CHAPTER 3

PLANNING SCREEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING SCREEN

3.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter details the process for completing the Planning Screen of the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process. The chapter also provides instructions for conducting the Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process during the Planning Screen, when applicable. The chapter describes the process for identifying environmental considerations to assist in the development of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Cost Feasible Plan, the Metropolitan Planning Organization/Transportation Planning Organization (MPO/TPO) Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs), and further into the MPO/TPO Cost Feasible Plans. It also describes tools and techniques for interacting with the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) and members of the public during the Planning Screen review. The ETAT includes representatives from MPOs/TPOs, federal and state agencies, and participating Native American tribes.

The Planning Screen incorporates federal guidance on environmental streamlining and links the transportation Planning phase to the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) phase by giving early consideration to natural, physical, cultural, and community resources. Accomplishing this involves frequent communication and coordination among ETAT members. These reviews help to consider the feasibility of proposed projects; focus the issues to be addressed during the Programming Screen; and allow for early identification of potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities. Potential direct and indirect effects on communities are also identified through information gathering, analysis, and consideration of sociocultural effects. The Planning Screen generates documentation and support information which may be carried forward into subsequent project phases.

For federal projects, the Planning Screen provides the project sponsor [i.e., Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (Turnpike), or MPO/TPO] with the opportunity to begin addressing consistency with local plans pursuant to *23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450*. FDOT and the MPOs/TPOs can begin identifying modifications to the project concept or amendments to the plans that may be needed in future phases to ensure consistency. For more information about consistency requirements, refer to the *MPO Program Management Handbook*.

The Planning Screening applies only to qualifying projects (refer to *Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1* and *Table 2.2* of this *Manual* for a complete list of qualifying projects types). Projects selected for the Planning Screen originate from FDOT, MPOs/TPOs, or local government planning efforts intended to guide future transportation improvements. These efforts reflect community goals and visions, addressing subjects like transportation, conservation, and development. Transportation plans are prepared based on these goals and objectives and

supported by detailed transportation analyses, public outreach, and other planning considerations, and then carried out by FDOT, MPOs/TPOs, and local governments.

ETAT members use the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) to review project information, identify potential project effects, and submit comments to FDOT during the transportation planning process. This web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) database and mapping tool provides access to project information and data about natural, physical, cultural, and community resources in the project area. The ETAT members provide input about potential project effects on the natural, physical, cultural, and community resources specific to their area of expertise. They may also provide cumulative effect considerations during the screening. The early identification of potential issues may influence project priority and the feasibility of an alternative alignment and design. Input received during the Planning Screen helps transportation planners to prioritize transportation investment strategies and improve project cost estimates, in support of the development of a Cost Feasible Plan. Planning Screen information may also be used to inform subsequent steps in consideration and analysis of the proposed transportation project. The results of the Planning Screen are documented in a ***Planning Screen Summary Report***, which is accessible to ETAT members through the EST (*https://www.fla-etat.org/est*) and the public through the ETDM Public Access Site (*https://etdmpub.fla-etat.org*).

3.2 PLANNING SCREEN PROCESS

The Planning Screen occurs when considering projects for inclusion or prioritization within the cost feasible element of an LRTP. ***Figure 3-1*** illustrates how the Planning Screen fits within the context of the transportation planning process.
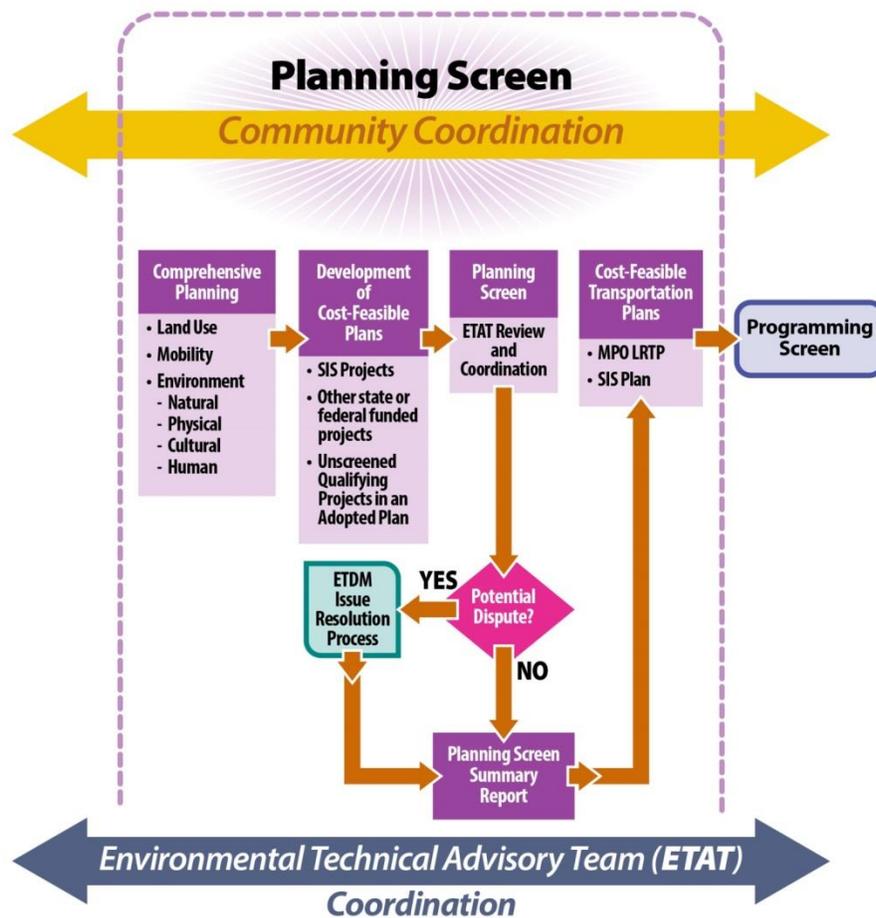
Figure 3-1: Planning Screen

