



# Environmental Screening Tool Quick Reference Guide

## How to Conduct a Sociocultural Effects Evaluation and Enter it into the Environmental Screening Tool

### Introduction

This guide should be used when conducting a Sociocultural Effects (SCE) Evaluation and entering the information into the Environmental Screening Tool (EST). This guide can be used for both the Planning and Programming Screen projects. The information provided is in accordance with the method the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 7 has established for their projects.

Additional detailed information can be located in the *Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Handbook* published by the FDOT Environmental Management Office.

### Overview

An SCE Evaluation can be conducted for any project by the FDOT Community Liaison Coordinator (CLC), County, or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) as an Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) member during the 45-day ETAT review period. It is an evaluation of how a transportation action may affect the quality of life of the citizenry and the following community issues; aesthetics, economics, land use, mobility, relocation and social. Once the evaluation is complete the information is entered into the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) in a Degree of Effect format. Public comments can be entered into the Public Comment section of the EST for the selected project as well. The following outlines how to conduct an SCE Evaluation, develop the Degree of Effects, and enter the information into the EST. Pertinent lists and templates are also included as Appendices to this guide.

### *Step 1 – Defining the Study Area*

The first step is to define the study area. Information that is useful in defining this is a map, project description, Purpose and Need Statement, and GIS analysis data from the EST. The study area is dependant on the type of transportation action and the existing facility. Typically the study area would be a 500-foot buffer area from the centerline of the roadway, bridge, etc. If you have an interstate or similar type of project where the roadway or right-of-way width is large consider expanding the study area to  $\frac{1}{4}$ - or  $\frac{1}{2}$ - mile.

### *Step 2 – Collect Data*

Once the study area has been defined, data collection, both quantitative and qualitative, can begin. The data collection will present a better picture of what impacts the transportation action may have on the community issues. Appendix A is a list of recommended data for collection along an area of analysis for each type of data. Note that the analysis of some data sources may need to expand beyond the 500-ft. or defined study area buffer to present a realistic view of the potential effects to the project.

### *Step 3 – Determine Data Sufficiency*

After the completion of the initial data collection it is important to review what information has been obtained and what information is still missing or needs to be verified. The following questions should be considered when determining data sufficiency:

- Is the community defined accurately?
- Are community resources identified?
- Is the data the best data to evaluate the issues (inclusive, reliable, current)?

Additional information should then be obtained by desktop data collection, a field visit, and/or by contacting a governmental agency, community group, etc. In preparation for the next step it is recommended to develop:

- A map with social, recreation, and cultural data along with land use maps both existing and future, if available. These maps should show the study area and resources or existing land uses within that area. These maps can be used during the field review to verify resources and locations.
- Field sheets for each issue which includes the sociocultural effects issues (outlined in Table 3-1 of the *SCE Evaluation Handbook*), considerations (questions outlined in Section 4 of the *SCE Evaluation Handbook* for that particular issue), summary of data gathered, a list of additional data needed, and space for field notes. An example field sheet is presented in Appendix B.
- A list of interview questions that can be used during the field review when talking with the community, businesses, Chambers of Commerce, local government agencies, etc. A list of example questions is in Appendix C. Please note that if public input is available it should be included with the information provided for the ETAT review under the public comments section of the EST. Any additional public input gathered as a result of the SCE Evaluation should be added to the public comments section.

#### ***Step 4 – Conduct a Field Review***

Conducting a field visit to verify information gathered and collect additional data needed is very important. The field review will also provide a visual perspective of what may affect the community issues. It is recommended to take photographs of the roadway, intersections, community facilities, etc. during the field review. Using the maps and field sheets developed either drive or walk the proposed project corridor or facility and carefully evaluate what effects both positive and negative the transportation action may have on each community issue. Once each issue has been reviewed answer the questions listed on the field sheets under considerations.

During the field review use established questions to interview individuals within the community as outlined in Step 3. It is important to have a community perspective on the existing transportation facility and planned actions.

#### ***Step 5 – Develop Degree of Effects***

Degree of Effects can be developed once sufficient data has been gathered and a field review has occurred. Another consideration is the balancing of adverse and beneficial effects. The following questions are useful in determining significance:

- What is the nature of the effect?
- What is the severity of the effect?
- What is the potential for mitigation?

Each DOE should list:

- Level of DOE (Not Applicable/No Involvement, Enhanced, None, Minimal, Moderate, Substantial, Potential Dispute/Dispute Resolution).
- Identified resources (i.e. residential areas, XYZ Hospital, XYZ Church, Comprehensive Plans, numbered bus routes, etc.).
- Comments on Effects to Resources using the data gathered and field knowledge.
- Recommendations as the FDOT CLC, County, or MPO ETAT member to resolve issues. When developing recommendations consider avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement measures.

#### ***Step 6 – Entering Degree of Effects and Additional Information into the EST***

Please note that the user must have write access as a CLC or assistant to the CLC to have rights to enter this information into the EST. Please contact the ETDM Helpdesk with any questions at (850) 414-5334.

To enter the Degree of Effects select [Wizards → Perform ETAT Review](#)

- Select the project to review and press [Next](#).
- The upcoming screens will display the Project Description and Purpose and Need Statement. Once prompted select Understood, select an Identity, input password, and press [Next](#).

