

CHAPTER 5

ADVANCING TO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT (PD&E)

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CHAPTER 5

5.1 OVERVIEW

During the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) phase, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) performs preliminary engineering, conducts environmental analysis and public involvement activities, and prepares necessary studies and reports. During PD&E, FDOT continues to develop or refine alternatives; evaluates potential impacts to natural, physical, social, and cultural resources; and documents compliance with federal and state environmental laws.

FDOT has assumed Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) responsibilities for environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental law with respect to highway projects within Florida, pursuant to **23 United States Code (U.S.C.) §327** and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by FHWA and FDOT. In general, FDOT's assumption includes highway and roadway projects in Florida whose source of federal funding comes from FHWA or which require FHWA approvals. For these projects, FDOT's traditional role of project sponsor has expanded to serve as Lead Agency with responsibility and liability for making applicable environmental decisions on projects. The program also allows FDOT to deepen its strong proactive working relationships and continue its commitment to work collaboratively with its federal and state resource agency partners to develop and implement innovative solutions.

Under this program, the Office of Environmental Management (OEM) performs Lead Agency functions for FDOT. OEM has assigned each District an OEM Project Delivery Coordinator (PDC) to assist with project delivery. The District should coordinate project activities that require OEM action or may need OEM support through the designated PDC. The PDC works closely with the District project team and provides support and guidance on FDOT policy and procedures, **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** and other regulations. Some of the responsibilities of the PDC include but are not limited to: review of project information developed during Planning through the development of the Environmental Document; approval of Purpose and Need, Project Description, Preliminary Environmental Discussion, Class of Action determination, and the elimination of alternatives.

FDOT follows the requirements of **23 U.S.C. §139** for efficient environmental reviews and applies it to projects for which EISs are prepared. These requirements emphasize collaboration between federal, state, local and tribal government entities, and the public when preparing EISs. Under **23 U.S.C §139**, lead agencies are required to provide an opportunity for the public and Participating Agencies to provide input in the development of the purpose and need and the range of alternatives to be considered as early as practicable in the environmental review process. It states that the Lead Agency will also collaborate with the Cooperating and Participating Agencies during the study process on study methodologies to be used and level of detail required for the analysis of project alternatives. Consistent with **23 U.S.C. §139**, FDOT uses the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process to begin early collaboration during the Planning phase and to support the PD&E Study.

The integration of planning information and products into the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** process is encouraged and authorized under **23 U.S.C. § 168**. Therefore, the results of the ETDM Programming Screen can be used to support the PD&E Study in the following ways:

- Provide the foundation for purpose and need
- Define the general travel corridor and/or general mode(s)
- Provide early input from stakeholders about project alternatives and, for Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), the elimination of unreasonable alternatives
- Provide planning-level consideration of potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects
- Identify mitigation opportunities
- Define the affected environment (existing conditions)
- Identify anticipated permits and technical studies
- Identify Cooperating and Participating Agencies
- Refine the range of reasonable alternatives
- Advance technical studies, if appropriate
- Identify the anticipated Class of Action (COA)
- Distribute the Advance Notification (AN)
- Support the development of a coordination plan, when applicable
- Enhance the project schedule

Recommendations made during the ETDM Planning and Programming Screens are recorded in the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) and published in the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** for use in the PD&E phase. The information collected during the ETDM process supports the PD&E Study by helping to inform the identification of project context and develop a focused and appropriate PD&E consultant scope of service.

At the completion of the PD&E phase, the Environmental Document is prepared and approved, providing the environmental and engineering decisions to guide final design.

This chapter describes the transition from the ETDM Programming Screen to the PD&E phase (see **ETDM to PD&E Process Diagram** on next page). **Chapter 4** of this **Manual** describes procedures for the Programming Screen. FDOT's [PD&E Manual](#) details the process and technical requirements for compliance with federal and state laws during the PD&E phase.

Entering the PD&E phase is defined as work occurring on the project after the official start date of the PD&E Study represented by project schedule and management (PSM) codes

(Type 2 CE Start = 706, EA Start = 707, NOI-EIS Start = 708, or SEIR Start = 709). The start of the PD&E phase date is project-specific and determined by the Project Manager. It represents the date the consultant or in-house project team begins PD&E Study Activities, thus signaling the beginning of **NEPA** coordination and analysis for federally funded projects, and the beginning of coordination and analysis to support development of a State Environmental Impact Report for state-funded projects. For an EIS, the Notice of Intent (NOI) serves as the official start date.