The Planning Screen includes steps for preparing a project for review, conducting the review, responding to comments, and preparing a *Planning Screen Summary Report*. These steps are shown in *Figure 3-2*, and further described in *Sections 3.3* through *3.5*.

Topic No. 650-000-002   March 16, 2006
ETDM Manual   Revised: December 1, 2015
Planning Screen
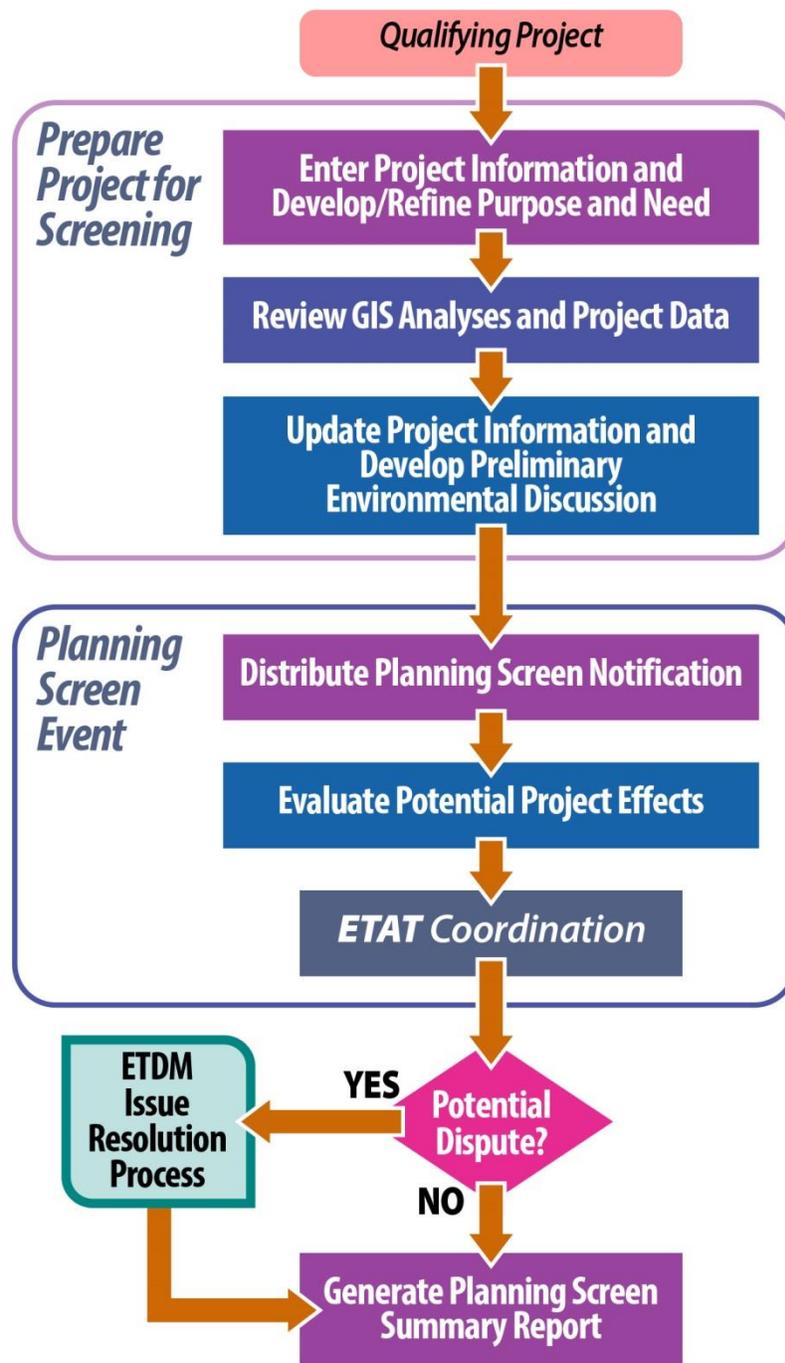
Figure 3-2: Planning Screen Process Flow

3.3 PLANNING SCREEN PROJECTS

In preparation of adopting Cost Feasible Plans, MPOs/TPOs and FDOT personnel identify qualifying projects and schedule the Planning Screen reviews. They may also use the EST to support planning activities related to other, non-qualifying, projects.

