



U.S. General Services Administration

Highgate Springs Land Port of Entry Environmental Assessment

Public Meeting
Thursday, January 12, 2023
5:30 – 7:30 PM
St. Albans City Hall Auditorium
St. Albans City, VT

Presented by
GSA and Solv



Welcome

**The front row of the right aisle is reserved
for individuals in need of
American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation**

The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale aerial photograph of a large stadium. The stadium's seating bowl is visible, along with the surrounding parking lots, roads, and greenery. The text is overlaid on this image.



Welcome

➤ **Introductions**

➤ **Why we are here**

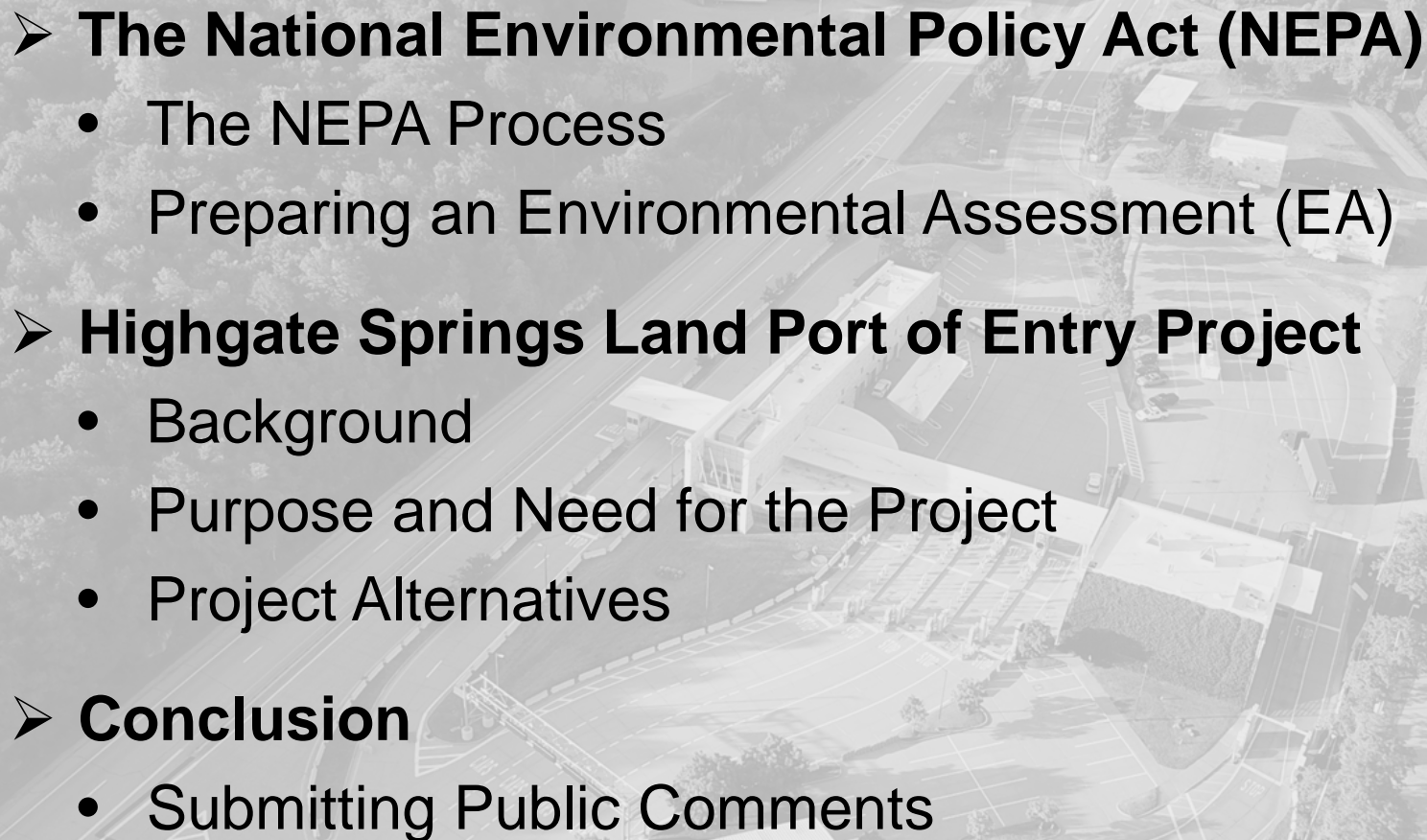
- Informational
- Soliciting community comments/concerns on what needs to be studied
- Concerns will be addressed in the EA

