

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE



Average Time to Complete Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)

Executive Summary

The Washington Department of Ecology developed this report to satisfy a requirement in state law, Revised Code of Washington 43.21C.0311(2), as excerpted below. This report outlines the approach and analysis of data used to determine the average time to complete Final Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

43.21C.0311

Final environmental impact statements—Expeditious manner— Time limit—Reports.

(2) Beginning December 31, 2018, and every two years thereafter, the department of ecology must submit a report on the environmental impact statements produced by state agencies and local governments to the appropriate committees of the legislature. The report must include data on the average time, and document the range of time, it took to complete environmental impact statements within the previous two years.

Upon review of every Final EIS included in this report, the average time frame for completing an EIS is **approximately 28 months**. The median value is 19 months. The range is from 6 months to 120 months.

Background

The Washington Legislature enacted the State Environmental Policy Act in 1971. Commonly called SEPA, the law helps state and local agencies identify environmental impacts likely to result from projects and decisions such as:

- Issuing permits for private projects such as an office building, grocery store, or apartment complex.
- Constructing public facilities like a new school, highway, or water pipeline.

- Adopting regulations, policies, or plans such as a county or city comprehensive plan, critical area ordinance, or state water quality regulation.

The SEPA review process helps agency decision-makers, applicants, and the public understand how the entire proposal will affect the environment. SEPA can be used to modify or deny a proposal to avoid, reduce, or compensate for probable impacts.

SEPA requires the preparation of an EIS when the lead agency has determined the proposal is likely to result in significant adverse environmental impacts. The EIS process is a tool for identifying and analyzing probable adverse environmental impacts, reasonable alternatives, and possible mitigation.

Excessive delays in the environmental impact analysis process can add uncertainty and burdensome costs to those seeking to do business in the state of Washington.

Each year several thousand proposals in Washington State are reviewed under SEPA, and most are done using an environmental checklist and 14-day comment period. In reviewing all SEPA data for the time period covered in this report Ecology found that Final EIS preparation accounted for less than one-half of one percent of all SEPA submittals.

SEPA submittals to Ecology	Fiscal year 7/1/2016-6/30/2017	Fiscal year 7/1/2017-6/30/2018
Total number of SEPA records issued	6931	6789
Total number of Final EIS issued	19	16

When a proposal is likely to have significant impacts, a longer review as part of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required. While many EISs are completed in less than two years, some EISs for unusually complex projects or projects with a great deal of public interest will often take longer than two years.

To complete this report Ecology reviewed all SEPA Final Environmental Impact Statements issued by state and local governments from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2018. The data shows the average time and range of time for a lead agency to complete the EIS process. This time frame includes issuing a Determination of Significance and Scoping Notice, issuing a Draft EIS and issuing a Final EIS. This is the first report due to the Legislature and Ecology will produce this report every two years, on even numbered years.

This report does not include data on SEPA Supplemental EIS, which are continuation of an existing processes and SEPA Addendums, which add minor new information to an existing EIS process. Both Supplemental EISs and Addendums processes rely on existing documents and do not include a threshold determination, so any measurement of time would not be comparable to the time frame for EIS preparation.

Results

Table: SEPA Environmental Impact Statements 2016-2018

Lead Agency	Proposal Title	Date Scoping Notice issued	Date Draft EIS issued	Date Final EIS issued	Months to complete
Seattle Public Schools	Building, Technology, and Academic/Athletics IV Program	01/07/16	5/24/16	7/14/16	6
Ecology	Amendments to Chapter 173-201A. Water Quality Standards for Surface Waters of the State of Washington	9/25/14	1/12/15	7/15/16	22
King County	Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) Regional Trail Draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement	6/5/15	2/26/16	7/18/16	13
City of Shoreline	145th Street Station Subarea Planned Action Final Environmental Impact Statement*	10/01/14	7/17/15	7/20/16	21
Department of Natural Resources	Olympic Experimental State Forest Land Plan	8/1/07	6/1/10 and 10/31/13	8/8/16	120
Douglas County	North End Master Site Plan (Subarea Plan) and Planned Action*	8/6/15	6/2/16	8/31/16	12
King County	South County Recycling and Transfer Station	11/3/15	2/4/16	9/20/16	10
Port of Kalama and Cowlitz County	Kalama Manufacturing and Marine Export Facility; Northwest Innovation Works, LLC	11/6/14	3/3/16	9/30/16	22
City of Hoquiam and Ecology	Westway Expansion Project	4/4/14	8/31/15	9/30/16	19
Port of Seattle	Terminal 5 Wharf Rehabilitation	10/22/15	5/26/16	10/18/16	12
City of Seattle	Alaskan Way, Promenade, and Overlook Walk (AWPOW)	09/10/13	6/29/15	10/31/16	35
City of Spokane Valley	City of Spokane Valley 2017-2037 Comprehensive Plan	1/29/16	9/16/16	12/19/16	11
City of Kenmore	Lodge at Saint Edward	7/12/16	10/14/16	12/19/16	6
Seattle Public Utilities	Ship Canal Water Quality Project	7/23/15	9/22/16	1/1/17	19