3.3.1 Identify Qualifying Projects

MPO/TPO Liaisons, FDOT Planning Managers, and ETDM Coordinators work with other MPOs/TPOs, FDOT, and local government staff to identify qualifying projects to screen. Projects may originate from a variety of FDOT, MPO/TPO, or local government programs and plans, such as:

- SIS Plan

- MPO/TPO LRTPs

- Transportation Needs Plans

- Master Plans

- Action Plans

- Corridor Plans

- Local Government Comprehensive Plans

They select transportation projects based on criteria including:

- Project type

- Transportation system designation

- Potential funding source (federal, state, or local)

- Responsible agency

In this context, "transportation system designations" refers to whether a proposed project is part of the SIS or State Highway System (SHS), also called on-system. "Responsible agency" refers to the agency required to meet federal, state, and other applicable requirements. See *Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1,* and *Table 2-2* of this *Manual* for specific examples of qualifying projects and guidance on how to apply the selection criteria.

Not all qualifying projects require a Planning Screen. Only unscreened qualifying projects in or expected to be included in a Cost Feasible Plan undergo a Planning Screen. Ideally, all Planning Screens should follow the formation of a Needs Plan and be completed before final approval of a Cost Feasible Plan, with highest priority projects being screened first.

The standardized EST GIS analyses can be performed on batch uploads of imported Needs Plan projects. This can assist MPOs/TPOs (and, as appropriate, local governments) to understand the relative potential project effects to environmental resources when prioritizing projects for Planning Screens or for inclusion in the cost feasible LRTP.

After selecting a project for review, the ETDM Coordinator begins the Planning Screen by updating the project record in the EST. Refer to the ***Environmental Screening Tool Handbook*** for instructions on preparing projects for review in the EST.

3.3.2 Project Screening Release Schedule

Based on the list of qualifying projects, FDOT ETDM Coordinators and Project Managers (if assigned) work with appropriate staff to develop or update a 12-month project release schedule as described in ***Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2,*** of this ***Manual***.

When releasing projects for review, ETDM Coordinators should ensure the ETAT members have enough time to review and provide comments. Therefore, when scheduling a Planning Screen review, it is recommended that no more than two projects be released at a time, and that project releases be scheduled at least two weeks apart. ETDM Coordinators should make every effort to discuss ETAT review schedules with other Districts to coordinate ETAT work efforts. In addition, four months should be allowed per project to provide time for reviews, public involvement activities, possible review extensions, and preparation of the ***Planning Screen Summary Report***.

3.3.3 Non-Qualifying Projects

FDOT and MPOs/TPOs (and local governments as needed) can also use the EST to support issue identification of non-qualifying projects (such as Type 1 CEs) and/or an entire plan. These projects are not intended to be released to the ETAT for formal review. Instead, they are entered into the EST using the Area of Interest Tool with only enough information to generate the standardized EST GIS analyses (refer to the ***Environmental Screening Tool Handbook*** for details).

3.4 PREPARE PROJECT FOR SCREENING

The transportation, environmental, and community data presented in the EST provide a foundation for project reviews. ***Chapter 6*** of this ***Manual*** describes data collection, preparation, and maintenance of these datasets. In preparation for a Planning Screen review, FDOT and the MPOs/TPOs enter information about the project into the EST, while the Community Liaison Coordinators (CLCs) gather and enter community data. In addition, the ETAT representatives provide new and updated GIS data to the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL) for use within the EST, as available.

3.4.1 Enter or Update Project Information

In MPO/TPO areas, the MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinator enters project data in the EST, unless the project is on the SIS/SHS. If the project is on the SIS/SHS or not in a MPO/TPO area, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator enters the project data. Whenever possible, ETDM Coordinators should work with FDOT and MPO/TPO planners to obtain information from previous planning and community involvement activities in order to maintain a comprehensive project record and better link the Planning and PD&E phases.