➤ **Rules**

- Meeting is being recorded with closed captioning

➤ **Submit your comments**

- Submitting Public Comments

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- The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale aerial photograph of a large industrial or port facility. It shows several large, interconnected buildings, extensive parking areas with many cars, and a network of roads and ramps. The facility is surrounded by greenery and trees.
- **The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**
 - The NEPA Process
 - Preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA)
 - **Highgate Springs Land Port of Entry Project**
 - Background
 - Purpose and Need for the Project
 - Project Alternatives
 - **Conclusion**
 - Submitting Public Comments



National Environmental Policy Act

- NEPA requires Federal agencies to examine the impacts of their proposed projects or actions on human and natural environment, and consider alternatives to the proposal before deciding on taking an action and which action to take.
- Agency responsibilities under NEPA include:
 - *Documentation and public disclosure of environmental impacts and alternatives analysis of the lead agency's proposal;*
 - *Solicitation of public input on project alternatives to be analyzed, resource areas to be studied, and impacts analysis; and*
 - *Coordination with other agencies as needed.*

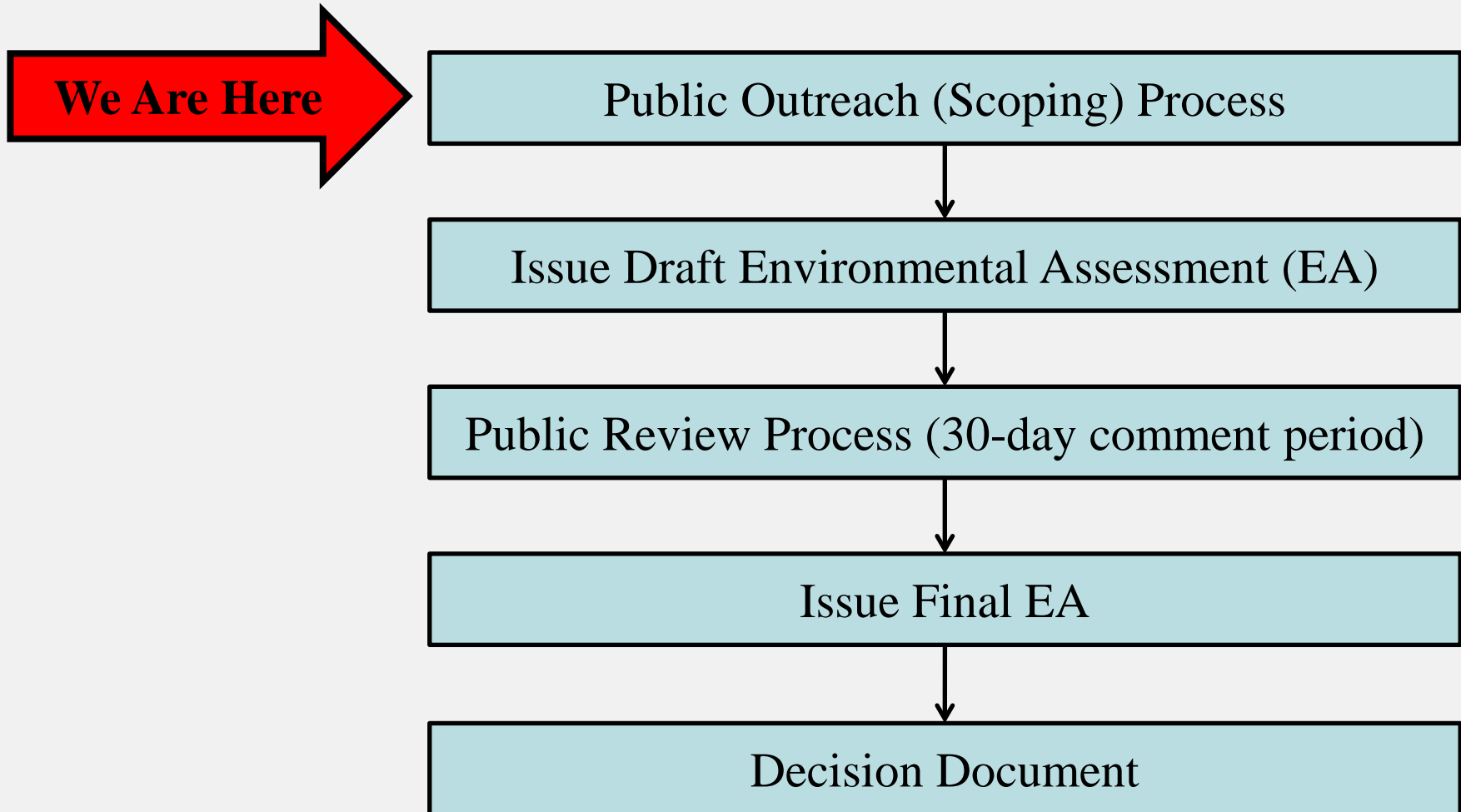


National Environmental Policy Act

- NEPA is considered an “umbrella law” under which the lead Federal agency charged with NEPA compliance must consider many other laws, regulations, and Executive Orders.
- The three key statutes integrated with NEPA include:
 - i. **Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)**, for Federal projects with a potential to affect listed threatened and endangered species and their potential habitat;
 - ii. **Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA)**, for Federal actions with the potential to discharge dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands; and
 - iii. **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)**, for Federal projects with a potential to affect cultural and historic properties.



