

Scoping Decision Document

Contacts

Debra Moynihan
MnDOT | Office of Environmental Stewardship
395 John Ireland Blvd, MS 620 St. Paul, MN 55155 (651) 366-3618
debra.moynihan@state.mn.us

Objectives

The Scoping Decision Document (SDD) delineates the issues and analyses to be contained in the EIS. A Draft Scoping Decision Document (DSDD) is issued in tandem with the [Scoping Document](#) (SD) for a 30-day comment period. The final SDD is issued after conclusion of the comment period.

The documents identified above should not be confused with the scoping report typically prepared during a MnDOT project's early planning stage prior to the project's programming in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Legal / Regulatory Basis

The Scoping Decision Document is required under Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) rules for EIS projects (see Minnesota Rule [4410.2100](#) subp. 2 and subp. 6). Refer to the rules for detail regarding the timing of SDD publication in relation to the scoping comment period.

The process that results in the final SDD per MEQB rules for the state EIS is also consistent with the scoping requirements for a federal EIS.

Format and Content

MEQB rules do not specify a format for the Scoping Decision Document. At a minimum, the SDD addresses the following points:

- The issues to be addressed in the EIS;
- Time limits for preparation (If shorter than allowed by Minnesota Rule parts 4410.0200 to

4410.6500)

- Identification of the permits for which information will be gathered concurrently with EIS preparation;
- Identification of the permits for which a record of decision will be required;
- Alternatives that will be addressed in the EIS;
- Identification of potential impact areas resulting from the project itself and from related actions which shall be addressed in the EIS; and
- Identification of necessary studies requiring compilation of existing information or the development of new data that can be generated within a reasonable amount of time and at a reasonable cost.

Typically, the DSDD and SDD also describe the:

- Report Purpose
- Project Description
- Responsible Governmental Unit and Project Manager
- The issues and alternatives that will not be addressed in the EIS, as determined through scoping process.

The final SDD, which is issued after conclusion of the scoping comment period, also addresses

- Comments that were received during the scoping comment period.
- Additional information relevant to the Scoping Decision that became available after the release of the SD/DSDD.

The Scoping Document (SD) provides complete details about the scoping process. The Scoping Decision Document (DSDD and SDD) is more concise, focused on the decisions that resulted from the scoping process, specifically what issues and alternatives will be addressed in the EIS.

Processing / Circulation

The Draft Scoping Decision Document (DSDD) is developed and circulated at the same time as the Scoping Document (SD). See [Scoping Document](#) HPDP chapter for processing/circulation details. The following steps are for the final Scoping Decision Document (SDD).

1. **District** develops Scoping Decision Document.

Develops preliminary final Scoping Decision Document, updating the Draft Scoping Decision Document (DSDD) to reflect information gathered during public comment period, in consultation with the Office of Environmental Stewardship (OES) and FHWA.

2. **District** distributes copies to Central Office and FHWA for review.
 - For signature blocks, see [Who Approves Project Documents](#)
 - For guidance on FHWA review, see [FHWA and MnDOT Stewardship and Oversight Agreement](#).
3. **Reviewers** provide comments to District.
 - Complete within 45 days of receiving preliminary report.
 - OES coordinator returns comments to Project Manager with copy to FHWA. FHWA Area Engineer returns FHWA comments to MnDOT Project Manager with copy to OES.
 - CO State-Aid (required only if local agency is involved and using federal aid funds) returns comments to Project Manager with copy to OES/FHWA.
4. **District** revises Scoping Decision Document based on comments received. District Engineer signs signature page.
5. **District** submits revised final Scoping Decision Document to OES for approval (one copy and one signed signature page).
6. **OES** approves the Scoping Decision Document:
 - Conducts final review of Decision Document (review completed in 5 days).
 - Approves Document: Chief Environmental Officer signs signature page (once all comments are adequately addressed)
 - Returns original-signature page to District for project file
 - The approved SDD must be stored in eDOCs.
7. **District** distributes copy of signed Scoping Decision Document:
 - FHWA: Two hard copies and one signed electronic copy.
 - CO State Aid: (required only if local agency is involved and using federal aid funds): One hard copy and one signed electronic copy.
8. A summary of the Scoping Decision is included in the state EIS preparation notice that is published in the EQB Monitor