To prepare a project for a Planning Screen review:

- Develop or refine the purpose and need for each qualifying project to be screened in accordance with the ***PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4, Project Description and Purpose and Need****.* Transportation planning data developed for long-range plans are the primary source of information used to assist in establishing the purpose and need. These data are drawn from corridor plans, subarea plans, regional models, and other sources that help identify corridors and facilities where transportation improvements are needed. This information is summarized in MPO/TPO LRTPs, the FDOT SIS Plan, MPO/TPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Staff preparing the purpose and need for projects undergoing a Planning Screen should coordinate with the MPO/TPO liaison or other appropriate planning staff to develop the initial purpose and need, if it does not already appear in the transportation plan. The initial purpose and need developed during the Planning phase may change as the project advances since new information or public input may be identified. Only describe the appropriate purpose and need categories that are applicable to the project. The District's SWAT Team should be consulted to identify projects to be screened and to contribute to information to be provided by the FDOT in the screening event prior to and following ETAT review.

- Develop a project description, which includes:

  o Project name;

  o Name of the city(ies) and county(ies) where the project is located;

  o Name of the planning organization responsible for the project;

  o Limits of the proposed project, such as its logical termini and length;

  o Description of the existing or general characterization of a new facility; and

  o Description of planned improvements. Provide as much information as available, such as the facility type, number of lanes, type of median, major structures, and potential right-of-way requirements (for example, a description of a road widening could indicate if the project intends to use existing right of way).

    Refer to ***PD&E Manual Part 2, Chapter 4, Project Description and Purpose and Need*** for further guidance and an example.

- Indicate whether the project is being developed under the Local Agency Program (LAP). To be considered a qualifying LAP project, funding must already be programmed in the Five Year Work Program and be listed in FDOT's federally mandated STIP.

- Indicate whether the project is being developed through the ACE process.

- Indicate whether the project is anticipated to use federal funds or require a federal action.

- Enter information showing the location of each project alternative using the EST Map Editor or by uploading a GIS file. The alternative features at this point generally represent planning-level corridors rather than detailed alignments. For ACE process projects, delineate the study area surrounding potential alternatives or general alternative corridors. Preliminary alternatives should offer potential solutions to the transportation problem identified in the purpose and need. The range of alternatives depends on the nature and scope of the project, as well as the context and intensity of potential impacts.

- Describe the study area and preliminary alternative(s), if available. For each alternative, include information about the mode(s) served by the project, type of alternative (widening, new alignment, etc.), termini location, and length. Include the estimated cost and the basis for the cost estimate, if available. When known, enter information about roadway functional classification, existing and predicted Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), and presence within an Urban Service Area or if it's designated as a SIS facility.

- Provide project plan consistency status information currently known or anticipated and the steps toward achieving consistency, as appropriate. Coordinate with FDOT District, MPO/TPO or Rural County Liaisons and either MPO/TPO or local government planning staff to compile and complete consistency information.

- Designate exempted agencies (if applicable). Exempted agencies are notified about the Planning Screen review but not expected to submit comments or act on the purpose and need. When making the decision to exempt an agency, consider the nature of a project. For instance, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) is exempt from reviewing any projects that do not impact navigable waterways. Additionally, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is exempt from reviewing Planning Screen projects. Other agencies that may be exempt from a review include United States Forest Service, National Park Service, and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

- Contact the Work Program Office to establish an ETDM Identifier (refer to ***Work Program Instructions Part III, Chapter 23***).

3.4.2   Review Standardized GIS Analyses and Project Data

Standardized EST GIS analyses identify natural, physical, cultural, and community resources within a specified buffer distance of the proposed project alternatives to help identify potential project effects. These analyses are performed automatically in the EST prior to a project being released for review. The analyses provide counts or summaries of

resources (for example, wetland acreage and demographic statistics) found in proximity to a transportation project. The EST includes analyses that have been requested by the ETAT, FDOT, or MPO/TPO representatives to help in their review of potentially affected resources. The results are organized within the EST by resource issue (see *Section 2.6 of this Manual* for a description of each) and reported along with issue-specific maps displaying project location and selected environmental resources.

Prior to initiating the Planning Screen review, the project team studies the results of the GIS analyses to gain additional understanding of the project area and to make any necessary refinements to the project. For projects on the SIS, the SIS Coordinators in the Systems Planning Office review the project for consistency with the SIS Plan. Once all data preparation steps are complete, the project status is updated in the EST to indicate that the project information is ready for final quality review. The PD&E Project Manager (if assigned), environmental specialists, other District SWAT team members as appropriate and ETDM Coordinator perform quality reviews to verify the accuracy and completeness of all project information.

The mapped project features should be consistent with the location described on the EST in the *Project Description* report. Confirm, for example, that:

- The beginning and ending locations of linear alternatives recorded on the EST in the *Project Description* report match the mapped termini;

- Project features follow an existing facility, such as a highway or rail line, if intended; and

- The project linework is digitized accurately in relation to other mapped features (e.g., if you intend for the project to go around a resource, verify the digitized linework shows that).

Specific data quality review procedures will depend on project context and scope. Refer to *Chapter 6, Section 6.4,* of this *Manual* for further guidance.