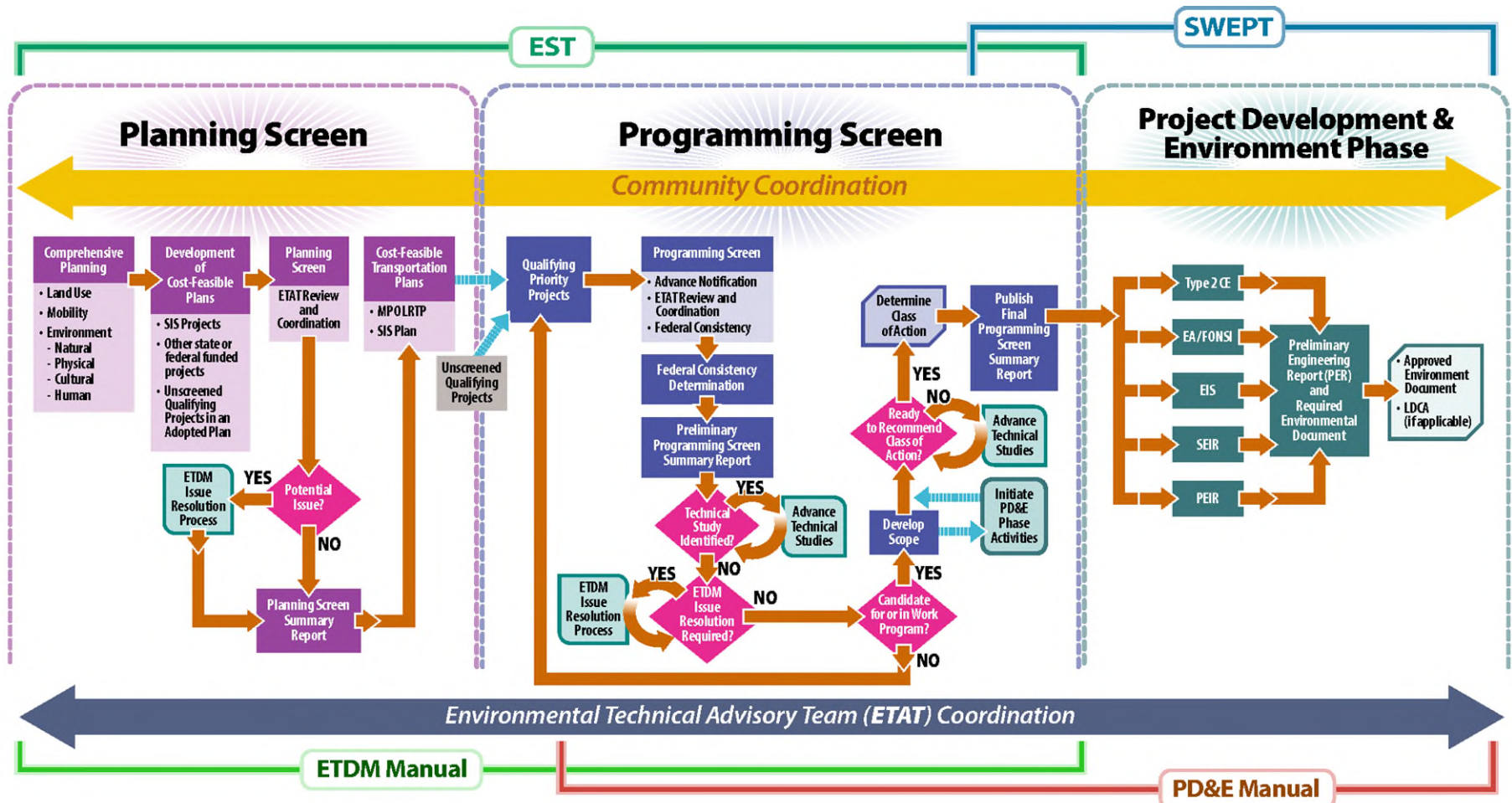


Figure 5-1: ETDM to PD&E Process Diagram

5.2 SCOPE OF WORK

The Programming Screen assists with identifying project issues and the actions needed during the PD&E phase to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential project impacts and provide the foundation for the development of a project's scope of services. The results of the Programming Screen assist the PD&E Project Manager in developing a focused scope of services for the PD&E Study (consultant projects) or project work plan (in-house projects) including any technical studies required.

During the Programming Screen, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator, the PD&E Project Manager (if assigned) and other staff members review and respond to comments received. They communicate with the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) members as needed for more information and clarification regarding comments received. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager assigns a Summary Degree of Effect (SDOE) to each ETDM topic based on the comments received and other available information. They also begin to identify, refine, or transmit the results of technical studies or other work activities to be completed or advanced to the PD&E Study in support of the anticipated COA. The ETDM Coordinator or Project Manager publishes results of the Programming Screen in a ***Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report***.

