhood.
 - Ratings will be high, medium, or low

9. **Document your findings.** Supporting documentation should be sufficient to justify your conclusions.

- Include public input comment in your justification and show how public input influenced your conclusions.