

The NEPA Process: Logical Termini

What are logical termini?

As part of the NEPA process, project sponsors must decide what constitutes the geographic extent of a project. The limits of the project being evaluated are known as “logical termini,” and are defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as:

1. rational end points for a transportation improvement
2. rational end points for a review of the environmental impacts

Why are logical termini important?

FHWA requires that the project or action being evaluated in the NEPA process meet three principles in order to avoid commitments to transportation improvements before the impacts are fully evaluated:

1. Connect logical termini and be of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scope;
2. Have independent utility or independent significance, i.e., be usable and be a reasonable expenditure even if no additional transportation improvements in the area are made; and
3. Not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements.

Establishing logical termini ensures that project needs are addressed and reduces the risk of unexpected effects that could result from analyzing an insufficient geographic area. Additionally, they are intended to prevent segmentation, which occurs when a need may extend beyond the project area but needs and environmental impacts are artificially targeted to a limited area to avoid application of NEPA requirements to some of the project’s segments.

How are the logical termini for a project determined?

Project sponsors use a number of different factors to determine logical termini. In addition to the ability of the project to meet an identified transportation need (safety, economic development, capacity, etc.), other factors considered could include socioeconomic factors, topography, future travel demand, other infrastructure improvements in the area, and more.

Logical termini can be locations where there are major traffic generators or changes in traffic volumes, major crossroads or system intersections, and/or locations where there are changes in settlement patterns, such as a transition from an urbanized area to a suburban or rural area.

Can logical termini change?

Logical termini and purpose and need interact with one another. As investigations into data, transportation problems, and impacts to resources continues, there can be rationale for modifying the logical termini based on new information obtained. This can also occur as alternatives are evaluated and further refined.

Source

FHWA Environmental Review Toolkit, NEPA Implementation, The Development of Logical Project Termini. November 5, 1993.

https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/legislation/nepa/guidance_project_termini.aspx