After the alternatives workshop, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager recommends the COA to the appropriate approving authority (see ***Section 4.10*** for more information about the COA determination process). For projects using Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds, there are three COAs defined in ***40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 1500-1508***, the regulations implementing ***NEPA***. FDOT meets these requirements through ***23 CFR § 771.115***, which establishes the level of documentation required in the ***NEPA*** process for transportation projects with federal involvement: Categorical Exclusions (CEs), Environmental Assessments (EAs), and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). For Type 2 CE, EA, and EIS highway projects the District proposes the COA through the EST. OEM considers the ETDM screening results and the District's recommendations and makes the final COA determination. Type 1 CEs follow the procedures in the ***PD&E Manual, Part 1 Chapter 2, Class of Action Determination for Highway Projects*** and are approved by the District Environmental Manager, or delegate. For other projects, the COA is determined by the appropriate Lead Agency, i.e., the organization primarily responsible for the Environmental Document and, for projects with federal involvement, providing approval. For FDOT projects advanced through the FDOT Work Program using only state transportation allocations, that do not require FHWA funding or OEM action pursuant to ***23 U.S.C. § 327***, a State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) is prepared as a result of the PD&E Study. For more information about the Environmental Documents and procedures to establish a COA, see ***PD&E Manual Part 1, Chapter 2, Class of Action Determination for Highway Projects***, or ***PD&E Manual Part 1, Chapter 10, State, Local, Or Privately Funded Project Delivery***.

Activities, such as coordination requirements or performing additional analysis may be necessary to support selection of an appropriate COA. These PD&E phase activities may begin prior to initiation of the PD&E Study. FDOT has the flexibility to identify funds and

advance these activities before the COA is selected and the PD&E Study is initiated. For detailed instructions, see [**FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 22, Planning, Section A.5, Efficient Transportation Decision Making \(ETDM\).**](#)

COA determinations are based upon information known when the COA recommendation is made to the Lead Agency. A COA determination is not mandatory prior to advancing a project to PD&E. There may be times when the COA is uncertain or in question after the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** has been published. The District completes additional studies or coordination prior to making the COA determination and submitting it to the Lead Agency for approval. After COA approval, the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** is published.

The **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** documents the results of agency reviews and serves as a reference for PD&E Project Manager(s) as the project advances. The amount of time between the publication of the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** and the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** can vary as the FDOT District works to identify the appropriate COA.

The results of the Programming Screen assist the PD&E Project Manager in developing a focused scope of services for the PD&E Study (consultant projects) or project work plan (in-house projects). After reviewing the Degrees of Effect (DOEs), SDOEs, and comments documented in the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**, the PD&E Project Manager works with the FDOT ETDM Coordinator, the Environmental Manager, Project Development Manager, OEM, and other appropriate engineering and environmental staff to determine the technical studies needed during the PD&E phase as well as permitting activities that could be advanced during the PD&E phase. In addition to ETAT comments and FDOT responses, the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** provides information to assist with the PD&E phase, including the following:

1. Purpose and Need acceptance by the Lead Agency
2. COA acceptance by the Lead Agency
3. Identification of Cooperating [under **40 CFR §§ 1500-1508**] and Participating Agencies under **23 U.S.C. § 139**.
4. Identification, and perhaps refinement of, alternatives, if more than one exists
5. Agency responses to the Preliminary Environmental Discussion (PED) or AN
6. Lead Agency concurrence on unreasonable alternatives eliminated from the need for detailed **NEPA** analysis
7. Identification of anticipated technical studies and permits, if applicable
8. Summary of public comments, development of sociocultural effects evaluation, and identification of community desired features

9. Identification of future coordination activities
10. Recommendations for subsequent project phases
11. Results of planning studies that may have useful information to support the PD&E Study

Project recommendations made in the Programming Screen advance to the PD&E phase for further consideration. These may result in commitments or recommendations in the Environmental Document which are reviewed during each Re-evaluation (see [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 13, Re-evaluations](#)). Refer to **Chapter 4** of this *Manual*.

5.3 ETAT COORDINATION DURING PD&E

Coordination between the PD&E Project Manager, District environmental staff, OEM, and the ETAT members continues throughout the PD&E phase. The PD&E Project Manager, OEM and District environmental staff coordinate with the ETAT members to resolve concerns, review products, discuss preliminary findings, or identify mitigation opportunities. This coordination keeps the ETAT members informed of a project's progress and the consideration of their comments into the project's development.

When the project advances to PD&E, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator or FDOT Project Manager updates the project phase in the EST and publishes the update (using the **Publish Project Information during PD&E** tool). This technique may be used throughout PD&E to notify the ETAT about project updates.

The ETAT is also notified if, upon further study, an update to the COA is approved by the Lead Agency following the publication of the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report**. Should this occur during the PD&E phase, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator describes the update and rationale at the top of the Project Description in the EST and re-publishes the project information. Correspondence from the Lead Agency approving the change is filed in the PD&E project file. (See **Chapter 4** of this *Manual* for information about re-processing the COA determination prior to advancing to PD&E.)

