



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT TIMELINES (2010-2024)

This report provides updated data on the time taken by Federal agencies to complete environmental impact statements (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For final EISs issued in 2024, the median time from notice of intent (NOI) to final EIS was 2.2 years, representing a 28 percent time savings since 2020 and a 20 percent time savings since 2010. CEQ expects additional reductions in median time to complete EISs in the future as more EISs completed in a given year will have benefitted from recent statutory, regulatory, and executive reforms to the NEPA process and significant cross-government investments to expedite permitting processes.

BACKGROUND

This report updates the data and analysis of EIS timelines under NEPA, which the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) last published in June 2020.¹ This updated report includes analysis of 1,903 EISs for which a final EIS was published between January 1, 2010, and December 31, 2024. As discussed further below, CEQ made a change to its methodology for consistency with the deadlines provision in section 107 of NEPA, as amended by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, and is reporting EIS timeline data from NOI to final EIS.

While this report discusses timelines for EISs, which is the most complex form of environmental review, available data indicates that the vast majority of environmental analyses under NEPA (approximately 99%) are completed through either environmental assessments or categorical exclusions.² While comprehensive government-wide data on the time to complete environmental assessments and categorical exclusions does not exist, these analyses take substantially less time than the EISs analyzed in this report.³ For example, data from the U.S. Department of Transportation show that for environmental assessments initiated and completed from 2021 to 2023, the average completion time was 9.6 months.⁴

Description of EIS Dataset and Methodology

In preparing this report, CEQ updated its dataset to add EISs issued from January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2024, as well as any NOIs and records of decision (RODs) issued from January 1, 2019, to November 30, 2024. CEQ retrieved data from the following publicly available sources: (1) the Environmental Protection Agency's EIS Database;⁵ (2) the *Federal Register*;⁶ and (3) agency and project websites.

In the findings section below, CEQ summarizes its analysis of median EIS completion times for this dataset, measured as the time from the NOI issuance to final EIS publication. Consistent with the 2020 report methodology, CEQ excluded from its analysis supplemental EISs,⁷ EIS adoptions,⁸ EISs where an agency published a notice of withdrawal or cancellation of the EIS,⁹ and non-Federal EISs.¹⁰ To access the underlying data for this report, [click here](#).

Changes to Methodology from 2020 CEQ Report

This report follows the methodology used in the 2020 report except that EIS timelines are measured from NOI to final EIS instead of NOI to ROD. (See endnote 13 for NOI to ROD values for comparison with the prior report.) The time from NOI to issuance of a final EIS is a better measure of the time needed to perform the environmental analysis itself, since factors not related to the NEPA review itself may affect the time needed to issue a ROD, or even lead an agency to not issue a ROD despite completing the environmental analysis. Notably, while the CEQ regulations have always required agencies to wait a minimum of 30 days to issue a ROD following the notice of availability of a final EIS, the regulations have never imposed a maximum period.¹¹ The median period between a final EIS and ROD in the dataset is 2.8 months. The change in methodology allowed CEQ to include final EISs without RODs in the updated results for 2019 to 2024.¹² This change is also consistent with the deadlines provision in section 207 of NEPA, as amended by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, as implemented in the CEQ regulations; the statute sets a two-year deadline for completing an EIS (rather than the decision-making process as a whole), which is measured to the issuance of the final EIS.

CEQ notes that the median EIS timeline is a more appropriate measure of the typical EIS timeline than the mean (average) value since a small number of actions have disproportionately longer timelines, which skew the average (see Figure 3 below). The median value better represents a typical EIS. The 2020 report included both mean and median durations of EIS completion times but did not discuss the fact that the median is the more appropriate measure of a typical EIS timeline given the nature of the data distribution (i.e., a positive- or right-skewed distribution).

FINDINGS

CEQ found that across all Federal agencies, the median time to complete an EIS, measured from NOI to final EIS, is 2.8 years (34 months) for final EISs issued from January 2019, to December 2024.¹³ This figure represents an improvement of almost 5 months (13 percent) relative to the period from 2010 to 2018, when the median time from NOI to final EIS was 3.2 years (38 months).¹⁴

Looking at the most recent data, for final EISs issued in 2024, the median time from NOI to final EIS was 2.2 years (26 months). This figure represents an improvement of nearly a year and a half from 2019—the first year of newly reported data—when the median time was 3.6 years (43 months). Furthermore, approximately 41 percent of final EISs issued in 2024 were completed in 2 years or less, an improvement from 2019, when only 24 percent were completed in 2 years or less.

