I. **NYSDOT MISSION STATEMENT**

It is the mission of the New York State Department of Transportation to ensure our customers - those who live, work and travel in New York State - have a safe, efficient, balanced and environmentally sound transportation system.

II. **POLICY STATEMENT**

As New York State’s largest public works agency, the Department of Transportation (the Department) has an obligation to the people of New York State to preserve, protect and enhance the environment. Strict regulatory compliance is only a part of the Department’s environmental stewardship responsibility.

In keeping with this mission and responsibility, the Department should use its organizational strengths to help advance State and Federal environmental policies.

By working with environmental agencies and groups to enhance the environment as part of our normal work, the Department is acting in the spirit of environmental law, the wishes and needs of our customers and the values we hold as public servants. This is the right thing to do for both transportation and the environment.

Thus, it is the policy and practice of the Department to:

- Plan, design, construct and maintain facilities that meet transportation needs while proactively protecting, conserving, restoring and enhancing important natural and man-made resources. Again, project permit and mitigation requirements are only a start.

- Seek opportunities to cooperatively advance Federal, State and local environmental policies, programs and objectives as part of the Department’s work through close and systematic coordination with the public and concerned agencies and groups.

- Demonstrate leadership by piloting the development and implementation of improved methods for environmental protection and enhancement.

- Employ safe and appropriate Context Sensitive Design measures to ensure that project designs reflect community values as understood through proactive outreach with local stakeholders.
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• Assist municipalities and others with their environmental projects by allowing them to include their work as environmental “betterments” in Department projects so that their investments can benefit from the economies of scale associated with larger projects.

III. ROLES OF PARTICIPANTS

• The Office of Public Affairs is responsible for the overall implementation of this policy and ensuring that the public is made aware of the Department’s environmental efforts in this regard through the coordination of speaking engagements, press releases, award nominations, etc.

• The Office of Engineering (Environmental Analysis Bureau) is responsible for the day-to-day interpretation of this policy and is assigned oversight responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in a timely and appropriate manner.

• The Governmental Relations Division is responsible for promoting this policy on a national level through its involvement in AASHTO, NASTO and other national and international transportation forums.

• Main Office Division Directors are responsible for the development and execution of policy implementation plans and programs within their scope of responsibilities listing specific objectives, responsible parties, deliverables and timetables.

• Regional Directors are responsible for ensuring that Regional policies, projects and programs reflect this policy. This includes use of program and project planning and development, outreach processes to solicit input on environmental matters from State and Federal agencies, municipalities, environmental groups, corporations and the general public, including minority and low income groups. Each Region will have an implementation plan listing specific objectives, responsible parties, deliverables and timetables.

IV. POLICY GUIDELINES

A. The goal of this policy is to formally incorporate an environmental ethic into Departmental processes. This is the responsibility of every Department employee. Accordingly, implementation plans should critically assess business practices for ways to:

• protect and improve water and air quality,
• reduce the use of nonrenewable energy resources,
• promote energy efficient transportation in all modes,
• promote non-motorized transportation alternatives,
• enhance facilities to encourage transit and other shared ride modes,
• reduce and eliminate Department generated waste,
• reuse and recycle materials,
• reduce or eliminate hazardous substance use,
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- clean up transportation-related contamination where appropriate,
- preserve and enhance historic and cultural resources,
- promote quality communities and sustainable development,
- protect and enhance wildlife habitat,
- enhance the visual, aesthetic and natural character of roadsides or streetscapes,
- enhance outreach to others through continuous public involvement, and
- advance Context Sensitive Design.

B. State and Federal highway funds shall continue to be used for project-specific avoidance, minimization, mitigation and enhancement efforts. They may also be used to advance the Environmental Policy consistent with State and Federal funding programs. (See EI 99-026 for State laws that support funding for environmental measures and for the Federal Highway Administration’s policies and funding programs that support environmental protection, mitigation and enhancements.)

C. The Department should become an acknowledged leader. Departmental operations, facilities and properties will be audited to ensure that the Department is conducting its business in keeping with our environmental stewardship values.

D. Department policies, procedures and guidelines shall be subsequently updated as necessary to achieve consistency with this policy.

1. Department Regional Directors shall meet at least annually with their counterpart Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Regional Directors to discuss progress under this Environmental Policy, review capital and maintenance programs, identify opportunities to improve resource protection and enhancement practices and update lists of contact people.

2. Department Regional Landscape/Environmental Managers shall continue to meet monthly, or as mutually agreed upon, with their DEC counterparts to discuss progress under this Environmental Policy, identify specific opportunities to include resource protection/enhancement practices in Department projects and update lists of contact people.

3. Department Regional staff shall continue to meet, as needed, with DEC to progress individual projects through existing project development and permit review processes.

4. Department Regions are encouraged to establish similar relationships with other State and Federal resource agencies, as appropriate, with coordination assistance from the Environmental Analysis Bureau.

5. Main Office Divisions should establish similar relationships with their counterparts with advice and assistance from the Environmental Analysis Bureau as appropriate.
E. Department Regions should seek opportunities for joint development with municipalities, other agencies and private developers where design, construction, land acquisition and maintenance responsibilities for environmental amenities can be equitably shared.

F. Specific environmental elements or facilities requested and funded by others (e.g., municipalities, other agencies, environmental groups) may, wherever practicable, be incorporated into the Department’s capital and maintenance projects as Environmental Betterments. These elements or facilities may include, but not be limited to, landscaping, park amenities, historic building preservation, noise barriers, wetlands creation, stream restoration, stormwater basins, habitat improvements and new municipal sanitary sewer lines, storm sewer lines and water mains that provide an environmental benefit.

The Department may provide the needed, added design services to ensure that the Environmental Betterment work is appropriately integrated into the transportation project plans and specifications. The Department may provide contract letting and construction inspection of the Environmental Betterment work at no charge to the municipality, agency or environmental group funding the betterment.

G. The Department’s Capital Program Update Process will include Environmental Initiative projects (those projects with environmental work above and beyond regular mitigation or permit requirements) in their updated program. External coordination with outside agencies or groups should be identified in the submissions.

H. Environmental Initiative work should be identified as a project attribute in the Department’s Program and Project Management System (P/PMIS). Various work types have been identified to allow Environmental Initiative projects to be grouped by a specific activity (e.g., water quality improvement, wetland mitigation, etc.).

V. RELATED AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

Department Website (www.dot.state.ny.us)
Engineering Instruction 99-026
Environmental Procedures Manual
Design Procedure Manual
Highway Design Manual
Scoping Procedures Manual
Policy Procedures Manual
Construction Procedures Manual