3.4.3   Develop Preliminary Environmental Discussion

After reviewing the standardized EST GIS analyses and considering information supplied by local knowledge, planning studies, internal FDOT coordination, and other evaluations in the project area, FDOT prepares a Preliminary Environmental Discussion (PED). FDOT completes the PED prior to a Planning Screen review to convey FDOT's knowledge of a project area and the potential level of involvement to address certain issues/resources to the ETAT and other agencies, as appropriate. The PED outlines FDOT's initial understanding of the natural, physical, cultural, and community issues/resources in a project study area. The PED also discusses the process FDOT plans to use to address or evaluate issues and resources as the project advances through future phases of project development. The PED is based on local knowledge, planning studies, and any other evaluations relevant to the

project area. The PED provides the ETAT with context and may help the ETAT provide focused and actionable comments.

The PED is required for projects undergoing a Planning Screen review. The PED can be submitted per issue and alternative to highlight unique or known conditions. For MPO/TPO projects, FDOT coordinates the assessment with the MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinator.

For instructions on completing a PED, refer to *PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification*.

3.5 PLANNING SCREEN REVIEW

Before a Planning Screen review, the ETDM Coordinator should consider holding an online meeting or webinar to introduce the project before submitting it to the ETAT. The meeting allows the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager to present project details, highlight issues, and communicate specific expectations to help the ETAT provide quality comments. For assistance with setting up these meetings, contact the ETDM Help Desk by emailing *help@fla-etat.org*.

3.5.1 Distribution of Planning Screen Notification

The ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager uses the EST to notify the ETAT about the start of a project review. The CLC also receives a copy of the email notification to begin the Sociocultural Effects (SCE) evaluation. The CLC or Project Manager can forward the notice to other stakeholders so they may review project information, provide input about potential effects to resources, or share information from previous planning activities (see the *FDOT Public Involvement Handbook* for strategies to provide public involvement opportunities during the Planning Screen). Non-ETAT members and the public are referred to the ETDM Public Access Site at *https://etdmpub.fla-etat.org*.

3.5.2 Review Time Frame

As established in the ETDM agency agreements (AAs), reviews occur within 45 calendar days of email notification. If additional review time is required, an ETAT member may request a 15-day extension. When needed, the ETAT member must submit a written request to the ETDM Coordinator within the initial 45-day comment period. Should a shorter extension period be necessary, it may be negotiated with the ETAT members; contact the State Environmental Management Office (SEMO) for more information. When an extension is granted, it applies to all reviewers and is announced via email.

ETAT members may submit and edit comments at any time during the review period using the EST. After the review period ends, the ETAT can no longer submit comments on the EST or edit submitted comments. If an ETAT member needs to revise comments, the member should contact the ETDM Coordinator.

3.5.3   Planning Screen Review

Upon receipt of the Planning Screen notice, ETAT members review the purpose and need and provide comments about potential project effects to the natural, physical, cultural, and community resources related to their regulatory authority.
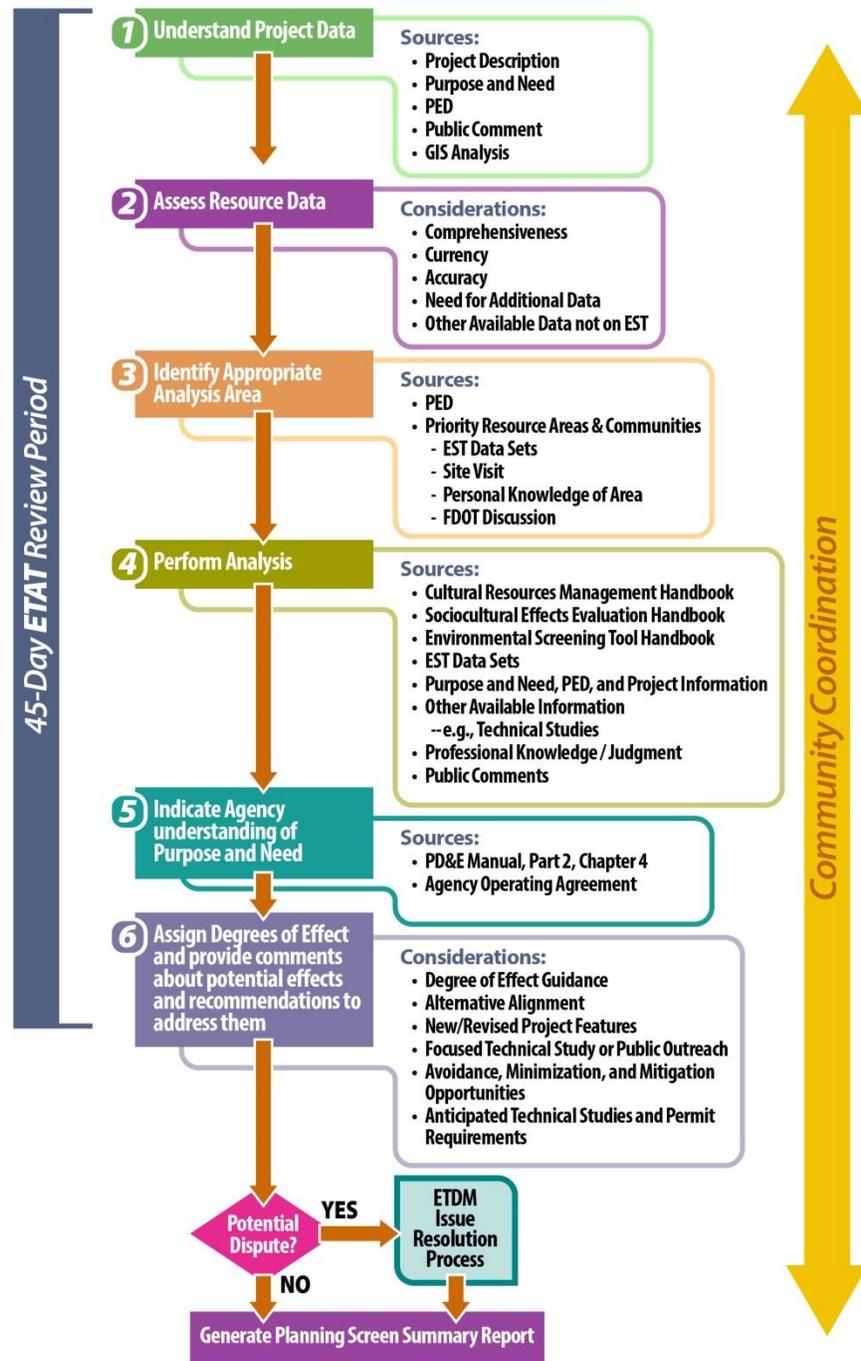