Table 1 and **Figure 1** show the median completion time and the percentage of EISs completed in two years or less for those final EISs completed from 2019 to 2024. Over this time range, there has been a marked decrease in the median completion time and a corresponding increase in the percentage of EISs completed in two years or less.

Table 1. Median Completion Time and Percent of EISs Completed in Two Years or Less by Year from 2019 to 2024.

Year	Median NOI to final EIS	Percent of EISs Completed in Two Years or Less
2019	3.6	24%
2020	3.0	30%
2021	2.5	39%
2022	2.8	41%
2023	2.5	33%
2024	2.2	41%

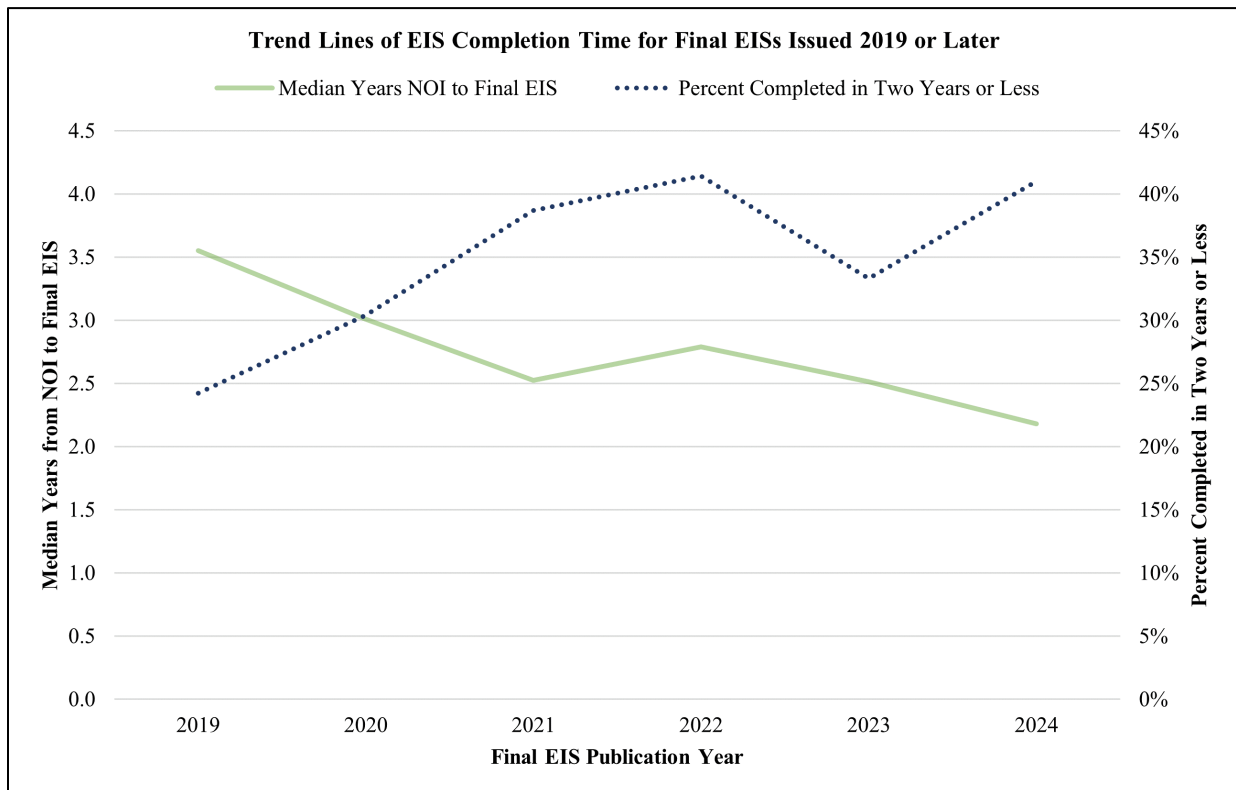


Figure 1. EIS Completion Time for Final EISs Issued from 2019 to 2024. This figure shows the median years from NOI to final EIS and the percent of final EISs completed in two years or less for those final EISs published from 2019 to 2024. The green line shows the median NOI to final EIS as measured on the left axis. The dotted blue line shows the percent of EISs completed from NOI to final EIS in two years or less as measured on the right axis.

