

MRMPO Regional Significance Screening Criteria

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Background

This document is intended to serve as a tool for assisting with determining whether a roadway facility in the MRMPO planning area is “Regionally Significant” with respect to the air quality conformity requirements found in the Transportation Conformity Rule (40 CFR Part 93). The purpose is to provide pertinent information to the Interagency Consultation Group (IACG) on the characteristics that would normally be used to consider the regional significance of a transportation project and in particular one that is on a roadway facility classified as a Minor Arterial or lower. The IACG will make the final determination of regional significance on a case-by-case basis as needed, and additional criteria beyond what is being presented in this document may be used at the IACG’s discretion.

The MRMPO shall provide initial determinations regarding exemption and significance status for each project to the interagency consultation group (IACG) for review and comment. Following consultation, the MRMPO shall make a final determination for the project pool.

Federal Conformity Rule Definition of Regional Significance

Regionally significant project means a transportation project (other than an exempt project) that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs (such as access to and from the area outside of the region, major activity centers in the region, major planned developments such as new retail malls, sports complexes, etc., or transportation terminals themselves) and would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area’s transportation network, including at a minimum all principal arterial highways and all fixed guide way transit facilities that offer an alternative to regional highway travel.

Examples of Regionally-Significant Projects

Below are examples of projects which must be included in the network modeling for the regional emissions analysis for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and amendments to RTP and TIP.

- **Interstates and Expressways**
 - New segment
 - Added through lane
 - Continuous auxiliary lane
 - New interchange
- **Other Principal Arterial**
 - New segment
 - Added through lane
 - Continuous auxiliary lane
 - New interchange
- **Rail and Fixed Guide-Way Transit**
- **Major expansion of fixed rail or fixed guide-way system**

Examples of Non-Exempt Projects that are not Regionally Significant

- Addition of thru traffic lanes on arterial roads that do not extend the full distance between major intersections
- Addition of thru traffic lanes on roads that are not functionally classified as an arterial or higher and do not serve regional transportation needs
- New collector roads that serve minor developments
- New or expanded park-and-ride lots that do not serve regional transportation needs
- New collector road overpasses

Regional Significance Screening Criteria

The proposed screening process is in two parts. Part 1 includes seven questions that should be addressed prior as part of the consultation process. Part 2 is applying the threshold criteria in Table 1(below) to determine if the project is regionally-significant, non-regionally significant, or requires consultation.

Part 1 – Initial Project Review

- 1.) What are the Exempt status and Functional Classification of the roadway project?
 - A non-exempt project on a roadway facility classified as an Other Principal Arterial¹ or higher, and in some cases minor arterials will generally be considered Regionally Significant.
 - A project determined to be Exempt under 40 CFR 93.126 or 93.127 (see Appendix A) will generally be considered Non-Regionally Significant unless the IACG group determines that it will have regional impacts for any reason.
- 2.) Is the facility either included in the Regional Travel Demand Forecasting Model, or would it be if it does not currently exist?
 - It is the practice of the MRMPO to include most “major” roadways (most major collectors and above) in order to improve model performance so if a roadway is not modeled it can generally be considered to be Non-Regionally Significant.
- 3.) Does the facility provide direct connection between two roadways classified as a Principal Arterial or higher?

¹ Other Principal Arterials serve major centers of metropolitan areas, provide a high degree of mobility and can also provide mobility through rural areas. Unlike their access-controlled counterparts, abutting land uses can be served directly. Forms of access for Other Principal Arterial roadways include driveways to specific parcels and at-grade intersections with other roadways. For the most part, roadways that fall into the top three functional classification categories (Interstate, Other Freeways & Expressways and Other Principal Arterials) provide similar service in both urban and rural areas. The primary difference is that there are usually multiple Arterial routes serving a particular urban area, radiating out from the urban center to serve the surrounding region. In contrast, an expanse of a rural area of equal size would be served by a single Arterial. (FHWA: *Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures*).

- Direct connections between major principal arterials and in particular connections to the Interstate can generally be considered Regionally Significant.

4.) Does the facility provide the primary regional connectivity to a “Major Activity Center”?

