FOCUS ON PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT LINKAGES (PEL)

NTAQS
Philadelphia, PA
August 7, 2012
What is Every Day Counts (EDC)?

- A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) initiative designed to develop and deploy innovation aimed at shortening project delivery, enhancing the safety of our roadways and protecting the environment.
EDC Initiatives

1. Accelerating technology and innovative deployment
2. Shortening project delivery toolkit
3. Accelerated project delivery methods
## Project Delivery Toolkit Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Environmental Linkages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding Use of Programmatic Agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of “In-Lieu” Fee and Mitigation Banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced Technical Assistance on Delayed EIS’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying the Scope of Preliminary Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Sufficiency Enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibilities in Right-of-Way (ROW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibilities in Utility Accommodation &amp; Relocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Manager / General Contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design-Build</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New – EDC 2

- Announced on July 25, 2012
- 13 continuing/new initiatives
  - Shortening Project Delivery/MAP-21 (fall 2012)
    - Geospatial Data Collaboration
    - Programmatic Agreements
  - 21st Century Solutions (spring 2013)
    - Implementing Quality Environmental Documentation
Planning & Environment Linkages (PEL)

Overview
An approach to transportation decision-making that helps State DOTs, MPOs, and local agencies consider environmental issues early in the transportation planning process and use information and analysis conducted in planning in the NEPA process.

Elements of PEL

Weaving Together Integrated Planning and NEPA

Transportation Agencies
Resource Agencies
Public

Long Range Planning
Statewide
Metropolitan

Planning
Project Planning
Corridor
Sub-Area
Tier I EIS

Project Development/NEPA
Design
Construction Maintenance Operations
Benefits of the Overall PEL Approach

- Address complex environmental challenges early and avoid environmentally sensitive natural resources.
- Design projects that meet mobility, environmental, and community needs.
- Minimize duplication of efforts and data.

Improves project delivery times
When is a PEL Study Done

• Transportation project or need identified in long-range plan
  – Perform preliminary analysis, make decisions at finer detail than regional/system level

• Transportation project or need not identified in long-range plan
  – Clearly identify problem, potential solutions for inclusion in future long-range plan
Example: I-95 Improvement Project

“The EIS will use data and findings from two major deficiency and needs studies entitled “Southeastern Connecticut Corridor Study” dated January 1999 and “I–95 Corridor Feasibility Study, Branford to Rhode Island” dated December 2004. Copies of these studies are available from ConnDOT’s Office of Environmental Planning.”
Ideal State of the Practice

Transportation Planning
- Public Involvement
- Transportation Deficiencies & Needs
- Goals and Vision
- Solutions Evaluation and Screening
- Preferred Solutions
- Documentation

NEPA Decision-Making
- Project Scoping
- Public Involvement
- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Preferred Alternative
- Documentation
Regulatory Authority

- 23 CFR 450.212 and 450.318 - Transportation planning studies and project development
- 23 CFR 450 Appendix A
- 23 CFR 771.111 (a)(2) - Early coordination, public involvement, and project development
- 40 CFR 1501.2 - Apply NEPA early in the process
- Environment and Planning Linkage Processes Legal Guidance
EDC Focus: PEL Questionnaire

Purpose:
1. Serves as a guide for the planning project team on the questions/issues to address in the study, and
2. Provides a summary of the planning process and eases the transition from planning to NEPA analysis.

EDC Goal:
50% of states will have implemented the PEL questionnaire or equivalent by December 31, 2011.
How the Questionnaire is Used

1. Completed questionnaire is included with the submittal of the planning study.

2. FHWA reviews questionnaire to assist in determining if an effective PEL process has been applied before NEPA is authorized to begin.

3. The questionnaire should be included in the planning document as an executive summary, chapter, or appendix.
Questionnaire Sections

- Background
- Methodology used
- Agency coordination
- Public coordination
- Purpose and need
- Range of alternatives
- Planning assumptions and analytical methods
- Environmental resources
- Cumulative impacts
- Potential strategies for mitigation
Background Questions

• Questionnaire asks background questions to capture key information in one place.
  – PEL study sponsor and team members.
  – Study name and identifying project information.
  – Description of existing transportation facility.
  – Chronology of study activities.
  – Other studies and projects in vicinity and relationship to PEL study.
Methodology Questions

• A critical set of questions to explain project team approach and applicability in NEPA.
  – Study scope.
  – Is NEPA-like language used.
  – Terms and definitions.
  – How terms should be used in NEPA.
  – Key steps and coordination in decision-making process.
  – How PEL information should be presented in NEPA.
Agency Coordination Questions

- Synopsis of coordination: level of participation and how you coordinated.
- Identify transportation agencies involved in the planning study
- What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?
Public Coordination

• Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.
Purpose and Need

• Scope of study
• Provide the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives to realize that vision
• Next steps
Range of Alternatives

- Types of alternatives studied
- Describe screening criteria and screening process
- Summarize the reasons for eliminating any alternative(s)
- Identify alternatives that should be brought forward into NEPA and why
- Information on public, stakeholders, and agencies comments
- Unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders and/or agencies
Planning Assumptions and Analytical Methods

- Forecast year
- Methods
- Planning assumptions and corridor vision consistent with long-range transportation plan?
- Future year policy and data assumptions related to land use, economic development, costs, and network expansion
Environmental Resources

- For each resource or group of resources reviewed, provide the following:
  - Method and detail level of review.
  - Existing environmental conditions in the area.
  - Issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements.
  - How will the data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?

- Resources not reviewed and reason.
Additional Information

- Cumulative impacts considered.
- Mitigation strategies discussed.
- Identify other issues future project team should be aware.
“Blessing Letter”

Purpose

• Acknowledges that the PEL study was conducted in a manner consistent with PEL.
• Highlights study strengths and areas not addressed at all or in limited fashion.
• Provides information on what additional details the project team should consider in NEPA.
Contacts & Information

Every Day Counts Website:
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/everydaycounts/projects/toolkit/planning.cfm

PEL Website:
Thank You!

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