The NEPA Process





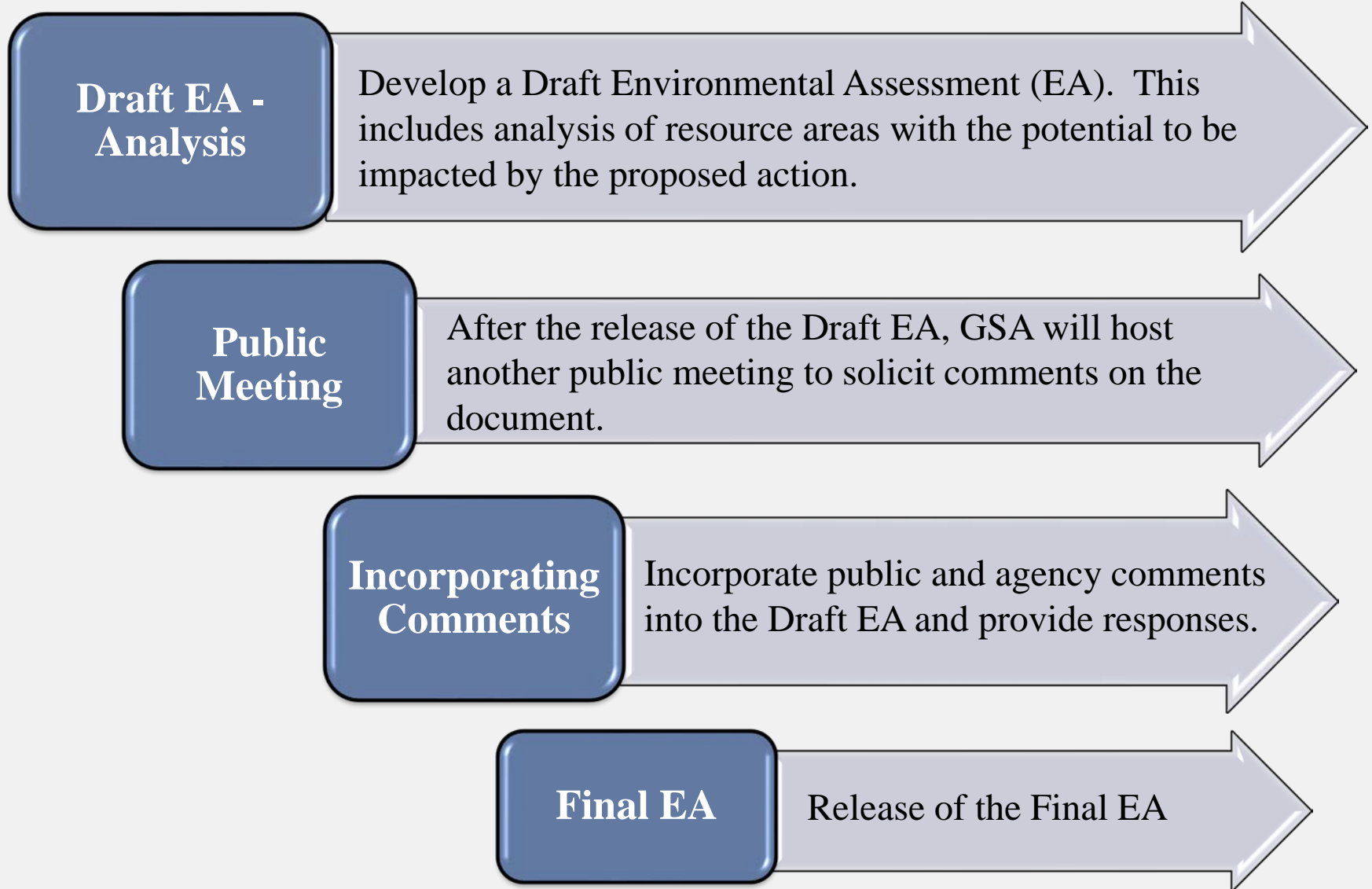
Public Outreach (Scoping) Phase

- The purpose of the outreach process is to solicit input from the public, agencies, and other interested parties on the proposed development of a new replacement LPOE in Highgate Springs.
- Solicited comments help guide the selection of action alternatives and the selection of resource areas to be analyzed in the EA.





Next Steps in the NEPA Process





Conclusion of the NEPA Process

- After the publication of Final EA, GSA will make a decision based on the analysis in the EA:
 - If there are any anticipated significant impacts, GSA will begin the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement
 - If there are no anticipated significant impacts, GSA will issue a Decision Document





Major Contents of an EA

1. Purpose & Need

What are you trying to achieve?

2. Alternatives

How can you achieve it?

3. Affected Environment

What resources will be affected?

4. Environmental Consequences

What effects would each alternative have?
What could be done about them?



Project Purpose and Need

The background of the slide is a photograph of a paved road with a yellow center line, curving through a dense forest of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. In the distance, blue mountains are visible under a clear sky.

Purpose: To enhance the performance, safety, security, and efficiency of operations of GSA and its tenant agencies at the Highgate Springs LPOE along the U.S.-Canada border

Need: The current Highgate Springs LPOE does not presently have the capacity to accommodate projected increases in traffic, or the infrastructure needed to ensure efficient operations

The affected environment section includes an analysis of the resources that may be impacted by the proposed action. This may include resources such as:

- Land Use

- Soils and Geology

- Biological Resources

- Water Resources

- Utilities

- Traffic and Transportation

- Visual Resources

- Air Quality & Climate Change

- Cultural Resources

- Socioeconomics

- Environmental Justice

- Solid and Hazardous Waste

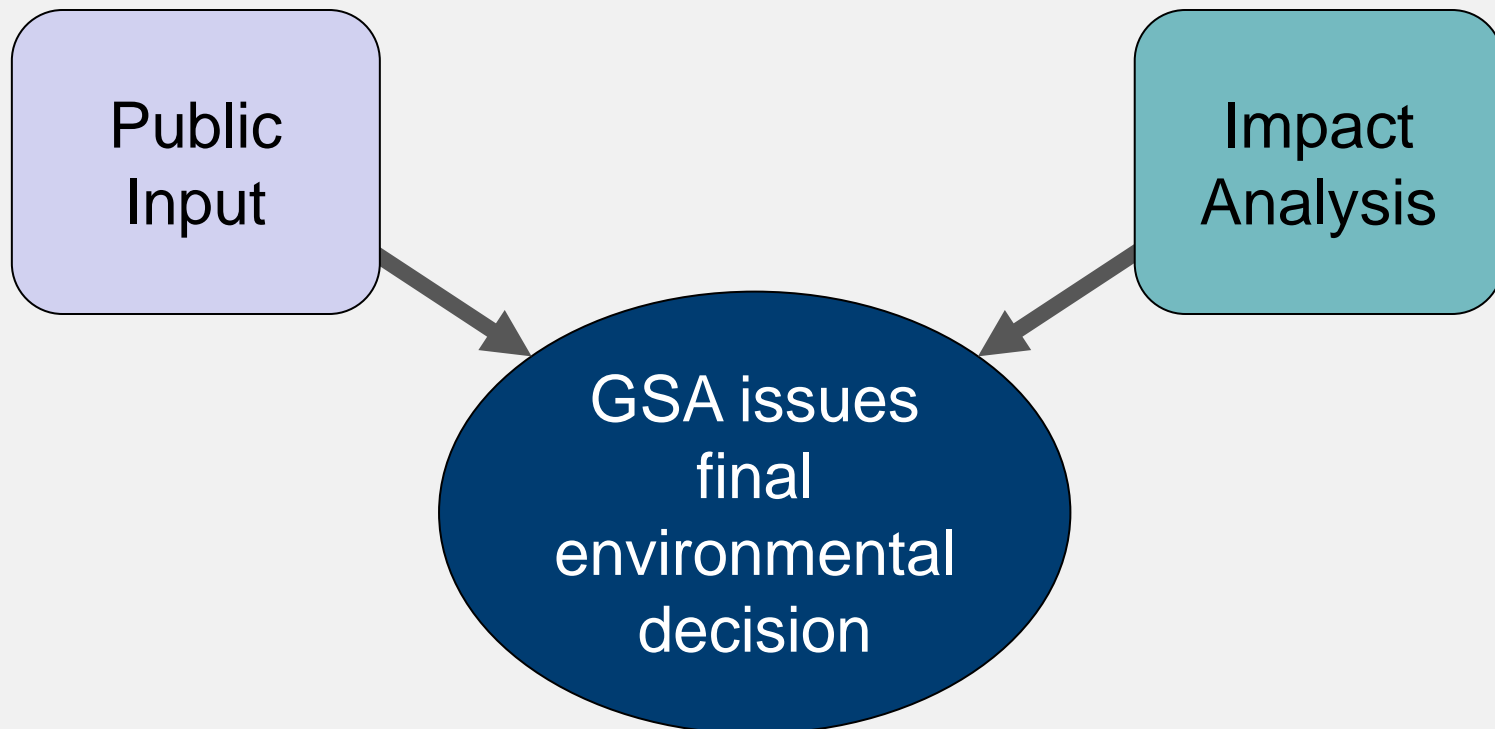
- Human Health and Safety

- Noise



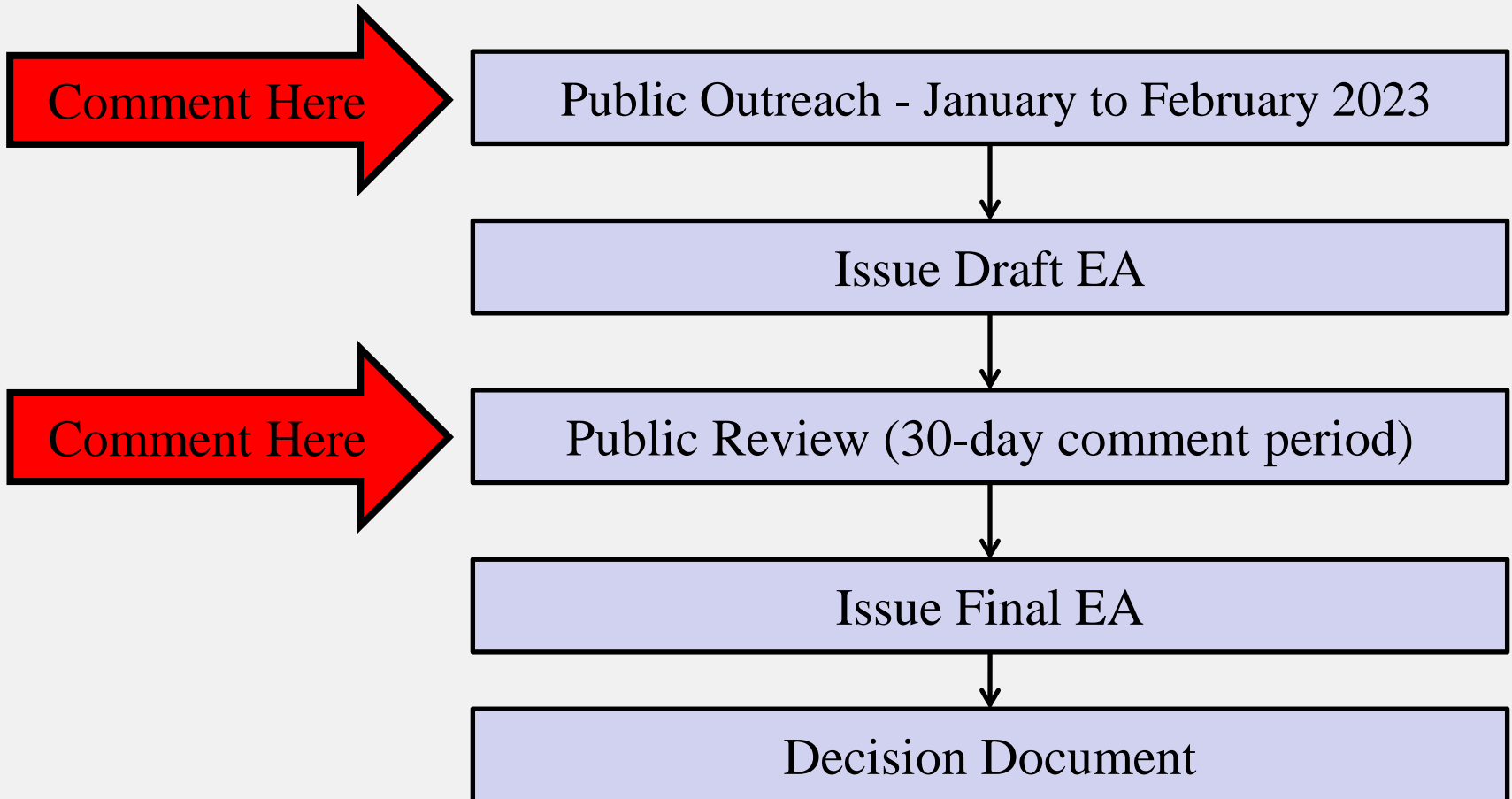
Environmental Consequences

After completing the impacts analysis and considering public input, it is GSA's responsibility to conclude the NEPA process by issuing the final environmental decision.





Opportunities for Public Input





Submitting Public Comments

GSA welcomes public input and has provided multiple ways to submit comments.

1. Fill out a comment form and leave it here with us tonight.
2. Email your comment to: highgatesprings.lpoe@gsa.gov with subject line **“Highgate Springs LPOE EA”**.
3. Mail your comment to:

**General Services Administration
Attention: John Maurer, Project Manager
Thomas P. O’Neill, Jr., Federal Building
10 Causeway Street, 11th Floor
Boston, MA 02222-1077**