- This is a criterion listed in the federal Regional Significance definition; however there can be different interpretations as to what constitutes a major activity center. Below is a list of general types of major activity centers, with specific locations to be determined on a case-by-case basis:
 - Major Hospitals and Regional Medical Centers
 - Central Business Districts of cities
 - Major Regional Retail Centers and Malls
 - Colleges and Universities
 - Tourist Destinations
 - Airports
 - Freight Terminals and Intermodal Transfer Centers
 - Sports Complexes

5.) Does the project add significant vehicular capacity?

- A project adding general purpose through lanes will typically be more significant than one that is adding “auxiliary” lanes or a continuous center turn lane or other projects that do not add significant roadway capacity.

6.) What is the length of the roadway segment being improved and what is the overall corridor length?

- Projects extending (or completing) long sections (typically greater than 1 mile) will tend to be more regionally significant.
- If the corridor is lengthy and there is an absence of other principal arterials in the vicinity then the roadway will tend to be more regionally significant.

7.) What is the current Average Daily Traffic of the roadway segment?

This is less important in determining Regional Significance although it will provide additional information to be considered along with the above criteria. Obviously high traffic segments will tend to be more correlated with the increased regional significance of a roadway.

New segments or added through lanes on arterials that are also associated with large land development projects may need AQ consultation even if the project is below the threshold in the table. Land development projects can be regionally significant when they have the potential to generate many trips or vehicle-miles of travel. Such developments are incorporated into the regional model during the update of socioeconomic forecasts, at the beginning of the update cycle for a new regional transportation plan.

TABLE 1	
MRMPO Thresholds of Regional-Significance for Transportation Projects	
Criteria A	
Interstate and Expressways	
Criteria A-1 Expansion Type	Criteria A-2 Threshold
a. New Segment	a. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
b. Added Through Lanes	b. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
c. Continuous Auxiliary Lanes	c. > ¼ mile (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
d. New Interchanges	d. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
e. Modification of Existing Interchanges	e. AQ Consultation Required
Criteria B	
Other Principal Arterials	
Criteria B-1 Expansion Type	Criteria B-2 Threshold
a. New Segment	a. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
b. Added Through Lanes	b. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
c. Continuous Auxiliary Lanes	c. > 1 mile (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
d. New Interchanges	d. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
e. Modification of Existing Interchanges	e. AQ Consultation Required
f. Separation of existing railroad grade crossings	f. Not regionally significant
Criteria C	
Minor Arterials	
Criteria C-1 Expansion Type	Criteria C-2 Threshold
a. New Segment	a. ¾ to 1 mile - AQ Consultation Required
b. New Segment	b. > 1 mile (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
c. Added Through Lanes	c. ¾ to 1 mile - AQ Consultation Required
d. Added Through Lanes	d. > 1 mile (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
e. Continuous Auxiliary Lanes	e. > 1 mile (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
f. Separation of existing railroad grade crossings	f. Not regionally significant
Criteria D	
Rail and Fixed Guide-way Transit	
Criteria D-1 Expansion Type	Criteria D-2 Threshold
a. New Route or Service	a. No Minimum (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
b. Route Extension with Station	b. > 1 mile from current terminus (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
c. Added track or guide-way capacity	c. > 1 mile (<i>regionally-significant</i>)
d. New Intermediate Station	d. AQ Consultation Required
Criteria E	
Bus and Demand Response Transit	
Criteria E-1 Expansion Type	Criteria E-2 Threshold
a. New Fixed Route	a. AQ Consultation Required
b. New Demand Response Service	b. Not Regionally Significant
c. Added Service to existing	c. Not Regionally Significant

Appendix A

40 CFR 93.126 and 93.127

§ 93.126 Exempt projects.

Notwithstanding the other requirements of this subpart, highway and transit projects of the types listed in table 2 of this section are exempt from the requirement to determine conformity. Such projects may proceed toward implementation even in the absence of a conforming transportation plan and TIP. A particular action of the type listed in table 2 of this section is not exempt if the MPO in consultation with other agencies (see § 93.105(c)(1)(iii)), the EPA, and the FHWA (in the case of a highway project) or the FTA (in the case of a transit project) concur that it has potentially adverse emissions impacts for any reason. States and MPOs must ensure that exempt projects do not interfere with TCM implementation. Table 2 follows:

TABLE 2—EXEMPT PROJECTS

Safety

Railroad/highway crossing.