Lead Agency	Proposal Title	Date Scoping Notice issued	Date Draft EIS issued	Date Final EIS issued	Months to complete
Washington State Convention Center	Washington State Convention Center Addition	2/18/15	2/26/16	2/21/17	24
Pierce County	Rim Rock Mineral Extraction	01/28/07	10/27/14	3/1/17	118
Cowlitz County and Ecology	Millennium Bulk Terminals-Longview; Construct and operate a coal export terminal	8/16/13	4/29/16	4/27/17	56
City of Yakima	City of Yakima Comprehensive Plan 2040	10/14/16	3/17/17	6/13/17	8
City of Seattle	Burke-Gilman Trail Missing Link	7/11/13	6/16/16	6/25/17	47
University of Washington	2018 Seattle Campus Master Plan	10/7/15	10/5/16	7/5/17	21
Skagit County	Tesoro Clean Products Upgrade Project	3/17/16	3/23/17	7/10/17	16
City of Edmonds	Highway 99 Subarea Plan*	5/24/16	6/2/17	8/8/17	15
Skamania County	Washougal Basalt Quarry	2/11/15	2/22/17	8/14/17	30
City of Shelton	Shelton Comprehensive Plan Update and UGA Expansion	5/2/14	2/2/17	8/24/17	39
University of Washington	The UW Bothell and Cascadia College Campus Master Plan	10/31/16	3/17/17	9/07/17	11
City of Tacoma	Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan*	10/1/15	8/11/17	11/3/17	25
City of Seattle	Citywide Implementation of Mandatory Housing Affordability	7/22/16	6/8/17	11/17/17	16
EFSEC	Tesoro Savage Vancouver Energy Distribution Terminal Facility	10/3/13	11/24/15	11/21/17	49
City of Bellevue	Energize Eastside	4/16/16	5/18/17	3/2/18	23
City of Puyallup	Downtown Puyallup Planned Action*	2011	2012	3/15/18	60
City of Seattle	Fort Lawton Army Reserve Center Redevelopment	6/5/17	12/14/17	3/29/18	10
City of Lake Stevens	Lake Stevens Downtown Subarea Plan*	07/05/17	01/05/18	4/27/18	10
City of Walla Walla	Walla Walla 2040 – Comprehensive Plan Update	12/21/17	3/9/18	5/23/18	6

Lead Agency	Proposal Title	Date Scoping Notice issued	Date Draft EIS issued	Date Final EIS issued	Months to complete
Seattle Public Schools	Seattle Public Schools Building Excellence Capital Levy	1/12/18	4/3/18	6/15/18	6
Ecology	Marine Spatial Plan for Washington Coast	7/16/13	10/12/17	6/20/18	59
	Average time for EIS completion (months)				27.9

*An EIS in which local government is the lead agency and uses the flexible planning tools in SEPA for local governments. This type of EIS process allows for streamlined and limited environmental review at the project level.

Next Steps

As outlined in RCW 43.21C.0311 Ecology will produce this report every two years on even numbered years,

Conclusion

This is the first report on “Average time to complete Final Environmental Impact Statements” produced by Ecology. Upon review of every Final EIS included in this report the average time frame for preparation of an EIS is **28** months. The median value is 19 months. The range is from 6 months to 120 months.

References

- Washington State Department of Ecology SEPA register:
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/separ/Main/SEPA/Search.aspx>
- RCW 43.21C.0311: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.21C.0311>

Publication information

This report is available on the Department of Ecology's website at
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1806012.html>

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