- Select an issue (Aesthetics, Economics, Land Use, Mobility, Relocation or Social)
- Select the Degree of Effect for that issue.
- Input the Degree of Effect information, comments and recommendations and select a coordinating document, if applicable. Then select an Identity, input password, and press [Next](#).
- Repeat these steps for each of the remaining five issues.

To input public comments from field interviews select [Tools → Document Public Involvement Activities](#). Enter the comments, select an Identity and input password.

To upload photographs from the field review select [Tools → Maintain Project Diary → Attach Documents](#).

- Select the type of document (photo).
- Attach the photograph using the Browse button.
- Input a description of the photograph in the File Description field.
- Press Submit and repeat if there are additional photographs.

**Appendix A**  
**SCE Evaluation - Recommended Data for Collection**

Type of Data	Area of Analysis
EST GIS data	500-ft.
Demographic characteristics (Census data)	¼-mile
Community facilities/focal points/landmarks	½-mile
Existing and Future Land Use Maps	Entire County
Major employment centers	½-mile or more
History of area and how was it developed (history of communities)	¼-mile
Community names and boundaries	¼-mile
EMS/hospitals/fire stations/police stations	500-ft.
Any pertinent information from the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR)	500-ft.
Neighborhood associations, if applicable	500-ft.
Schools	½-mile
Parks	¼-mile
Churches	500-ft.
Cemeteries	500-ft.
Revitalization Plans	½-mile
Sidewalks and bikeways	Entire County

**US 19 FROM PINELLAS COUNTY LINE TO HERNANDO COUNTY LINE**

(ETDM #9047)

Pasco County

**Appendix B**  
**Field Sheets**  
**Social**

Date of Field Review: \_\_\_\_\_

**Issues:**

- Demographics
- Community Cohesion
- Safety / Emergency Response
- Community Goals
- Quality of Life

**Considerations:**

- 1.1 What are the demographics of the potentially affected population?
- 1.2 What displacements of population, if any, would be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.3 Would any increases or decreases in population be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.4 Would any displacement of minority populations be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.5 Are there any disproportionate effects on special populations?
- 1.6 Have minority populations previously been affected by other public projects in the area?
- 1.7 Would the project result in any barriers dividing an established neighborhood(s) or would it increase neighborhood interaction?
- 1.8 What changes, if any, in traffic patterns through an established neighborhood(s) would be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.9 Would any changes to social relationships and patterns be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.10 Would the project result in any loss, reduction or enhancement of connectivity to a community or neighborhood activity center(s)?
- 1.11 Would the project affect community cohesion?
- 1.12 Would the project result in the creation of isolated areas?
- 1.13 Would any increase or decrease in emergency response time (fire, police, and EMS) be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.14 Does the project affect safe access to community facilities?

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- 1.15 Would any changes in social value be expected as a result of the project?
- 1.16 Would the project be perceived as having a positive or negative effect on quality of life?
- 1.17 Have community leaders and residents had opportunities to provide input to the project decision-making process in the present and/or past?
- 1.18 Have previous projects in this area been compatible with or conflicted with the plans, goals and objectives of the community?
- 1.19 Is the proposed project consistent with the community vision?
- 1.20 Are transportation investments equitably serving all populations?

**Summary of Data Gathered:**

- There are numerous public facilities along the corridor including the West Pasco Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, American Legion Post No. 173, two cemeteries, three Post Offices, three schools, three hospitals, three fire stations, and sixteen churches. See map of Social.
- The population from 2000 to 2025 is expected to grow from 88,692 to 98,727 (an increase of 10,035).
- See Census Data Summary.

**Additional Data Needed:**

- Visit Chamber of Commerces (West Pasco Chamber of Commerce, Greater New Port Richey Main Street).
- Verify community features.
- Verify that Title VI issues are not present.
- Look for areas with low income.
- Note where traffic is gathering during rush hour.
- Notate new neighborhoods or DRIs.

**Other:**

**Appendix C**  
**Example Questions for Interviewing the Public, Government and Chambers of Commerce**

Project Name \_\_\_\_\_

ETDM # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Person/Business/Interested Party/Agency Interviewed \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are people commuting locally or long distance? (Commuting from a location within the county to a destination within the county or just driving through the county to reach another county.)
2. Are local facilities being utilized (parks, recreation, social clubs, etc.) by community members or are the community members traveling to other facilities around and outside of the county?
3. Thoughts on the area in general?
4. Thoughts on traffic in the area in general?
5. What are the traffic conditions during specific times of the year (winter vacation, spring break, major holidays, etc.). Is the traffic seasonal?
6. Sidewalk and trail facilities? Are they present and if so, are they being utilized?
7. During storm events is the facility utilized as a north-south “local” evacuation route?
8. Does the facility experience any flooding or ponding during storms?
9. What are the key areas of the facility that need improvements? Signals, pavement deterioration, system deficiencies, etc.
10. Is the signage adequate along the facility, particularly for out-of-towners or snowbirds for wayfinding?
11. What about local transit? Do the buses stop traffic or is there adequate bus pull outs?
12. Is transit a concern for this corridor?
13. Do the school-aged children affect peak-hour movements with school crossings, buses, traffic back ups from parents dropping off children, etc.?
14. Are there many residents who do not own vehicles that cross illegally to go from home to work or home to shopping?
15. Are there adequate pedestrian facilities?
16. How would widening this corridor affect/impact your business?