Table 2 compares EIS completion times for final EISs completed from 2021 to 2024 with earlier four-year intervals: 2013 to 2016 and 2017 to 2020. The median NOI to final EIS completion time decreased in the 2021 to 2024 interval as compared to the two prior four-year intervals. The percent of EISs completed in two years or less also increased in 2021 to 2024 when compared to the prior four-year intervals.

Table 2. Median Completion Time and Percent Completed in Two Years or Less in Four-Year Intervals.

Time Range	Median NOI to final EIS	Percent of EISs Completed in Two Years or Less
2013 – 2016	3.5 years	21%
2017 – 2020	3.1 years	27%
2021 – 2024	2.4 years	39%

Figure 2 shows the median EIS completion time in years from NOI to final EIS for final EISs issued in each year in the full EIS dataset from January 2010 to December 2024.

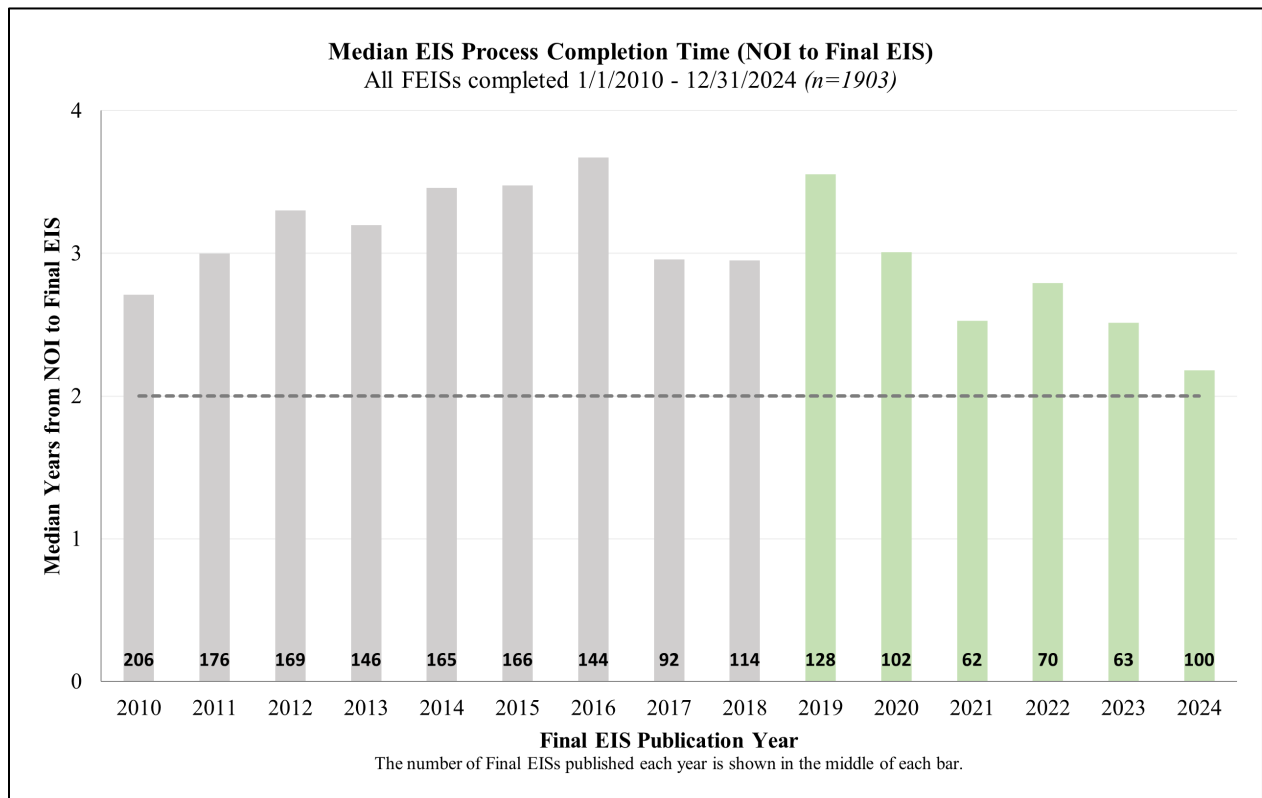


Figure 2. Median EIS Process Completion Time (NOI to final EIS) by Year. This figure shows median EIS completion time in years from NOI to final EIS for all final EISs completed from January 1, 2010, to December 31, 2024, by final EIS publication year. The number of final EISs published each year is shown at the bottom of each bar, n=1,903. The green bars show the years of new data added since the 2020 report. The grey dotted line highlights the two-year completion mark.

Figure 3 shows the right skew of the distribution of EIS completion times for the full EIS dataset from January 2010 to December 2024. For example, agencies completed 118 EISs in 1 year or less and 424 EISs in between 1 to 2 years, while 15 EISs were completed in between 13 to 14 years. A small proportion of projects take many years longer to complete than the typical EIS, which increases the average (mean) completion time compared to the median.

