



Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

NEPA Process

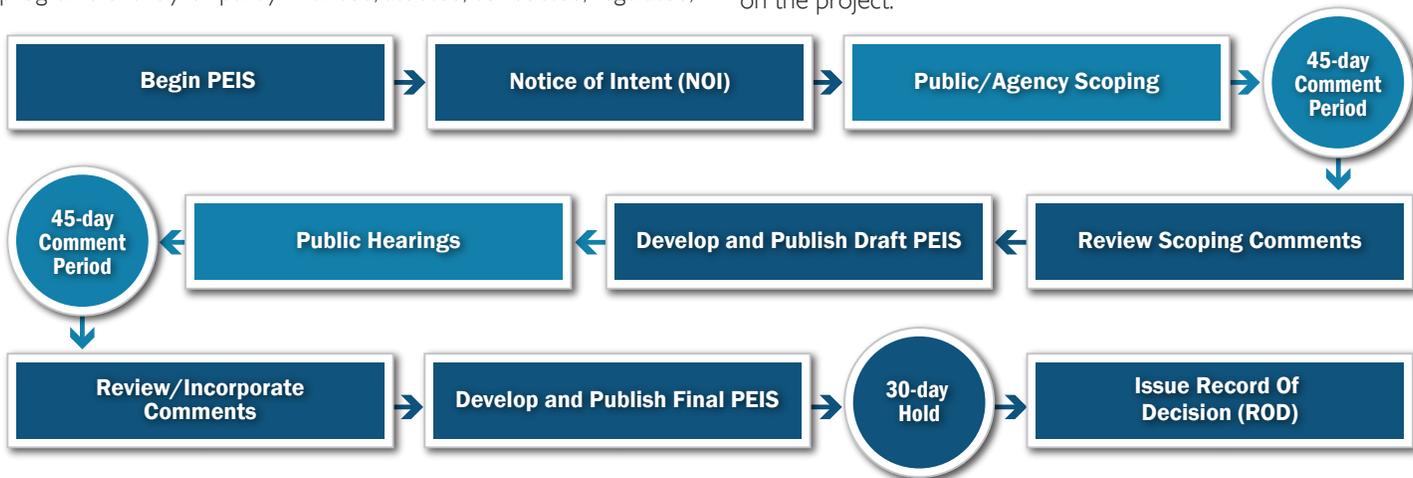
The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) provides a framework to evaluate the impact of major federal actions on the environment and allows the public the opportunity to provide input on implementation alternatives. NEPA requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. NEPA also established the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). As part of the Executive Office of the President, CEQ coordinates federal environmental efforts and is responsible for advising the President on environmental policy matters. CEQ has also promulgated regulations implementing NEPA which are binding for all federal agencies. These regulations address the procedural provisions of NEPA and the administration of the NEPA process, including preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS).

NEPA is applicable to all “major” federal actions affecting the quality of the human environment. A major federal action is an action with effects that may be major and which are potentially subject to federal control and responsibility. These actions may include new and continuing activities, including projects and programs entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated,

or approved by federal agencies; new or revised agency rules, regulations, plans, policies, or procedures; and legislative proposals. FirstNet has determined the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) qualifies as a major federal activity under these criteria and triggers a NEPA review.

Because of this, FirstNet is required to comply with NEPA, which requires that the government examine the environmental, social, historic, and cultural impacts of its proposed actions before it irretrievably commits resources to undertake them. Furthermore, FirstNet must comply with its own NEPA implementing procedures, which were finalized and published in the Federal Register on April 29, 2014. On November 12, 2014, FirstNet published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare five coordinated Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEIS) in the Federal Register. The PEISs will analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the alternative approaches to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the NPSBN on natural, cultural, and social resources.

The NEPA process is depicted in the diagram below. The light blue coloring indicates those opportunities for the public to comment on the project.



The PEIS process started with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on November 12, 2014. The scoping/public comment period for this PEIS will end on December 29, 2014.

Currently, the PEIS is at the scoping phase. During the scoping phase, a wide range of partners including the public, interest groups, and agencies at all levels of government are encouraged to provide input about the project. The PEIS will incorporate and build upon the prior planning efforts, environmental studies, and public input.

All of the collected information will form the basis for a range of alternatives to implement the project and eventually the selection of a preferred alternative.

The preferred alternative will be identified in the Draft PEIS when it is made available to the public for review and comment. A 45-day public comment period with public hearings similar to the scoping meetings will be held. The Final PEIS will incorporate comments received on the Draft PEIS. After publication of the Final PEIS, FirstNet will make the decision regarding the selection of an alternative within a Record of Decision.