

NEPA TERMS

The following terms are defined to provide a reference guide for some of the common NEPA terms used in study materials.

1. **NEPA:** National Environmental Policy Act; Federal law established in 1969 that is required when a project receives federal funding or approval. NEPA requires that agencies consider the potential impacts of an action on the social, economic and physical environment. It requires public outreach, and establishes procedures that agencies must follow, but does not dictate the outcome.
2. **Initiation and Scoping:** CAMPO, the metropolitan planning organization for Central Texas, approves the project and the project is added to the Regional Transportation Plan. Later an agency sponsor (in this case, the Mobility Authority) chooses to move forward with the project.
3. **Purpose & Need:** Project team identifies the problem we are trying to solve (which is supported by data), and the purpose that the project will meet if approved. This is the foundation of the NEPA document.
4. **Alternative:** This term means a potential option for how to solve the problem we have identified.
7. **Environmental Analysis of Alternatives:** The Project Team analyzes each alternative for potential impacts to the human and natural environment. Public input helps to develop the criterion (as an example, for MoPac South, elevation over Lady Bird Lake was added as a criterion).
8. **No Build Alternative:** The “do nothing” alternative where no project is carried out. It assumes all current and other planned regional transportation improvements are carried out, and is advanced as a baseline for comparison against the other alternatives.
9. **Build Alternative:** A proposed course of action that meets the project’s purpose and need.
10. **Reasonable Build Alternative (pre-DRAFT EA):** A proposed course of action that best meets the project’s purpose and need.
11. **Recommended Build Alternative (pre-DRAFT EA):** The final draft iteration of the build alternative that best meets the project’s purpose and need. Study team makes this recommendation based on results of evaluation matrix, and is carried forward for

further review and public input at a public hearing, the last public engagement event for feedback.

13. **Environmental Assessment (EA):** An EA is carried out when the environmental impacts are uncertain. It is a public document to aid an agency's compliance with NEPA. It concludes with either a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) or a determination to proceed with an EIS.
14. **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):** Final step for the EA process. Essentially this provides environmental clearance for the project to proceed to the next phase of project delivery.
15. **Draft Environmental Assessment:** The draft environmental document is presented for agency and public review at a formal public hearing.
16. **Final Environmental Document:** The Final EA is completed for TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division's review and consideration.
17. **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):** An environmental study for when environmental impacts of a project are anticipated to be significant.