Certain changes in the project concept or delays in the project schedule require the District to distribute a project status fact sheet to the recipients of the Programming Screen Notification and/or AN. See [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#) for these conditions and information about the fact sheet.

The PD&E Project Manager, in coordination with the FDOT ETDM Coordinator, may upload completed technical studies or consultation requests to the EST for a 30-day ETAT review and comment period; relevant ETAT members are notified by email of a document's availability. The EST may also be used to distribute the Environmental Document to the Florida State Clearinghouse and ETAT agencies (including Cooperating and Participating Agencies) after it is approved for public availability. When published through the EST, the Environmental Document is also published on the ETDM Public Website. ETAT agencies may submit comments electronically through the EST, others may email their comments to the

designated project contact person. When an approved DEIS or FEIS is distributed through the EST, this process provides for electronic submission of comments as required by 40 CFR 1503.1(c).

While the ETAT members generally stay informed about projects through the above mechanisms, all ETAT organizations assign a specific individual to act as the liaison between FDOT and the respective organization on transportation projects, regardless of phase. The assigned ETAT member can be a resource for initiating contact and identifying methods to resolve project issues.

In instances where there are designated Cooperating and/or Participating Agencies, there are higher levels of responsibility and involvement in the environmental review process (refer to the [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#)). Coordination and scheduling requirements established in **23 U.S.C. § 139(g)** are met following procedures found in the [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 6, Environmental Assessment](#) and [Chapter 8, Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#).

Regardless of the role or designation, ETAT representatives coordinate with other staff and resources within their agency to review products and assist in resolving project issues.

5.4 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The PD&E Project Manager is responsible for the development and implementation of a PD&E Public Involvement Plan to comply with federal and state law and FDOT procedures. Knowledge gained from the initial evaluation of sociocultural effects of project alternatives during the Planning and Programming Screens can be used to help develop the Public Involvement Plan. For more information, refer to the [PD&E Manual Part 1, Chapter 11, Public Involvement](#) and [Part 2, Chapter 4, Sociocultural Effects Evaluation](#) and [FDOT Public Involvement Handbook](#).

5.5 HANDLING UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Any agreements, understandings, and/or recommendations resulting from the ETDM Issue Resolution process in the Planning or Programming Screens are documented and accompany the project as it advances into PD&E. Advancing and coordinating a recommended project technical study during or prior to the PD&E phase is one of the options to clarify and resolve a resource concern in the ETDM Issue Resolution process. When selected, the PD&E Project Manager, FDOT ETDM Coordinator, OEM, and/or FDOT environmental staff, as appropriate, coordinate with and involve the ETAT member that raised the potential issue throughout the development of the technical study. The PD&E Project Manager, FDOT Environmental Manager, OEM, and other environmental staff work with the agency to develop the scope and methodology of the study, as well as gather input and receive technical assistance. Upon completion of the technical study, the ETAT member reviews and comments on the document, addressing recommended solutions to handle the issue.

If there are unresolved issues for federal highway projects undergoing **NEPA** review, then the issue resolution process established under **23 U.S.C. § 139** will be applicable. This process establishes a series of forums for issues to be resolved. If not resolved, issues are advanced to these forums. The process also includes potential financial penalties for unexcused delays by Participating Agencies as defined by **23 U.S.C. § 139**. The outcomes of these activities should be recorded in the final Environmental Document and communicated to the applicable ETAT member.

See **Chapter 2, Section 2.7** of this **Manual** for more information about the ETDM Issue Resolution process.

5.6 REFERENCES

23 CFR § 139. Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision making.

23 U.S.C. Highways.

40 CFR §§ 1500-1508. Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), Pub. L. 112-141, 2015.

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Florida Department of Transportation. 2012. Procedure Number 700-011-035-a, Project Commitment Tracking.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2021. Public Involvement Handbook, Accessed at <https://www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/publicinvolvement/index> on 4/30/2020.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2024. Project Development and Environment Manual. Accessed at <https://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubs/pdeman/pdeman-current> on 4/30/2021.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). 2012.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

5.7 HISTORY

03/2006: Original publication

07/2013: Updated to reflect current practices

12/2015: Updated to reflect current requirements and practices

05/2017: Updated to incorporate requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding dated 12/14/2016 and executed by FHWA and FDOT concerning the State of Florida's participation in the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program pursuant to **23 U.S.C. § 327**

03/2019: Pen and ink updates to FDOT website links

09/2019: Updated to reflect current requirements and practices

07/2020: Pen and ink updates to incorporate updates to the PD&E Manual

12/2021: Updated to reflect current practices and add clarification

12/2024: Pen and ink edits to incorporate updates to the PD&E manual.