

## Regional Significance Guidance

This document is being provided as a guidance resource for local municipalities and project implementers to:

1. Help define what is meant by the term “regionally significant project”
2. Provide information on the regional air quality conformity process
3. Provide guidance on expected project-level informational requirements of local municipalities.

This document does not in any way change, modify, or supersede any regulatory or statutory requirements of the Clean Air Act, Clean Air Act Amendments, or other related federal and state legislation. The final determination on whether a project can be considered regionally significant is reserved by the air quality consultation committee.

NIRPC provides the conformity process as a service to local governments. By excluding regionally significant projects from the regional emissions analysis, project implementers may risk a violation of the Clean Air Act, and non-conformity for the regional transportation plan and transportation improvement program. The applicable federal regulations are included at the end of this document.

NIRPC’s transportation network model includes all roads functionally classified a collector and higher and all interchange ramps. The collectors and some local roads are included to accurately load traffic onto the higher classification roads, including the minor arterials, principal arterials, expressways and interstates. All roads functionally classified as Minor Arterial or above should be considered as regionally significant. This includes all freeways, expressways, interchange ramps, principal arterials and minor arterials. All fixed guide-way transit services, including commuter rail are regionally significant. Fixed route bus services can also be regionally significant when they offer a significant alternative to regional highway travel.

Transportation projects, whether single or multi-jurisdictional, that modify these facilities can be regionally significant. Individually, projects can be considered as regionally significant when they are above certain thresholds. Collectively, when a series of smaller projects on a regionally significant facility are completed, the overall improvements can be regionally significant.

Thresholds of regional significance for the anticipated overall improvement projects are listed:

<b>Interstates, Expressways, Toll Roads</b>	
<u>Expansion Type</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
New Segment	No Minimum
Added Through Lanes	No Minimum
Continuous Auxiliary Lanes	> ¼ mile
New Interchanges	No Minimum
Modification of Existing Interchanges	AQ Consultation Required

<b>Principal Arterials</b>	
<u>Expansion Type</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
New Segment	No Minimum
Added Through Lanes	No Minimum
Continuous Auxiliary Lanes	> 1 mile
New Interchanges	No Minimum
Modification of Existing Interchanges	AQ Consultation Required
Separation of existing railroad grade crossings	Not regionally significant

<b>Minor Arterials</b>	
<u>Expansion Type</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
New Segment	¾ to 1 mile - AQ Consultation Required
New Segment	> 1 mile
Added Through Lanes	¾ to 1 mile - AQ Consultation Required
Added Through Lanes	> 1 mile
Continuous Auxiliary Lanes	> 1 mile
Separation of existing railroad grade crossings	Not regionally significant

<b>Rail and Fixed Guide-way Transit</b>	
<u>Expansion Type</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
New Route or Service	No Minimum
Route Extension with Station	> 1 mile from current terminus
Added track or guide-way capacity	> 1 mile
New Intermediate Station	AQ Consultation Required

<b>Bus and Demand Response Transit</b>	
<u>Expansion Type</u>	<u>Threshold</u>
New Fixed Route	AQ Consultation Required
New Demand Response Service	Not Regionally Significant
Added Service to existing	Not Regionally Significant

New segments or added through lanes on arterials that are also associated with large land development projects may need AQ consultation even if the project is below the threshold in the table. Land development projects can be regionally significant when they have the potential to generate many trips or vehicle-miles of travel. Such developments are incorporated into the regional model during the update of socioeconomic forecasts, at the beginning of the update cycle for a new regional transportation plan. Local agencies shall provide their comprehensive plans to NIRPC as they're updated, which reflect the known development projects.

Local agencies should proactively include anticipated developments in their comprehensive plans without specific reference to potential high profile private sector developments.

#### Implementation

Conceptual "place-holder" projects can be included in the conformity determination long before commitments are made for their implementation. For plan milestone years, anticipated projects should be included. Local agencies shall submit to NIRPC thoroughfare plans that use the functional classification system as they're adopted. Functional classification changes shall be done in the context of the Regional Transportation Plan.

At the start of each conformity cycle, NIRPC will solicit new project and related development information from all local agencies, so that the analysis will use the latest planning assumptions. Local agencies that wish to proceed with transportation improvement projects, regardless of funding sources, must respond to the solicitation to be sure that their projects are included in the regional emissions analysis. Projects that are excluded from the analysis may be delayed until the next conformity cycle (a minimum of six months), when they will be included in the regional emissions analysis. In addition, at the start of each plan update cycle NIRPC will request an update of land development that local agencies anticipate, for inclusion in the regional emissions analysis, by including updated population, household and employment data.

This guidance is intended to help NIRPC and project sponsors to comply with the following federal regulation: **40 CFR Part 93** (Transportation Conformity Rule Amendments: Flexibility and Streamlining; Final Rule) **§93.101** (Definitions) *Regionally significant project means a transportation project (other than an exempt project) that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs (such as access to and from the area outside the region, major activity centers in the region, major planned developments such as new retail malls, sports complexes, etc., or transportation terminals as well as most terminals themselves) and would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area's transportation network, including at a minimum all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer an alternative to regional highway travel.*; **§93.105** (Consultation) **(c)** (Interagency Consultation Procedures: Specific Processes) *Interagency consultation procedures shall also include the following specific processes: (ii) Determining which minor arterials and other transportation projects should be considered "regionally significant" for the purposes of regional emissions analysis (in addition to those functionally classified as principal arterial or higher or fixed guideway systems or extensions that offer an alternative to regional highway travel), and which projects should be considered to have a significant change in design concept and scope from the transportation plan or TIP.*; **§93.121** (Requirements for adoption or approval of projects by other recipients of funds designated under title 23 U.S.C. or the Federal Transit Laws.) **(a)** *Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, no recipient of Federal funds designated under title 23 U.S.C. or the Federal Transit Laws shall adopt or approve a regionally significant highway or transit project, regardless of funding source, unless the recipient finds that the requirements of one of the following are met: (1) The project was included in the first three years of the most recently conforming transportation plan and TIP (or the conformity determination's regional emissions analysis), even if conformity status is currently lapsed; and the project's design concept and scope have not changed significantly from those analyses; or (2) There is a currently conforming transportation plan and TIP, and a new regional emissions analysis including the project and the currently conforming plan and TIP demonstrates that the transportation plan and TIP would still conform if the project were implemented (consistent with the requirements of §93.118 and/or 93.119 for a project not from a conforming transportation plan and TIP). (b) In isolated rural nonattainment areas and maintenance areas subject to §93.109(g), no recipient...*