

TRD

Brief

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Integration, Status, and Potential of Environmental Justice and the Social Impact Assessment Process in Transportation Development in Missouri

The Social Impact Assessment process; including community impact assessment and environmental justice, is increasing in relevancy for Departments of Transportation. This renewed relevancy is based on the Federal emphasis on transportation-related human dimension impacts, as well as legal challenges regarding community impacts and environmental justice issues resulting from transportation improvements. The purpose of this project is to assess the current status of human-dimension considerations in transportation project development and to identify tools and practices that aid in ensuring human dimension impacts are adequately addressed in transportation project development.

This research examines the Social Impact Assessment Process at the Missouri Department of Transportation as directed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Four case studies are used to assess the influence of human-dimension impacts in transportation development. The case studies include the organizational setting and development of an environmental emphasis in the Missouri Department of Transportation, the process of environmental clearance that includes human-dimension impacts, the influence of Environmental Justice and Community Impact Assessment, and the industry guidance, trends and policies created to address Environmental Justice.



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Findings of this research indicate that the Social Impact Assessment process is under-utilized in transportation development but holds great potential for opening the environmental and transportation decision-making process to greater influence on the part of citizens. Constraints to increased effectiveness of the Social Impact Assessment Process include the organizational setting in Departments of Transportation, the original

NEPA guidance, the lack of personnel with social science backgrounds at Departments of Transportation, the budgetary constraints on staffing facing these organizations, and the lack of external agency influence over the Social Impact Assessment Process.



The Social Impact Assessment process is likely to increase in relevancy for Departments of Transportation based on the Federal Highway Administration's emphasis on human-dimension impacts and potential legal challenges regarding Community Impacts and Environ-

mental Justice. Increased consideration of the human-dimension issues surrounding the transportation development process can benefit citizens and communities by ensuring transportation facilities enhance rather than degrade the social and economic setting of neighborhoods and communities. Departments of Transportation are also likely to benefit from greater consideration of human-dimension impacts through increased citizen consent for projects and decreased environmental clearance delays.

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