



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Indiana Division

February 10, 2012

575 N. Pennsylvania St, Room 254
Indianapolis, IN 46204
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In Reply Refer To:
HDA-IN

Dear Indiana MPO Directors:

The Indiana Division Office of FHWA, with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), continues its annual issuance of planning emphasis areas (PEAs) for implementing SAFETEA-LU in FY 2013. These will help us focus our efforts on priority areas and prepare all of us for future work program reviews. These PEAs are:

- Red Flag Investigations as part of Planning and Environmental Linkages (FHWA Every Day Counts Innovative Initiative)
- Quarterly project tracking reports and meetings
- ADA Transition Plans
- Adjusted Urban Area Boundaries and Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries

We request that the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) address them in their Unified Planning Work Programs or Statement of Works. The following are some comments to guide interpretation of each PEA:

Red Flag Investigations as part of the Planning & Environmental Linkages Initiative – The PEL initiative purpose is to help MPOs and INDOT consider environmental issues early in the transportation planning process, and use information and analysis conducted in planning to assist the NEPA process. One accepted practice is the Red Flag Investigation which is used to screen the project area for potential environmental, constructability, and engineering issues of concern prior to projects entering into the Transportation Improvement Programs. Conducting RFI early in the planning process will allow an examination of items of concern that might be impacted as a result of the proposed action and discard alternatives which contain fatal flaws before devoting time and resources to their development.

The first phase of implementing the RFIs will begin with an introduction to the topic at the Indiana MPO Council's January meeting followed by more in-depth training April 24th, 2012. The MPOs are to identify and assess their GIS datasets capabilities to conduct RFIs in their FY 2013 UPWPs. In FY 2014, the second phase of will commence with the implementation of the RFIs on projects coming into the MPOs' Transportation Improvement Programs.

Quarterly project tracking reports and meetings – MPOs are to document the method for tracking projects quarterly. Describe how you manage those changes with your INDOT Districts or others to ensure project schedules are kept consistent and up-to-date, including project costs at letting and change orders. This continues the role of the MPO to monitor the funding and project development progress. The MPO will also ensure a certified ERC is maintained by the LPA and a certified Lead Consultant Project Manager is maintained in order to continue to be eligible for federal funding.

American Disabilities Act Transitions Plans – The MPOs and INDOT should continue to monitor the progress of local public agencies (LPAs) efforts to complete the required Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plans. All local governments with greater than 50 full/part and volunteer employees have been given to December 31, 2012 to complete their transition plans. By LPAs reporting their completion to their MPOs, and the remaining LPAs reporting their completion to INDOT, local agencies will remain eligible for federal aid highway funding. Not only should MPOs and INDOT have lists of LPAs that must have ADA transition plans, it is also incumbent upon MPOs and INDOT to have processes/mechanisms that effectively screen local agencies for funding based on the presence of an ADA transition plan.

Adjusted Urban Area Boundaries and Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries – MPOs are encouraged to work with INDOT to produce Adjusted Urban Area Boundaries for their respective area per the INDOT memorandum dated November 28, 2011. The MPO, INDOT and FHWA will approve the final product. In addition, future efforts to identify updates to their MPAs Boundaries maps should be made. Updated MPAs must be approved by the Governor and submitted to FHWA.

If you have any questions, please contact your FHWA Planning and Environmental Specialist or INDOT MPO Liaison.

Sincerely,



Joyce Newland
Planning Program Manager

Sincerely,



Audra Blasdel,
Director, LPA/MPO Grants Administration

cc:

Indiana MPO Council
Roy Nunnally, INDOT
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