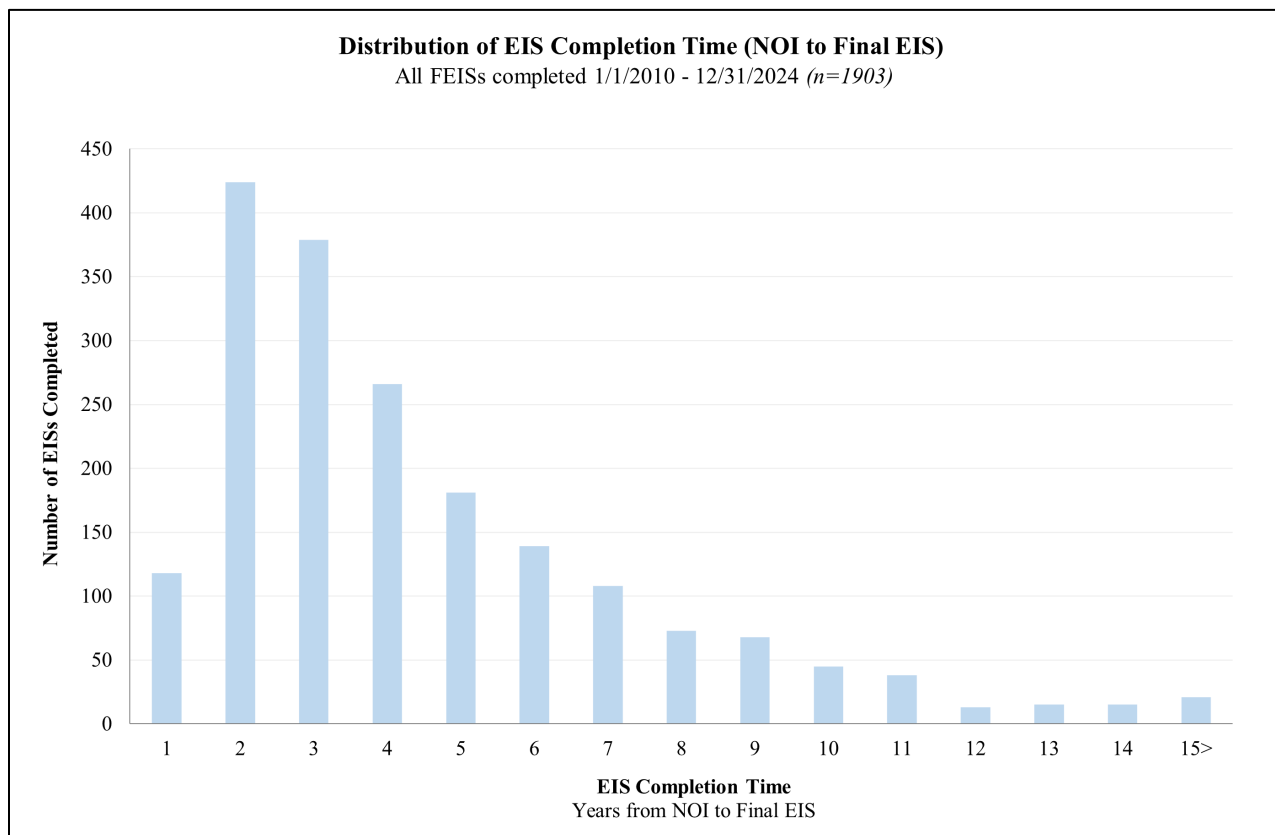


Figure 3. Distribution of EIS Completion Time (NOI to final EIS). This figure shows the distribution of all final EISs completed from January 1, 2010, to December 31, 2024, with the number of EISs grouped by EIS completion time (NOI to final EIS) rounded up to the nearest whole year, n=1,903.

CONSIDERATIONS

The data presented in this report represent a complex dataset. The following considerations summarize some of that complexity.

Variation in Scope and Complexity: Even within an agency, EISs may vary widely in technical complexity and other factors that influence the length of the document and the time it may take to complete an EIS. These other factors may include changes in the proposed action, funding, and community concerns. Similarly, EIS processes for large infrastructure projects with multiple cooperating agencies and multiple permitting requirements vary considerably from those associated with rulemakings or land management planning processes that are largely within the control of the lead agency. This document presents Federal Government-wide data but does not subdivide EISs by sector or type. The distribution of EIS completion times in Figure 3 indicates that there may be factors that cause some reviews to take much longer than is typical. This report does not attempt to identify those factors or to measure their effect on review times.

Pauses, Delays, or Suspensions in EIS Activity: The time required to complete an EIS as analyzed in this report does not necessarily represent continuous activity on the preparation of the EIS. Pauses, delays, or suspensions that occur during the preparation of the EIS may be attributable to actions (or inactions) by the agency, the applicant, Congress, or cooperating agencies, and may respond to the needs of States, Tribes, and local communities, to public controversy, and to other factors. Agencies have not consistently announced or publicly tracked when work on an EIS has been paused, delayed, or suspended. Consequently, CEQ did not adjust timeframes to account for pauses, delays, or suspensions. This report does not identify the causes of or when pauses, delays, or suspensions of any EISs included in the data occurs and does not adjust the timelines for such circumstances. Going forward, agencies will have to meet the two-year deadline established by NEPA and implemented by the CEQ regulations or extend the deadline for a specified amount of time. This may provide additional data to help better understand when and why delays in EIS preparation occur.