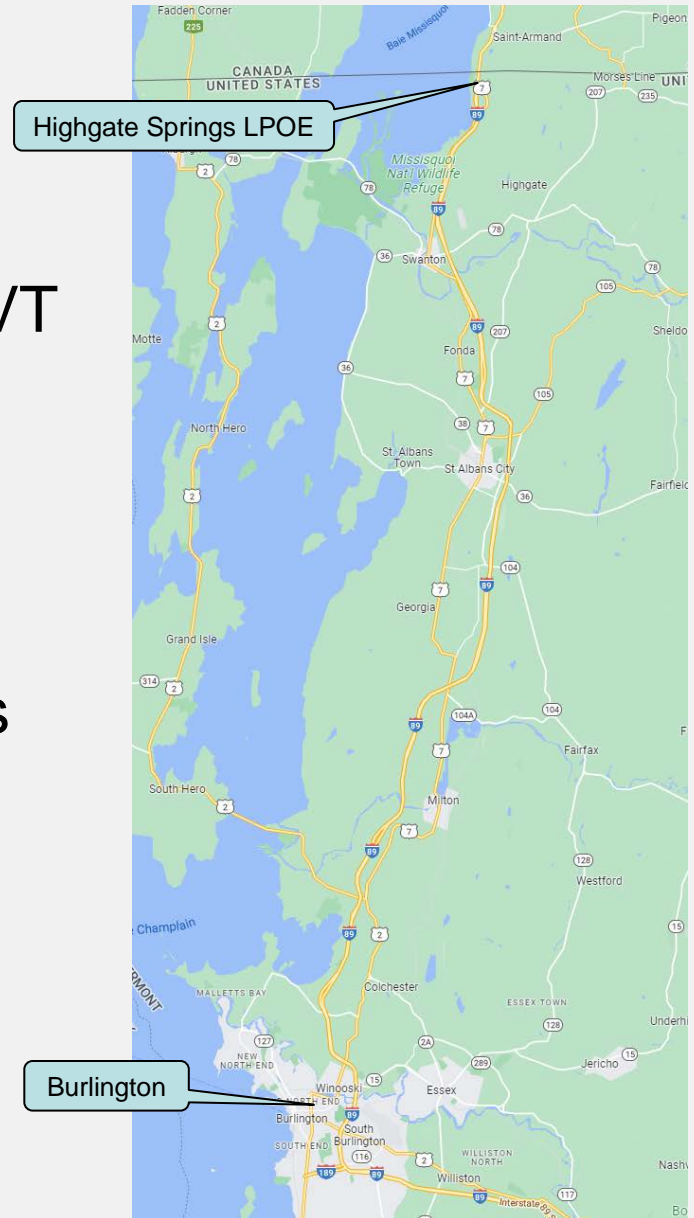
Project Background: Existing LPOE





Project Background: Existing LPOE

- Located on Interstate 89 (I-89)
- ~ 40 miles north of Burlington, VT
- Commercial and Non-commercial traffic
- 24/7 Operation
- One of the three busiest LPOEs in New England





Project Background: Existing LPOE

- Built in 1997
- Expanded in 2004 and 2005
- Approx. 16 acres of land





Project Background: Existing LPOE

- 7 buildings totaling 44,000 GSF
- 5 POV lanes
- 1 Bus lane
- 1 Commercial lane





Project Background: Existing LPOE

The federal agencies at this LPOE include:



U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP)



U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)



**U.S. Department of Agriculture –
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**



U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)



Projected Conditions at the LPOE



Projected Conditions at the LPOE

- The Canadian government is building the final segment of Autoroute-35 (A-35) highway between Montreal and St. Armand/Philipsburg, Quebec.
- When completed, traffic at the Highgate Springs LPOE is projected to increase by ~30 percent.
 - ➔ Travel delays of over 100 mins. per vehicle during peak days/times.
 - ➔ Direct economic impact to tourism, trade, and other activities throughout and beyond the Montreal to Boston I-89 Corridor.



(Source: Quebec Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility)



Current Challenges at the LPOE

Some of the buildings and infrastructure at the LPOE have deteriorated over time, which has:

Adversely impacted the operations of GSA's tenant facilities at the port

Lowered the site's energy performance

Increased GSA's costs for operating and maintaining the facility



Current Challenges at the LPOE

Existing traffic queuing and vehicle processing is already poorly performing.

→ Impacts quality of service for the LPOE.

