

**Programmatic Agreement  
between the Federal Highway Administration, Washington Division  
and the Washington State Department of Transportation  
regarding the processing of actions classified as  
Categorical Exclusions for Federal-Aid Highway Projects**

This Programmatic Agreement (“Agreement”), by and between the Federal Highway Administration, United States Department of Transportation, and the State of Washington, acting by and through its Department of Transportation, hereby provides as follows:

**I. Parties**

The Parties to this Agreement are the Federal Highway Administration (hereinafter “FHWA”) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (hereinafter “WSDOT”).

**II. Purpose**

The purpose of this Agreement is to authorize the WSDOT to determine on behalf of FHWA whether a project qualifies for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) specifically listed in 23 CFR 771 without further review and approval by FHWA. This agreement allows WSDOT to make NEPA CE approvals on FHWA’s behalf for projects using Federal-aid funds or requiring FHWA approval.

**III. Authorities**

This agreement is entered into pursuant to the following authorities:

- A. National Environmental Policy Act, [42 U.S.C 4321 - 4370](#).
- B. CEQ Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, [40 CFR parts 1500 - 1508](#).
- C. 23 CFR - Highways: Applicability and Responsibilities, [771.109](#), Timing of Administration Activities, [771.113](#) and FHWA Categorical Exclusions, [771.117](#), specifically 23 CFR 771.117(g).

**IV. Responsibilities**

- A. WSDOT is responsible for:

1. Approving CEs, without the need for FHWA consultation, for actions specifically listed in 23 CFR 771.117(c) and 23 CFR 771.117(d) including c list activities constrained by 23 CFR 771.117(e), on behalf of FHWA. This includes any activities added through FHWA rulemaking to those listed in 23 CFR 771.117(c) or 23 CFR 771.117(d) after the date of execution of this Programmatic Agreement. WSDOT will identify the applicable listed CE, ensure any conditions or constraints are met, verify that unusual circumstances as defined in 23 CFR 771.117(b) do not apply, address any and all other environmental requirements, and complete the review with a wet or electronic signature evidencing approval. No separate review or approval of the CE by FHWA is required.
  2. Consulting with FHWA for actions that involve unusual circumstances (23 CFR 771.117(b)) to determine the appropriate class of action for environmental analysis and documentation. WSDOT may decide, or FHWA may require, additional studies to be performed prior to making a CE approval or changing the class of action to an EA or EIS.
  3. Meeting applicable documentation requirements, as listed in Section V of this agreement, for WSDOT CE approvals on FHWA's behalf, applicable approval and re-evaluation requirements in Section VI, and applicable quality control/quality, monitoring, and performance requirements in Section VII.
  4. Relying only upon employees directly employed by the WSDOT to make CE approvals under this agreement. WSDOT may not delegate its responsibility for CE approvals to third parties (e.g., local government staff, other State of Washington agency staff).
- B. FHWA is responsible for:
1. Providing timely review and approval of CEs for actions that are not specifically listed in 23 CFR 771.117(d), or for actions for which WSDOT has requested FHWA approval based on unusual circumstances.
  2. Providing timely review and response to a request from WSDOT for a CE determination for an action not specifically listed in 23 CFR 771.117.
  3. Providing timely review and response to any request for coordination, consultation, or compliance with any environmental requirement under law, regulation, or Executive Order related to WSDOT's processing of CE actions under this agreement. This includes all Section 4(f) evaluations and *de minimis* and temporary occupancy determinations, all formal ESA consultations except those included in a programmatic ESA consultation, all responses to Essential

Fish Habitat conservation recommendations, all Section 106 Memorandums of Agreement, and government-to-government consultation with Native American Tribes.

4. Providing timely advice and technical assistance on CEs to WSDOT, as requested.
5. Overseeing the implementation of this Agreement in accordance with 23 CFR 771.117(g).

## **V. Documentation of WSDOT CE Approvals**

- A. For WSDOT CE approvals, WSDOT shall ensure that it fulfills the following responsibilities for documenting the project-specific determinations made:
  1. For actions listed in 23 CFR 771.117(c) and 23 CFR 771.117(d), WSDOT will identify the applicable action, ensure any conditions specified in FHWA regulation are met, verify that unusual circumstances do not apply, address all other environmental requirements, and complete WSDOT's NEPA form(s) with a WSDOT electronic signature evidencing approval.
  2. In addition, for actions listed in 23 CFR 771.117(c) and 23 CFR 771.117(d), WSDOT shall prepare documentation that supports the CE determination and that no unusual circumstances exist that would make the CE approval inappropriate.
- B. WSDOT should maintain a project record for CE approvals it makes on FHWA's behalf. This record should include at a minimum:
  1. Any checklists, forms, or other documents and exhibits that summarize the consideration of project effects and unusual circumstances.
  2. Any stakeholder communication, correspondence, consultation, or public meeting documentation.
  3. The name and title of the document approver and the date of WSDOT's approval.
  4. For cases involving re-evaluations, any documented re-evaluation (when required) or a statement that a re-evaluation was completed for the project (when supporting documentation is not necessary).