Figure 3-3: Planning Screen Review Tasks

Topic No. 650-000-002   March 16, 2006
ETDM Manual   Revised: December 1, 2015
Planning Screen

3.5.3.1 ETAT Review Tasks

Steps one through six in *Figure 3-3* show the process ETAT members follow when reviewing projects during the Planning Screen. These tasks are described in detail below:

1. **Develop Understanding of Project** – Develop an understanding of the proposed transportation project by reviewing the project description, purpose and need, PED, EST GIS analyses, project and resource maps, any project attachments, and comments from previous planning activities.

2. **Assess Resource Data** – Verify that the information available in the EST is the best available; refer to *Chapter 6, Section 6.4.5.2* of this *Manual,* for data review considerations. Identify information gaps or data needed to support further evaluation. ETAT members are expected to supplement the information in the EST with additional sources and personal knowledge, such as data gathered from site visits. If the ETAT members have relevant knowledge or information not already contained in the EST, provide and discuss such information.

3. **Identify Appropriate Analysis Area** – Typically, the analysis area for a project is influenced by the nature of the ETAT member's resources of interest, the project's context, and the potential for resource effects. The buffers used in the EST range from 100 feet to 5,280 feet [one (1) mile] in width. These areas represent typical distances used by the ETAT to evaluate a variety of resources in different contexts, although the size of any individual study area depends on the nature of the project.

4. **Perform Analysis** – Review projects for existing conditions and potential direct and indirect effects to jurisdictional resources. Assess the need for potential agency coordination in subsequent project phases. Each ETAT member performs analyses consistent with the criteria and methodologies that they established for each specific resource.

5. **Indicate Understanding of Purpose and Need** – Review the project's purpose and need and acknowledge understanding or ask for clarification from the District ETDM Coordinator.

6. **Provide Comments about Potential Effects and Recommendations to Avoid or Address Effects** – Comment on project concepts and alternatives based on analysis in Step 4. Be as specific as possible. Submit comments in the EST for each screened alternative for the issues identified in the AOA. Comments should focus on fatal flaws and not just list resources found within the standard EST buffer areas. For example:

   - If potential direct and indirect effects exist, comment on the type, quality, and sensitivity of the resources involved in relation to their location to the proposed project and related activities. If the project does not impact resources of interest, or a detailed evaluation is not necessary during the PD&E phase, indicate this as well.

- ETAT members are not expected to evaluate nor assign Degrees of Effect (DOEs) for cumulative effects during the Planning and Programming Screens. If there is a concern for cumulative effects, provide considerations to help the Lead Agency decide on the level of evaluation needed in the environmental document (see *Section 2.5* of this Manual for an explanation about the Lead Agency role). Cumulative effects can be both positive and negative. See the *FDOT Cumulative Effects Evaluation Handbook* for more information.

- Provide information about agency plans, studies, regulatory information, or other data that may affect the project or are affected by the project. Fill in data gaps and validate data, as needed.

