

Environmental Assessments and the National Environmental Policy Act

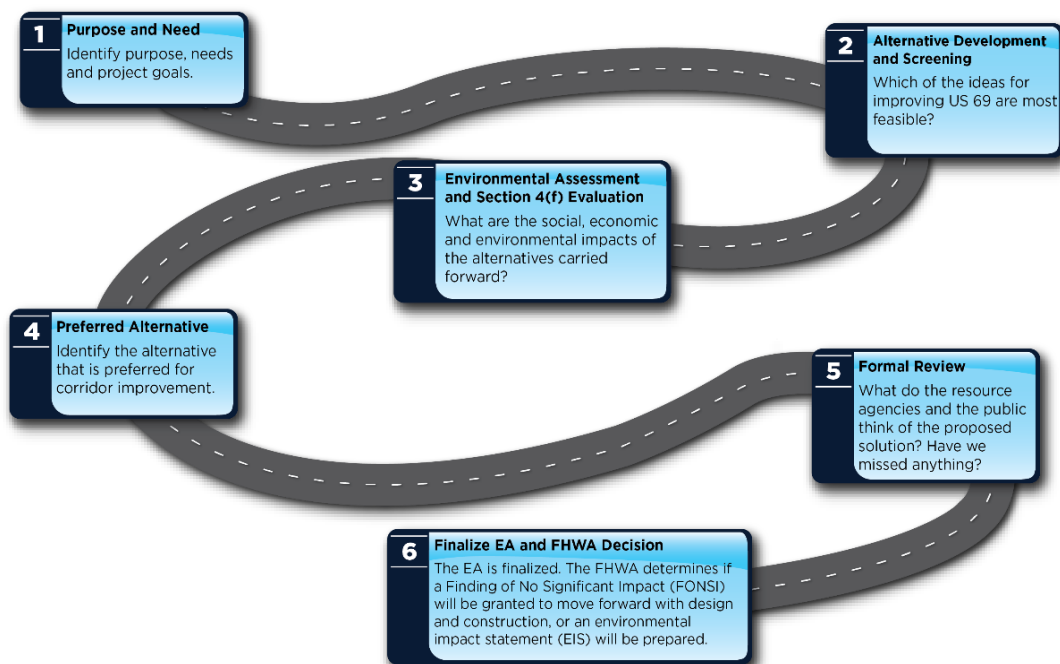
The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is examining potential benefits and impacts of improvements to U.S. 69 as part of its U.S. 69 Modernization and Expansion Project (69Express). This is being done through an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the impacts the proposed transportation improvements could have on the Project Area’s natural and manmade environment.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), a federal law, projects that involve federal funding or require a federal action must evaluate potential impacts to the natural and manmade environment. For this Project, the evaluation will be conducted and documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA).

EAs are designed to help agencies, elected officials and the public make sound decisions. The environmental process started in November 2020 and will end in February 2022. This process is just over a year long.

An EA is a type of environmental document necessary to secure federal clearance and funding for transportation projects. It involves several steps (**Figure 1**). For more information about the EA timeline please visit <https://www.69express.org/resources/> and click on [U.S. 69 Environmental Assessment Project Coordination Plan](#).

Figure 1 – 69Express Environmental Process for an EA



The Purpose and Need is developed by the Project Team to identify the purpose, needs and project goals. After the Purpose and Need is developed, the Project Team will develop and screen the Corridor improvement alternatives for their effectiveness at meeting the Purpose and Need of the Project. This will lead to a recommendation of a proposed action (preferred alternative) for the Project. Following the decision of the preferred alternative, the formal review of the alternative will take place. After the formal review, the EA document will be finalized and if there are not any major impacts associated with the Project that cannot be mitigated, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). If there are significant impacts which cannot be mitigated, additional studies are required.

The Team will investigate social, economic and environmental impacts that need to be considered when developing improvement alternatives for the U.S. 69 Corridor. Previous corridor studies will also be utilized. The team will evaluate and document potential impacts to such things as:

- Parks and recreation facilities;
- Community facilities such as schools, churches and libraries;
- Public services such as police and fire;
- Natural resources such as wetlands, floodplains, critical habitat and threatened and endangered plants and animals;
- Sites with hazardous materials;
- Cultural and historical sites;
- Highway traffic noise;
- Time spent traveling; and
- Traffic and pedestrian safety due to changes in local traffic and congestion.

A highway traffic noise study will be completed as part of the environmental process for the EA. During this study, potential impacts are identified and are then evaluated in accordance with the *KDOT Highway Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement Policy and Procedures*. For more information about the Traffic Noise Study, please visit <https://www.69express.org/resources/> and click on [I-435/ U.S. 69 K-5700-01 Environmental Screening](#).

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Learn More

For more information on EAs, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/nepa/national-environmental-policy-act-review-process#ea>.

To learn more about the 69Express environmental review process – or about the project overall – please visit the [69Express project website](#) and [sign up to be updated about the project](#) as it progresses. You can post comments or pose questions about the project at [the website feedback page](#) as well.