

# Environmental Review 101

**Jim Erkel, Director**  
Land Use and Transportation Program  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

26 East Exchange Street, Suite 206  
St Paul, MN 55101 - [www.mncenter.org](http://www.mncenter.org)

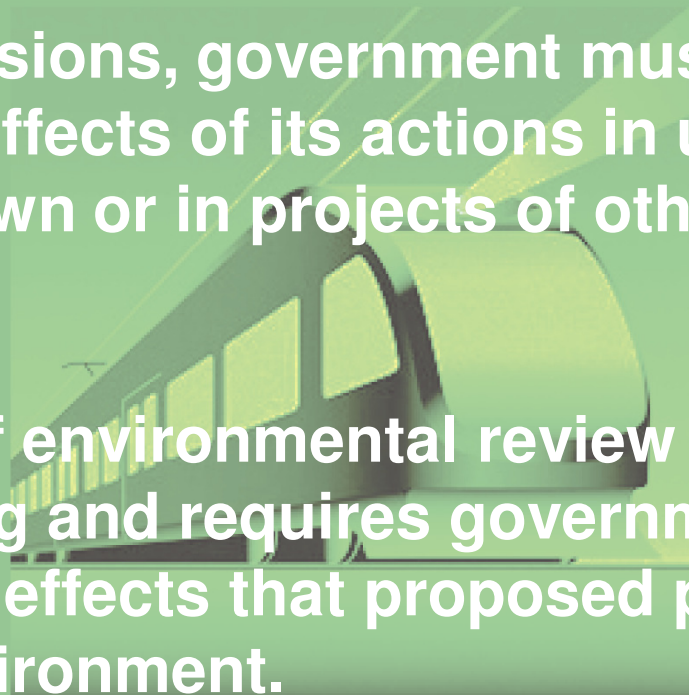
# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## What is Environmental Review?

- In making decisions, government must consider the environmental effects of its actions in undertaking projects of its own or in projects of others that it may permit or fund.
- The process of environmental review is intended to be action-forcing and requires government to take a hard look at the effects that proposed projects will have on the environment.



# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## National Level:

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

42 U.S.C. § 4321 - § 4327

## State Level:

Minnesota Environmental Policy Act of 1973

Minn. Stat. § 116D.01 - § 116D.06

Similarities, Differences / Coordination



# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## When Environmental Review is Needed

NEPA - *"major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment"*

MEPA - *"when there is potential for significant environmental effects resulting from any major government action"*

Actions Broadly Defined:

*"Projects that government, in whole or in part, conducts, permits, assists, finances, regulates or approves"*

# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

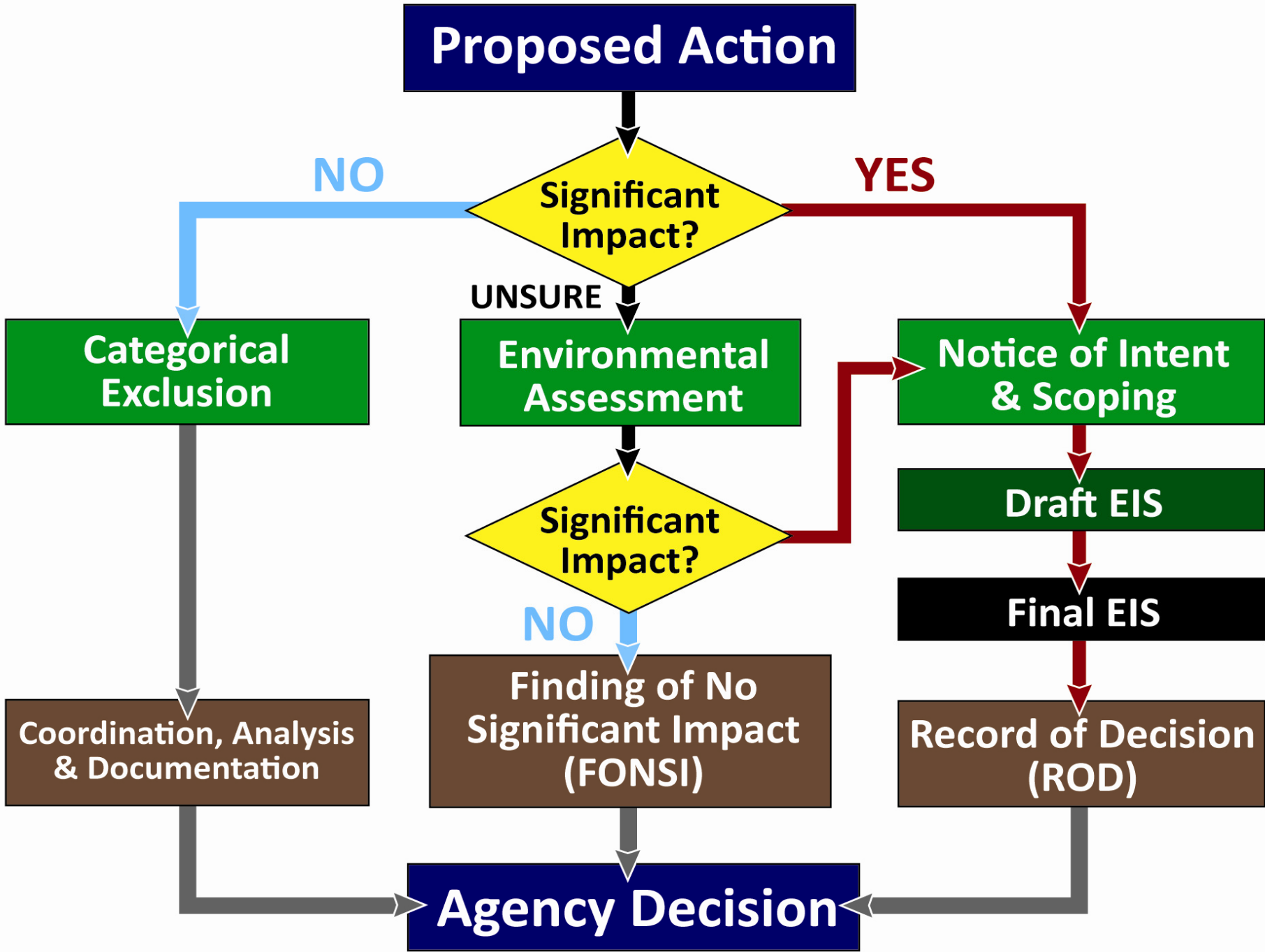
## Three Levels of Environmental Review

1 ) Categorical Exclusions

2 ) Environmental Assessments

3 ) Environmental Impact Statements





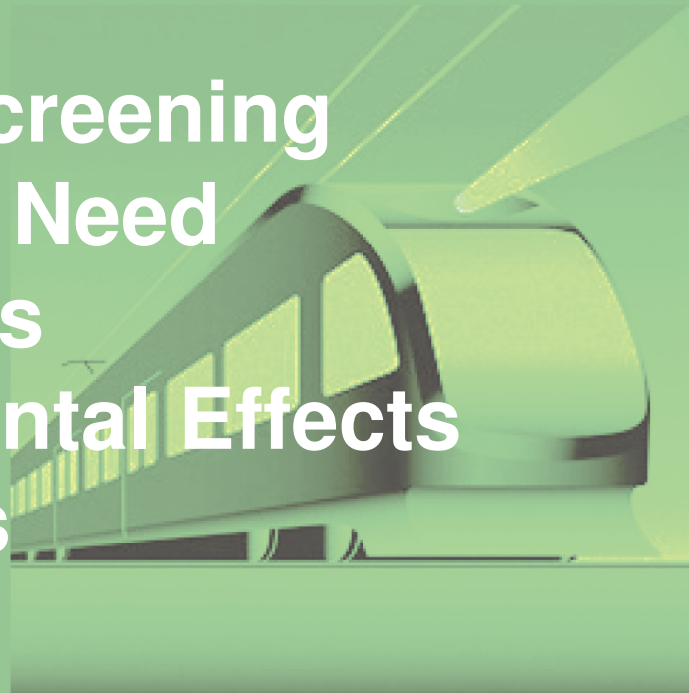
# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## Environmental Impact Statements

- Scoping/Screening
- Purpose & Need
- Alternatives
- Environmental Effects
- Mitigations
- Decisions