- Provide specific recommendations to address resource concerns which may arise during permitting, such as potential avoidance, minimization, or mitigation opportunities based on statutes and regulations.

- Specifically identify differences in potential jurisdictional resource impacts among alternatives.

To help carry forward information produced during the Planning phase to the environmental documents prepared during the PD&E phase, the ETDM process uses definitions consistent with *NEPA* as stated in *40 CFR § 1508.7 and § 1508.8:*

Direct effects… are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place as the action.

Indirect effects… are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.

Cumulative effect is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

The terms "effects" and "impacts" are synonymous in CEQ regulations (*40 CFR § 1508.8*) and are used interchangeably in this *Manual*.

- Identify specific activities FDOT or other ETAT member(s) could complete between Planning and Programming Screens to answer questions, address concerns, or fill in data gaps (e.g., seasonal studies, preliminary site inspections, or studies to support the permitting process).

- Indicate a DOE for each issue and alternative being reviewed. A DOE reflects the magnitude of both potential direct and indirect effects caused by a particular alternative to a resource. *Section 3.5.4* provides guidance for assigning a DOE,

but more specific evaluation criteria should be used by each ETAT member for the resources under the member's jurisdiction. Include the rationale for selecting a DOE. During a Planning Screen, this is a preliminary assessment based on existing information. This early consideration helps to assess the feasibility of project alternatives. It can help better develop cost estimates by identifying flaws and other difficulties that may lead to unnecessary delays and expenses as the project moves into future phases.

- Indicate the need for future involvement (e.g., coordination/consultation, permits and technical studies).

3.5.3.2 ETDM Resource Issues

ETAT members comment on the potential project effects to one or more of the following ETDM issues as defined by their respective AOAs and/or in accordance with their regulatory authority:

Social and Economic

- Aesthetic Effects

- Economic

- Farmlands

- Land Use Changes

- Mobility

- Relocation Potential

- Social

Cultural

- Historic and Archaeological Sites

- Recreation Areas

- Section 4(f) Potential

Natural

- Coastal and Marine

- Floodplains

- Water Quality and Quantity

- Wetlands and Surface Waters

- Wildlife and Habitat

Physical

- Air Quality

- Contamination

- Infrastructure

- Navigation

- Noise

Special Designations

Within the EST, ETAT members use the *Special Designations* issue to identify involvement with any of the following:

- Outstanding Florida Waters

- Aquatic Preserves

- Scenic Highways

- Wild and Scenic Rivers

Refer to **Chapter 2, Section 2.6,** of this **Manual** for additional explanation and guidance regarding each ETDM issue.

3.5.4 Assigning a Degree of Effect

ETAT members should use available information to evaluate and comment on the potential direct and indirect effects of a project. This includes using the data layers in the EST, historical documentation, previous studies, site visits, talking to other agency experts and FDOT staff, as well as personal knowledge of the project area. These potential effects drive the DOE selection, which reflects the potential magnitude of project effects on a resource, not the level of coordination involved in addressing the effect. The level of coordination with the ETAT during future project phases reflects the issues that need to be addressed, regardless of the DOE. The ETDM Coordinator, PD&E Project Manager, and Lead Agency use DOEs and comments to help identify potentially critical issues and determine how to address them. The ETAT DOEs and supporting comments help the ETDM Coordinator or

PD&E Project Manager assign a Summary Degree of Effect (SDOE) and assist the Lead Agency to identify potential issues.

Table 3-1 provides guidance on assigning a DOE. ETAT members are encouraged to develop a specific matrix to further clarify their own understanding of DOE levels and coordinate it with FDOT for mutual understanding and partnering. This promotes consistency when ETAT members assign a DOE.

Table 3-1: Potential Project Effects Degree of Effect Guidance – Planning Screen

Degree of Effect	Guidance	
	ETAT Resources	Sociocultural Resources
Not Applicable/No Involvement	The issue/resource in question is not a part of, in any way involved with, or affected by the proposed alternative.	
Enhanced	The proposed alternative has a positive effect on the resource or can reverse a previous adverse effect leading to environmental improvement.	The proposed alternative has a positive effect. The affected public supports the proposed alternative.
None	Resources exist, but there is no potential impact by the proposed alternative.	The proposed alternative has been evaluated for sociocultural effects. Resources exist, but the proposed alternative has no potential for effect and there is no concern about the alternative.
Minimal	The proposed alternative has little potential for negative effects on the resources.	The proposed alternative has little potential for negative effects. Initial outreach reveals little or no concern about the alternative.
Moderate	Resources are potentially affected by the proposed alternative, but avoidance, minimization, or mitigation options are available and can be addressed during the PD&E phase.	Resources are potentially affected by the proposed alternative, but avoidance, minimization, or mitigation options are available.
Substantial	The proposed alternative potentially affects unique or sensitive resources. Avoidance, minimization, or mitigation options may be difficult to identify.	Potential effects on the resources are anticipated, and/or are likely to be highly controversial.
Potential Dispute	Potential effects are anticipated to the degree that the proposed alternative may need to be modified or eliminated. Dispute resolution may be required.	