- C. Any electronic or paper project records maintained by WSDOT should be provided to FHWA at its request. WSDOT should retain those records, including all letters and comments received from governmental agencies, the public, and others for a period of no less than three (3) years after completion of project construction, according to state records retention schedules. This provision does not displace or relieve WSDOT of its project or program recordkeeping responsibilities under [2 CFR 200.334](#) or any other applicable laws, regulations, or policies.

## **VI. CE Approvals and Re-Evaluations**

- A. WSDOT's Delegation of Authority policy ([E 1012](#)) provides for delegation of signature authority for NEPA CE approvals to the Assistant Secretaries of Multimodal Development and Delivery and Washington State Ferries, who are then authorized to sub-delegate to appropriate positions within the agency. The process of sub-delegation results in the following primary signatory authorities for WSDOT NEPA CEs, or staff they choose as delegates:
  - WSDOT Region and Megaprograms Environmental Managers
  - Local Programs Environmental Manager
  - Washington State Ferries Director of the Department of Quality, Health, Safety, and Environment
- B. In accordance with [23 CFR 771.129](#), WSDOT shall re-evaluate its determinations and approvals for projects, consult with FHWA as necessary, and prepare additional documentation to ensure that determinations are still valid.

## **VII. Quality Control/Quality Assurance, Monitoring, and Performance**

- A. WSDOT Quality Control and Quality Assurance

WSDOT agrees to carry out regular quality control and quality assurance activities, as described in WSDOT procedures, the Environmental Manual, and Local Agency Guidelines to ensure WSDOT's CE approvals are made in accordance with applicable law and this Agreement. The signatories of the CEs are responsible for ensuring quality.

- B. WSDOT Performance Monitoring and Reporting

- 1. FHWA and WSDOT should cooperate in monitoring performance under this Agreement and work to assure quality performance.

2. WSDOT will implement corrective actions to ensure compliance with the terms of this agreement as needed.

C. FHWA Oversight and Monitoring

1. Monitoring by FHWA will include consideration of the technical competency and organizational capacity of WSDOT, as well as WSDOT's performance of its CE processing functions. Performance considerations include, without limitation, the quality and consistency of WSDOT's CE approvals, adequacy and capability of WSDOT staff and consultants, and the effectiveness of WSDOT's administration of its internal CE approvals.
2. FHWA will conduct one or more program reviews during the term of this agreement as part of its oversight activities. Program reviews will be conducted in close coordination with WSDOT and will be developed in accordance with FHWA guidance. The details of the review will be documented in a charter developed with WSDOT. Results of program review(s) shall be taken into account at the time this Agreement is considered for renewal.
3. WSDOT and FHWA should cooperate in all oversight and quality assurance activities.

## **VIII. Amendments**


If the Parties agree to amend this Agreement, then FHWA and WSDOT may execute an amendment with new signatures and dates of the signatures. The term of the Agreement shall remain unchanged unless otherwise expressly stated in the amended Agreement.

## **IX. Term, Renewal and Termination**

- A. This Agreement shall have a term of five (5) years, effective on the date of the last signature. WSDOT shall post and maintain an executed copy of this Agreement on its website, available to the public.
- B. This Agreement is renewable for additional five (5) year terms if WSDOT requests renewal and FHWA determines WSDOT has satisfactorily carried out the provisions of this Agreement. In considering any renewal of this Agreement, FHWA will evaluate the effectiveness of the Agreement and its overall impact on the environmental review process.

C. Either party may terminate this Agreement at any time by giving at least thirty (30) days written notice to the other party.

Execution of this Agreement and implementation of its terms by both Parties provides evidence that both Parties have reviewed this Agreement and agree to the terms and conditions for its implementation. This Agreement is effective upon the date of the last signature below.

 Digitally signed by  
RALPH RIZZO  
Date: 2024.12.19  
09:10:34 -08'00'

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ralph J. Rizzo  
Division Administrator, Washington Division  
Federal Highway Administration

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Digitally signed by Ahmer Nizam  
Date: 2024.12.18 16:26:42 -08'00'

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ahmer Nizam  
Environmental Services Director  
Washington State Department of Transportation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Jay Drye** Digitally signed by Jay Drye  
Date: 2024.12.18 15:35:44  
-08'00'

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jay Drye  
Local Programs Director  
Washington State Department of Transportation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date