# Environmental Review 101



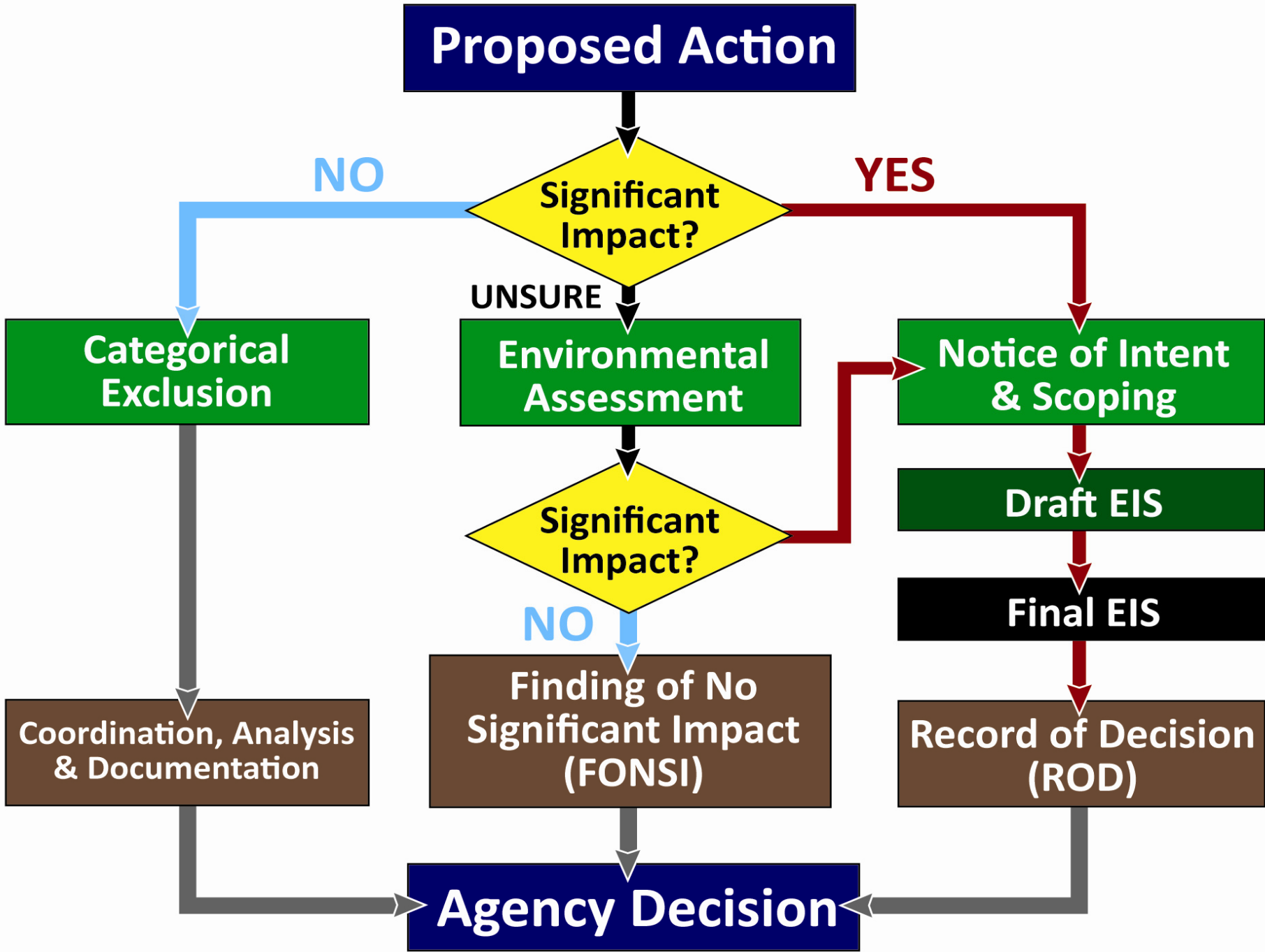
Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## What is the Environment?

