

may result in producing any of the following for a proposed transportation project:

(1) Purpose and need or goals and objective statement(s);

(2) General travel corridor and/or general mode(s) definition (e.g., highway, transit, or a highway/transit combination);

(3) Preliminary screening of alternatives and elimination of unreasonable alternatives;

(4) Basic description of the environmental setting; and/or

(5) Preliminary identification of environmental impacts and environmental mitigation.

(b) Publicly available documents or other source material produced by, or in support of, the transportation planning process described in this subpart may be incorporated directly or by reference into subsequent NEPA documents, in accordance with 40 CFR 1502.21, if:

(1) The NEPA lead agencies agree that such incorporation will aid in establishing or evaluating the purpose and need for the Federal action, reasonable alternatives, cumulative or other impacts on the human and natural environment, or mitigation of these impacts; and

(2) The systems-level, corridor, or subarea planning study is conducted with:

(i) Involvement of interested State, local, Tribal, and Federal agencies;

(ii) Public review;

(iii) Reasonable opportunity to comment during the metropolitan transportation planning process and development of the corridor or subarea planning study;

(iv) Documentation of relevant decisions in a form that is identifiable and available for review during the NEPA scoping process and can be appended to or referenced in the NEPA document; and

(v) The review of the FHWA and the FTA, as appropriate.

(c) By agreement of the NEPA lead agencies, the above integration may be accomplished through tiering (as described in 40 CFR 1502.20), incorporating the subarea or corridor planning study into the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or En-

vironmental Assessment, or other means that the NEPA lead agencies deem appropriate.

(d) Additional information to further explain the linkages between the transportation planning and project development/NEPA processes is contained in Appendix A to this part, including an explanation that it is non-binding guidance material. The guidance in Appendix A applies only to paragraphs (a)–(c) in this section.

(e) In addition to the process for incorporation directly or by reference outlined in paragraph (b) of this section, an additional authority for integrating planning products into the environmental review process exists in 23 U.S.C. 168. As provided in 23 U.S.C. 168(f):

(1) The statutory authority in 23 U.S.C. 168 shall not be construed to limit in any way the continued use of processes established under other parts of this section or under an authority established outside of this part, and the use of one of the processes in this section does not preclude the subsequent use of another process in this section or an authority outside of this part.

(2) The statute does not restrict the initiation of the environmental review process during planning.

§ 450.320 Development of programmatic mitigation plans.

(a) An MPO may utilize the optional framework in this section to develop programmatic mitigation plans as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process to address the potential environmental impacts of future transportation projects. The MPO, in consultation with the FHWA and/or the FTA and with the agency or agencies with jurisdiction and special expertise over the resources being addressed in the plan, will determine:

(1) *Scope.* (i) An MPO may develop a programmatic mitigation plan on a local, regional, ecosystem, watershed, statewide or similar scale.

(ii) The plan may encompass multiple environmental resources within a defined geographic area(s) or may focus on a specific type(s) of resource(s) such as aquatic resources, parkland, or wildlife habitat.

(iii) The plan may address or consider impacts from all projects in a defined geographic area(s) or may focus on a specific type(s) of project(s).

(2) *Contents.* The programmatic mitigation plan may include:

(i) An assessment of the existing condition of natural and human environmental resources within the area covered by the plan, including an assessment of historic and recent trends and/or any potential threats to those resources.

(ii) An identification of economic, social, and natural and human environmental resources within the geographic area that may be impacted and considered for mitigation. Examples of these resources include wetlands, streams, rivers, stormwater, parklands, cultural resources, historic resources, farmlands, archeological resources, threatened or endangered species, and critical habitat. This may include the identification of areas of high conservation concern or value and thus worthy of avoidance.

(iii) An inventory of existing or planned environmental resource banks for the impacted resource categories such as wetland, stream, stormwater, habitat, species, and an inventory of federally, State, or locally approved in-lieu-of-fee programs.

(iv) An assessment of potential opportunities to improve the overall quality of the identified environmental resources through strategic mitigation for impacts of transportation projects which may include the prioritization of parcels or areas for acquisition and/or potential resource banking sites.

(v) An adoption or development of standard measures or operating procedures for mitigating certain types of impacts; establishment of parameters for determining or calculating appropriate mitigation for certain types of impacts, such as mitigation ratios, or criteria for determining appropriate mitigation sites.

(vi) Adaptive management procedures, such as protocols or procedures that involve monitoring actual impacts against predicted impacts over time and adjusting mitigation measures in response to information gathered through the monitoring.

(vii) Acknowledgement of specific statutory or regulatory requirements that must be satisfied when determining appropriate mitigation for certain types of resources.

(b) A MPO may adopt a programmatic mitigation plan developed pursuant to paragraph (a), or developed pursuant to an alternative process as provided for in paragraph (f) of this section through the following process:

(1) Consult with each agency with jurisdiction over the environmental resources considered in the programmatic mitigation plan;

(2) Make available a draft of the programmatic mitigation plan for review and comment by appropriate environmental resource agencies and the public;

(3) Consider comments received from such agencies and the public on the draft plan; and

(4) Address such comments in the final programmatic mitigation plan.

(c) A programmatic mitigation plan may be integrated with other plans, including watershed plans, ecosystem plans, species recovery plans, growth management plans, State Wildlife Action Plans, and land use plans.

(d) If a programmatic mitigation plan has been adopted pursuant to paragraph (b), any Federal agency responsible for environmental reviews, permits, or approvals for a transportation project shall give substantial weight to the recommendations in the programmatic mitigation plan when carrying out its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) (NEPA) or other Federal environmental law.

(e) Nothing in this section limits the use of programmatic approaches for reviews under NEPA.

(f) Nothing in this section prohibits the development, as part of or separate from the transportation planning process, of a programmatic mitigation plan independent of the framework described in paragraph (a) of this section. Further, nothing in this section prohibits the adoption of a programmatic mitigation plan in the metropolitan planning process that was developed under another authority, independent of the framework described in paragraph (a).