

*Texas Department of Transportation  
Environmental Affairs Division*

**Standards of Uniformity for Projects Without  
Federal Highway Administration Involvement**

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A Guide to Projects without FHWA Involvement

**Questions and Answers**

### **1. What is a Standard of Uniformity (SOU)?**

An SOU defines the state minimum requirements for each element of a work product. Its purpose is to speed TxDOT approval and avoid or minimize repetition or unnecessary revisions of work. (In this context, “work products” also include supporting items in project files.) SOUs function to increase efficiency of production and review.

An SOU offers the user a best management practice to the work product, to satisfy legal, scientific, and other matters relevant to the environmental review and public involvement process. Alternatives to an SOU may be used as long as they satisfy regulatory requirements, but cannot be guaranteed in advance to be acceptable, even if they are free of errors. Use of a TxDOT SOU does not guarantee acceptance of a work product by any other state or federal agency, including FHWA.

### **2. What are the goals of the SOUs?**

- Getting producers and reviewers on the same page
- Defining TxDOT performance standards for various environmental and public involvement tasks
- Defining TxDOT standards for documentation/disclosure
- Developing project information and coordination early for successful outcomes
- Reducing preventable do-overs
- Increasing consultant, district, region, and ENV accountability
- Providing a baseline for the related Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Control (QC) and subsequent environmental compliance reviews of efficiency of production and review of environmental work products.

### **3. Can ENV guarantee that the SOU will always work?**

No. An SOU cannot prevent errors of fact or method. Also, these SOUs will be modified periodically to reflect lessons learned as they are put to use, and to address problems identified during the QA/QC process and environmental compliance reviews. SOUs will also be modified to adapt to new or changing expectations from resource agencies and the public, and any of the SOUs may be revised subject to changes in rules, regulations, and agreements.

### **4. Who will be trained to use SOUs?**

ENV, district staff, and Regional Environmental Centers (Centers) personnel have been trained to use SOUs and can provide mentoring and advice on their use to Local Governments. Updated training may be necessary at a later date. Training will expand later to include consultants, Regional Mobility Authorities (RMAs), local governments, and developers, as needed.

### **5. Does ENV intend to review how well the SOUs are working?**

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Yes. Project reviews will be conducted on a certain percentage of TxDOT work products. ENV will meet periodically with the resource/regulatory agencies to gauge how well the SOUs are working and make adjustments as they are needed. ENV conducted a customer service survey in July 2009 for districts and RECs, which included questions regarding SOU quality. These results informed the latest revisions of the SOUs.