Cooperating and Joint Lead Agencies: The data analyzed in this report associates each EIS and its timeline with a single lead agency. EISs often involve multiple agencies as joint lead, cooperating, or participating agencies, which facilitates use of a single EIS to satisfy multiple agencies' NEPA responsibilities. The practice of preparing EISs with joint lead and cooperating agencies provides efficiency and means that more Federal actions are undergoing NEPA review than the number of EISs in the dataset indicate.

AREAS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

CEQ recognizes that the methodology used in this and previous CEQ reports is retrospective in nature, meaning the EIS completion times reported for a given year are based on those EISs *completed* that year. This retrospective analysis will not show the full effects of recent statutory and regulatory reforms to the NEPA process for several more years, since many of the final EISs issued in recent years were begun prior to these reforms. In order to understand fully how those reforms have affected EIS timelines, additional time or more sophisticated statistical analyses will be required. Such analysis could look at the completion time for EISs *initiated* in a given year while accounting for those EISs still underway. Using a statistical method such as “survival analysis” could help to more effectively evaluate the extent to which EIS timelines have improved following recent statutory and regulatory changes. Given that the statutory two-year deadline requirement has been in effect for less than two years, data is not yet available to show the extent to which this specific reform has resulted in reduced EIS timelines.

CEQ's report on NEPA technology¹⁵ identifies opportunities to improve the tracking of NEPA reviews including EISs, environmental assessments, and categorical exclusions. Improved understanding of the time required to comply with NEPA and public access to that data will provide policy makers, the public, and applicants with greater insight into the NEPA process.

¹ The 2020 CEQ EIS Timeline Report is available at https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/nepa-practice/CEQ_EIS_Timeline_Report_2020-6-12.pdf.

