

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of a project is essential in establishing a basis for the development of the range of reasonable alternatives and assists with the identification and eventual selection of a preferred alternative.

The purpose and need statement is intended to clarify the expected outcome of public expenditure and to justify that expenditure. What are you trying to accomplish and why do you think it is necessary? As such, it is the first step in the project development process. It will be used to guide the development of alternatives, and it will be a fundamental element when selecting between alternatives.

It is not sufficient to state that the project is needed to provide increased capacity and improve safety. Supporting data must be provided.

The **purpose** defines the transportation problem to be solved. It is the “what” of the proposal.

- The purpose should be stated in a concise manner.
- The purpose should be stated as the positive outcome that is expected. For example, the purpose is to reduce congestion in the interstate corridor.
- The purpose should avoid stating a solution, for example: “the purpose of the project is to build a bypass”.
- Where appropriate, it should be stated broadly enough so that more than one mode can be considered and multi-modal solutions are not dismissed prematurely.
- Similarly, it should be stated broadly enough so that more than one alternative can be considered and alternatives are not dismissed prematurely.

The **need** provides data to support the problem statement (purpose).

- The need should establish the evidence that a problem exists, or will exist if projected population and planned land use growth are realized.
- The need should be factual and numerically based.
- The need should support the assertion made in the purpose statement. For example, if the purpose statement is based on safety improvements, the need statement should support the assertion that there is or will be a safety problem to be corrected.

Documentation

The purpose and need statement must be included in the permanent record for any proposal that is intended to result in a constructed transportation facility using federal funds. The statement will be used in later environmental documentation and will be required for the project to enter onto the TIP for development and construction.

Developing a Purpose & Need Statement

The following items may be listed and described in the purpose and need statement for a proposed action. These are by no means all-inclusive or applicable in every situation. They are intended as a guide.

- *Project Status* - Briefly describe the project history, including measures taken to date, other agencies and governmental units involved, action spending, schedules, etc.
- *Capacity* - Is the capacity of the present facility inadequate for the present traffic? Projected traffic? What capacity is needed? What is the level(s) of service for existing and proposed facilities?
- *System Linkage* - Is the proposed project a "connecting link"? How does it fit into the transportation system?
- *Transportation Demand* - Discuss the project's relationship to any statewide plan or adopted urban transportation plan. In addition, explain any related traffic forecasts that are substantially different from those estimates of HATS' Regional Transportation Plan or PennDOT's Mobility Plan.
- *Legislation* - Is there a Federal, state, or local governmental mandate for the action?
- *Social Demands or Economic Development* - Describe how the action will foster new employment and benefit schools, land use plans, recreation facilities, etc. What projected economic development/land use changes indicate the need to improve or add to the highway capacity?
- *Modal Interrelationships* - How will the proposed project interface with and serve to complement airports, rail and port facilities, mass transit services, etc.?
- *Safety* - Is the proposed project necessary to correct an existing or potential safety hazard? Is the existing accident rate excessively high? Why? How will the proposed project improve safety?
- *Roadway Deficiencies* - Is the proposed project necessary to correct existing roadway deficiencies (e.g., substandard geometrics, load limits on structures, inadequate cross-section, high maintenance costs)? How will the proposed project improve it?