Successful Electronic Commitment Tracking in Utah

Utah DOT Environmental Commitments System

Introduction

Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) established an electronic data system (ePM) for tracking environmental documents and commitments. Use of the ePM software is not only an efficient way for UDOT to catalog the progress of environmental documentation and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), it also allows for others involved in the project, including consultants, to quickly identify the current status of an environmental review and outstanding commitments. Utah has assumed NEPA authority from the Federal government under 23 U.S.C. 326 and 327, and therefore environmental commitment tracking and compliance fall under the State's NEPA assignment responsibilities.

UDOT's ePM System

UDOT's Environmental Services Manual of Instruction describes the different types of environmental commitments, as well as the development, communication, and tracking of those commitments that can be added to projects. For Categorical Exclusions, standard project commitments are listed in a project development database and are added to projects with specific resource impacts. Some commitments are auto-populated into the commitment tracking system after certain impact thresholds are met for a project. For example, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is added as an environmental commitment for projects with greater than one acre of ground-disturbing activity. By entering project details up front into the system, standard commitments are able to be added in a uniform manner for the project.

For environmental assessments and environmental impact statements that may have greater impacts and require more project-specific commitments, project commitments are included in the environmental decision document. For example, a Section 404 Permit is typically tracked through annual reporting to the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for performance of mitigation sites, and a Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the project is included in a spreadsheet of all active MOAs with the various level of completion. A meeting between UDOT and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) is held annually to discuss compliance with all open commitments and programmatic agreements.
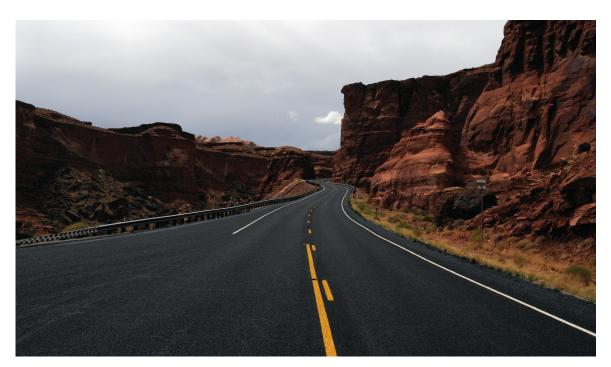

Navajo Lake Road, image courtesy of Utah DOT.

Center for Environmental Excellence

Compliance Tracking

UDOT tracks the compliance of the environmental commitments and mitigation requirements by incorporating the commitments into project design plan sets, specifications, and even associating them with pay items during construction, where possible. During construction, there are often inspection requirements such as for stormwater management or protection of sensitive resource areas within the project. In times of non-compliance with a commitment, UDOT adaptively manages the commitments and coordinates solutions with the regulatory authorities to resolve all areas of non-compliance. As commitments are completed, UDOT ensures there is a system to report commitment statuses to regulatory agency partners to ensure mitigation is completed within their jurisdictions.

From the planning process through construction of a project, UDOT exemplifies a clean and clear method of generating and tracking commitments associated with their transportation projects.

South East Utah, image courtesy of Utah DOT.