Projects that correct, improve, or eliminate a hazardous location or feature.

Safer non-Federal-aid system roads.

Shoulder improvements.

Increasing sight distance.

Highway Safety Improvement Program implementation.

Traffic control devices and operating assistance other than signalization projects.

Railroad/highway crossing warning devices.

Guardrails, median barriers, crash cushions.

Pavement resurfacing and/or rehabilitation.

Pavement marking.

Emergency relief (23 U.S.C. 125).

Fencing.

Skid treatments.

Safety roadside rest areas.

Adding medians.

Truck climbing lanes outside the urbanized area.

Lighting improvements.

Widening narrow pavements or reconstructing bridges (no additional travel lanes).

Emergency truck pullovers.

Mass Transit

Operating assistance to transit agencies.

Purchase of support vehicles.

Rehabilitation of transit vehicles ¹.

Purchase of office, shop, and operating equipment for existing facilities.

Purchase of operating equipment for vehicles (e.g., radios, fareboxes, lifts, etc.).

Construction or renovation of power, signal, and communications systems.

Construction of small passenger shelters and information kiosks.

Reconstruction or renovation of transit buildings and structures (e.g., rail or bus buildings, storage and maintenance facilities, stations, terminals, and ancillary structures).

Rehabilitation or reconstruction of track structures, track, and trackbed in existing rights-of-way.

Purchase of new buses and rail cars to replace existing vehicles or for minor expansions of the fleet ¹.

Construction of new bus or rail storage/maintenance facilities categorically excluded in 23 CFR part 771.

Air Quality

Continuation of ride-sharing and van-pooling promotion activities at current levels.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Other

Specific activities which do not involve or lead directly to construction, such as:

Planning and technical studies.

Grants for training and research programs.

Planning activities conducted pursuant to titles 23 and 49 U.S.C.

Federal-aid systems revisions.

Engineering to assess social, economic, and environmental effects of the proposed action or alternatives to that action.

Noise attenuation.

Emergency or hardship advance land acquisitions (23 CFR 710.503).

Acquisition of scenic easements.

Plantings, landscaping, etc.

Sign removal.

Directional and informational signs.

Transportation enhancement activities (except rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities).

Repair of damage caused by natural disasters, civil unrest, or terrorist acts, except projects involving substantial functional, locational or capacity changes.

NOTE: ¹ In PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} nonattainment or maintenance areas, such projects are exempt only if they are in compliance with control measures in the applicable implementation plan.

[62 FR 43801, Aug. 15, 1997, as amended at 69 FR 40081, July 1, 2004; 71 FR 12510, Mar. 10, 2006; 73 FR 4441, Jan. 24, 2008]

§ 93.127 Projects exempt from regional emissions analyses.

Notwithstanding the other requirements of this subpart, highway and transit projects of the types listed in Table 3 of this section are exempt from regional emissions analysis requirements. The local effects of these projects with respect to CO concentrations must be considered to determine if a hot-spot analysis is required prior to making a project-level conformity determination. The local effects of projects with respect to PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations must be considered and a hot-spot analysis performed prior to making a project-level conformity determination, if a project in Table 3 also meets the criteria in § 93.123(b)(1). These projects may then proceed to the project development process even in the absence of a conforming transportation plan and TIP. A particular action of the type listed in Table 3 of this section is not exempt from regional emissions analysis if the MPO in consultation with other agencies (see § 93.105(c)(1)(iii)), the EPA, and the FHWA (in the case of a highway project) or the FTA (in the case of a transit project) concur that it has potential regional impacts for any reason. Table 3 follows:

TABLE 3—PROJECTS EXEMPT FROM REGIONAL EMISSIONS ANALYSES

Intersection channelization projects.

Intersection signalization projects at individual intersections.

Interchange reconfiguration projects.

Changes in vertical and horizontal alignment.

Truck size and weight inspection stations.

Bus terminals and transfer points.

[58 FR 62235, Nov. 24, 1993, as amended at 71 FR 12511, Mar. 10, 2006]