

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

OKI has formed a new committee of community representatives and elected officials to draft an Environmental Justice policy for transportation planning in the Tri-State. While OKI has always recognized the importance of public participation in transportation planning, we are seeking to intensify our efforts and formalize our public involvement and outreach processes, particularly as it relates to minority and low income populations.

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

"The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies." U.S. EPA Office of Environmental Justice

IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE A NEW REQUIREMENT?

No. The recipients of Federal-aid have been required to certify and the U.S. DOT must ensure nondiscrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and many other laws, regulations, and policies. In 1997, the Department issued its DOT Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations to summarize and expand upon the requirements of Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice.

TITLE VI AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADDRESS WHICH GROUPS?

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. The DOT Order on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898 address persons belonging to any of the following groups: African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Low-Income.

HOW DOES ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING?

Concern for environmental justice should be integrated into every transportation decision - from the first thought about a transportation plan to post-construction operations and maintenance. Properly implemented, environmental justice principles and procedures improve all levels of transportation decision making. This approach will:

- Make better transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people.

- Design transportation facilities that fit more harmoniously into communities.

- Enhance the public-involvement process, strengthen community-based partnerships, and provide minority and low-income populations with opportunities to learn about and improve the quality and usefulness of transportation in their lives.

- Improve data collection, monitoring, and analysis tools that assess the needs of, and analyze the potential impacts on minority and low-income populations.

- Partner with other public and private programs to leverage transportation-agency resources to achieve a common vision for communities.

- Avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations.

- Minimize and / or mitigate unavoidable impacts by identifying concerns early in the planning phase and providing offsetting initiatives and enhancement measures to benefit affected communities and neighborhoods.

For more information on environmental justice, visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/index.htm or contact La Tania Thomas at (513) 621-6300, ext. 103 or email her at lthomas@oki.org.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY

The OKI Environmental Justice Policy expands OKI's efforts to involve the public in transportation decision making and adds provisions for assessing the equity of transportation investments.