Number and configuration of Inspection Lanes:

→ Limits throughput capacity

→ Poor alignment, queuing lengths, and visibility.

Inadequate space for processing commercial vehicles and buses.



Project Alternatives

The EA will analyze action and no action alternatives to meet the purpose and need of the project.

Action Alternatives – May include the construction of a newer, larger LPOE to replace the existing facility at Highgate Springs

No Action Alternative – The Highgate Springs LPOE would continue to operate under current conditions



Action Alternatives

Key components of the action alternatives include:

- Acquisition of additional land;
- Demolition of the existing buildings and construction of newer, larger buildings to expand operations;
- Construction of facilities for CBP, FDA, APHIS, and GSA, and sufficient area for parking and facilities support (e.g., snow storage and removal); and
- Construction of up to seven new privately owned vehicle (POV) primary inspection lanes and up to four new commercial primary inspection lanes (two for commercial vehicles and two for buses).



Land Considered for Acquisition



Action Alternatives would require additional land on the southbound side of I-89, south and west of the current LPOE



Action Alternatives

Features that vary across the action alternatives include roadway alignment, available queue space, number and location of Primary Inspection and Commercial Vehicle Booths, and the opportunity for future facility expansion.

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
POV Lanes	7	6
Bus Lanes	2	2
Commercial Lanes	2	2
Allows for Future Expansion?	Yes	No

Thank You!!





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Submitting Public Comments

Project information, including a video recording of this public meeting, will be available at:

<https://www.gsa.gov/highgatespringslpoe>