² See *The Eleventh and Final Report on the National Environmental Policy Act Status and Progress for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Activities and Projects – Attachment 1*, Council on Environmental Quality, November 2, 2011, https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/ceq-reports/nov2011/Attachment1_Overview_Spreadsheet_Nov_2011_final.pdf; see also *Surface Transportation NEPA Process Improvements Report to Congress*, U.S. Department of Transportation Infrastructure Permitting Improvement Center, July 2024, at 19, <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-07/2024%20Report%20to%20Congress%20on%20Process%20Improvements%20for%20NEPA%20Projects.pdf> (“Although EIS projects are often the highest visibility projects and have the greatest impacts on communities (positive and negative), categorical exclusions (CE) account for more than 99% of DOT NEPA actions.”).

³ Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Takes Action to Deliver More Projects More Quickly, Accelerates Federal Permitting, The White House, August 29, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/08/29/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-takes-action-to-deliver-more-projects-more-quickly-accelerates-federal-permitting/>.

⁴ Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Delivers on Permitting Progress to Build America’s Infrastructure and Clean Energy Future Faster, Safer, and Cleaner, The White House, April 30, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/04/30/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-delivers-on-permitting-progress-to-build-americas-infrastructure-and-clean-energy-future-faster-safer-and-cleaner/>.

⁵ Federal agencies must file EISs with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA’s database is available at <https://cdxapps.epa.gov/cdx-enepa-II/public/action/eis/search> and includes records of all EISs received by EPA since 1987. The database includes the dates of EPA’s publication of a notice of availability of a draft or final EIS. Under certain authorities, States, Tribes, and units of local government have been granted the authority to conduct NEPA reviews on behalf of Federal agencies. EISs conducted by non-Federal agencies are included in this report if the Federal agency on whose behalf the EIS was conducted filed the EIS with EPA.

⁶ Every Federal agency must publish an NOI in the *Federal Register* to initiate preparation of an EIS. See 40 C.F.R. § 1502.4(e).

⁷ From January 2019, to December 2024, supplemental final EISs were issued for 106 actions. Supplemental EISs sometimes lacked NOIs, making timeline calculation difficult, and these supplements were prepared for a broad range of purposes across departments and agencies.

⁸ Agencies may adopt another agency’s EIS. See 40 C.F.R. 1506.3. This was done 74 times from January 2019, to December 2024.

⁹ CEQ’s 2024 NEPA regulations added a provision requiring agencies to publish notification in the *Federal Register* of withdrawal or cancellations of an EIS. See 40 C.F.R. § 1502.4(f). Known withdrawn or cancelled EISs were excluded from this analysis.

¹⁰ Some Federal laws authorize the delegation of NEPA responsibilities to non-Federal agencies such as States or Tribes. Consistent with past CEQ EIS timeline reports, EISs prepared by non-Federal agencies are not included in this report.

¹¹ See 40 C.F.R. § 1506.10(b)(2) (2024); 40 C.F.R. § 1506.10(b)(2) (1978); and 40 C.F.R. § 1506.11(b)(2) (2020).

¹² For the 1,903 EISs for which a final EIS was published between January 1, 2010, and December 31, 2024, 1,768 also had a signed ROD as of November 30, 2024.

¹³ For the four most recent calendar years (2021–2024), the median time from NOI to ROD was 2.5 years (down from 3.5 years from 2010–2018), and the mean time from NOI to ROD was 3.8 years (down from 4.5 years from 2010–2018). ROD data is through November 30, 2024. As noted in the report, the CEQ regulations generally require a minimum 30-day period following the notice of availability of a final EIS before an agency can issue the ROD, yet the median (2.8 months) and mean (5.3 months) periods between final EIS and ROD in the dataset are substantially longer, which indicates that factors other than the CEQ regulatory requirements are causing delays in agency decision making following the completion of the NEPA review in the EIS.

¹⁴ In order to compare across time periods, CEQ calculated the median NOI to final EIS value using the 2020 Report’s published dataset. The monthly figures do not sum due to rounding.

¹⁵ CEQ, *Report to Congress on the Potential for Online and Digital Technologies to Address Delays in Reviews and Improve Public Accessibility and Transparency under 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)* (2024), <https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq-reports/e-nepa-report-to-congress.html>.