

REGION 10 BULLETIN NO: 07-34

SUBJECT: Outstanding Achievement Award for Excellence in Environmental Document Preparation

PROGRAM AREAS: Environmental Awards

DATE: August 21, 2007

There is a growing awareness among the public, as well as legislators and the bureaucracy at all levels of government, that environmental impact statements, which have grown over the years to become bloated, non-analytical documents often exceeding 1,000 pages in length, are no longer serving their intended purpose. As a consequence, some agencies, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), are re-examining their guidance and practices with a view toward dramatically improving the quality of environmental documentation. The fundamental purposes and principles of efficient, effective Federal impact statement preparation, set forth in regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related guidance, have been in place for nearly three decades.

There are few disincentives for preparing environmental documents that do not serve their intended purpose. But disincentives are not always the most effective means of achieving a desired result. Environmental documents that comport with document preparation expectations and achieve the objective of paperwork reduction deserve more than passing reference; they should be formally recognized and showcased as examples of effective, efficient environmental documentation. Suitable recognition will enhance the reputations of sponsors and consultants who are so recognized and will serve to encourage others to follow suit, all to the benefit of the public and agency decisionmakers. It is for these reasons that the Federal Transit Administration is establishing an outstanding achievement award for excellence in environmental document preparation.

Criteria and Filing Requirements

Submissions-environmental impact statements and environmental assessments-will be evaluated based on three criteria, each having equal value for judging purposes:

- (1) Content-does the document satisfy the content requirements of the NEPA implementing regulations and relevant guidance?
- (2) Utility-has the document been designed to be truly useful to the public and decisionmakers?

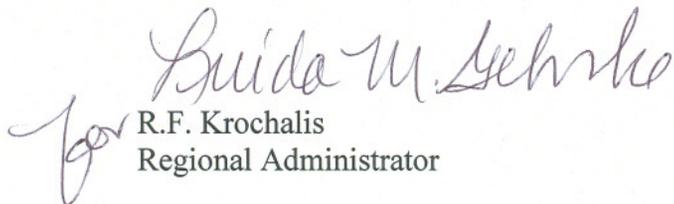
- (3) Practicality-have procedural techniques to reduce paperwork and delay (see 40 C.F.R. §§ 1500.4 and 1500.5, appended to this document) been effectively employed?

Documents, limited to one-whether an environmental impact statement (draft or final) or an environmental assessment-annually for any sponsor, should be submitted, together with a cover letter explaining how and the extent to which each criterion was met for the document, to the planning director of the region in which the sponsor is located for initial screening. Following initial screening, documents will be forwarded to headquarters for judging. The filing deadline for documents and accompanying explanations (to the regional planning director) is **June 1, 2008**.

Requests for additional information should be directed to Julie Atkins, Office of Planning and Environment, Federal Transit Administration, Telephone: (202) 366-4491, e-mail: julie.atkins@dot.gov.

For further information, please contact Region 10's Dan Drais at 206-220-4307, or email daniel.drais@dot.gov.

Sincerely,


for R.F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator

Attachment