*“include(s) the natural and physical environment and the relationship of the people with that environment”*

## Project's Social and Economic Effects

Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

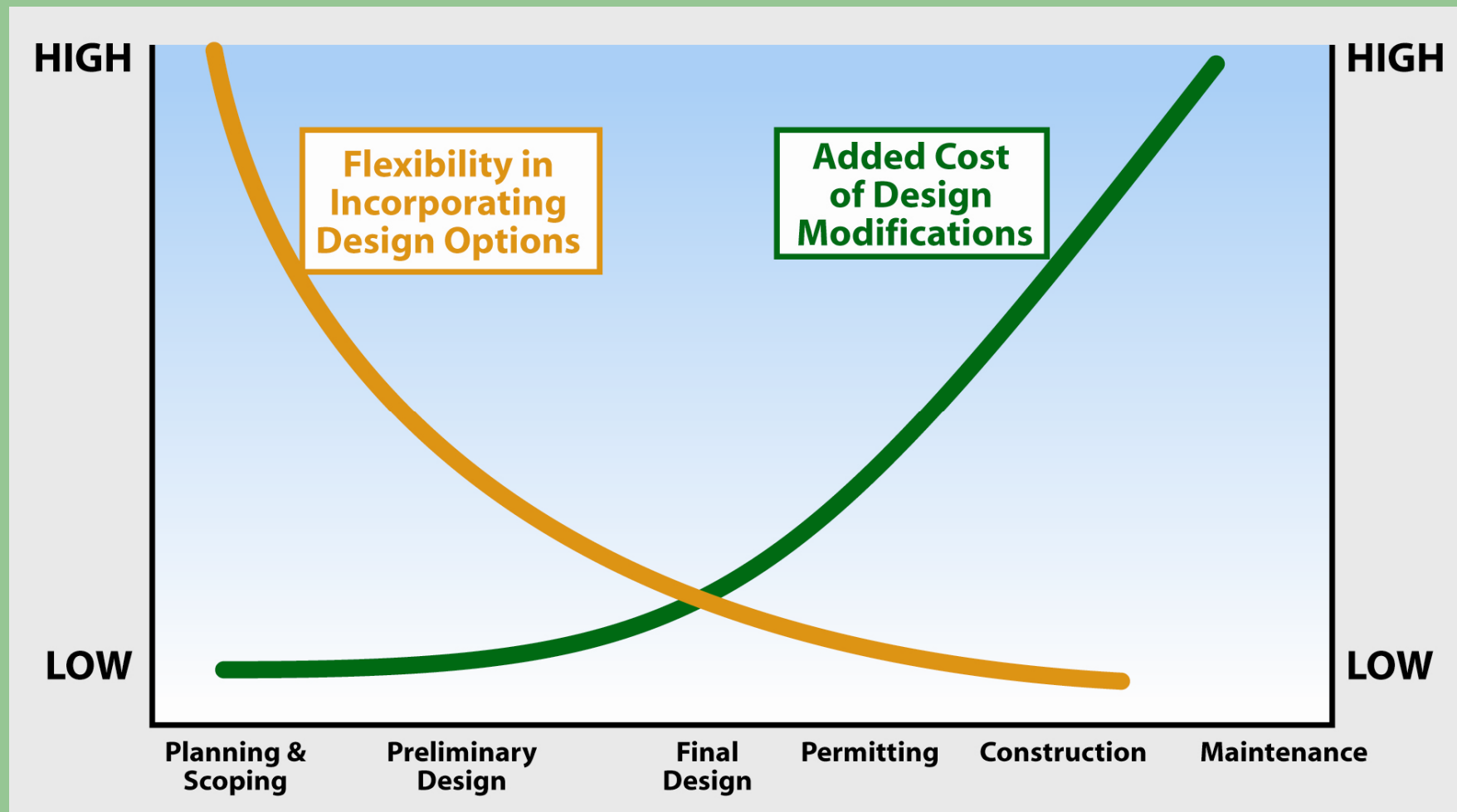


# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## Importance of Public Engagement



# Environmental Review 101



Minnesota Center for  
Environmental Advocacy

## Helpful Material

Council on Environmental Quality, *A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA: Having Your Voice Heard* (December 2007)

Council on Environmental Quality, *Environmental Justice: Guidance Under the National Environmental Policy Act* (December 10, 1997)

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, *A Citizen's Guide: An Introduction to Environmental Review* (December 2005)

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, *A Citizen's Guide: Commenting on Environmental Review Projects* (December 2005)

American Bar Association, *The Law of Environmental Justice: Theories and Procedure to Address Disproportionate Risks* (2nd Ed. 2008)