Note: The DOE reflects the potential magnitude of both direct and indirect project impacts.

The responsibility for performing SCE evaluations and assigning a DOE to the six SCE issues (Social, Economic, Land Use Changes, Mobility, Aesthetic Effects, and Relocation Potential) rests with the MPOs/TPOs and FDOT. Public involvement activities assist in identifying concerns and desired project features. The FDOT and MPO/TPO CLCs should take a collaborative team approach during these evaluations. Much of the data preparation and initial analysis involved with SCE evaluations can be conducted prior to a Planning Screen review and made available to the ETAT as part of the PED. The *PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 9, Sociocultural Effects Evaluation*, the *FDOT Public Involvement*

Handbook, and the *FDOT Sociocultural Effects Evaluation* web page provide guidance on identifying SCE issues and techniques for gathering public input.

For further guidance on how to evaluate cultural and historical resources, refer to *PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 12, Archaeological and Historical Resources* and the FDOT *Cultural Resources Management Handbook*. For guidance on potential *Section 4(f)* issues, refer to *PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 13, Section 4(f) Evaluations*.

3.5.5   ETAT Coordination

During the Planning Screen review, the ETDM Coordinator should monitor preliminary ETAT responses and conduct personal communication to clarify issues or respond to questions. Specifically, they should review relevant ETAT commentary to identify actions necessary to advance the project. Actionable ETAT commentary should be transmitted to the appropriate staff as the project advances. Following the screening event, the ETDM Coordinator, CLCs, PD&E Project Managers, and other MPO/TPO or District staff assesses ETAT commentary in order to assign SDOEs and prepare the *Planning Screen Summary Report*. The ETDM Coordinator works with the ETAT to gain a better understanding of identified concerns, clarify any instances where DOEs for an issue may differ between ETAT members, and address commentary that raised additional questions or the need for additional information. When differences in DOE assignments occur between agencies for an issue, more weight should be given to the ETAT member with jurisdictional authority over the resource of concern.

3.5.6   Publish Planning Screen Summary Report

The *Planning Screen Summary Report* summarizes key recommendations and results from the review. If the project is an ACE process project, there is both a *Preliminary* and *Final Planning Screen Summary Report* (refer to *Section 3.6* of this *Manual*).

The ETDM Coordinator develops and publishes the *Planning Screen Summary Report* within 60 days from the end of the 45-day review period. In MPO areas, the District and MPO ETDM Coordinators work jointly, as appropriate, to review comments, coordinate with the ETAT, and assign SDOEs to all issues and alternatives based on ETAT DOEs and comments received from the ETAT or other stakeholders. The ETDM Coordinator should consult with appropriate project team or SWAT team members to assure complete and accurate response as needed.

The SDOE represents the position of FDOT (or the MPO/TPO for projects occurring within MPO/TPO areas) and is based on known information about the project area, including ETAT member and public comments and other technical resources. There is no requirement to select the highest DOE assigned by an ETAT member. However, when assigning a SDOE lower than an ETAT member's assigned DOE, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager must include a rationale for the decision, which could be based on input from an agency with jurisdiction over the resource. Coordination with an agency is expected when

selecting a lower SDOE than an ETAT's assigned DOE and should be documented in the EST during the development of the SDOE. The ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager should coordinate with the FDOT team to discuss the issue and reach consensus on the proposed SDOE before publishing the summary report.

If an ETAT member indicates a Potential Dispute DOE, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager begins coordination with the agency to seek a mutually agreeable avoidance and minimization option. If they cannot identify a mutually agreeable option, the ETDM Coordinator may initiate the Potential Issue Resolution process. An unresolved dispute during the Planning Screen does not prohibit a project from advancing to the Programming Screen but signifies that the project has potential conflicts or issues that may require continued issue resolution activities. See **Chapter 2, Section 2.7,** of this **Manual** for more information about the Potential Issue Resolution process.

In the event that no reviews are received on a specific ETDM issue and that issue is assigned to an ETAT member through an executed AOA, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager should contact the respective ETAT member(s) and ask for the member's comments. If the member does not have comments or concerns regarding the issue, the member should indicate this in the EST. The outcome of those efforts and FDOT's knowledge regarding the issue should be the basis for determining the SDOE. If agency coordination attempts fail, the ETDM Coordinator seeks assistance from FDOT staff to help with issue assessment and to provide the basis for the SDOE determination; documentation of a non-responsive member should be provided in the EST to support the project record.

During the development of the **Planning Screen Summary Report**, it may be determined, when multiple alternatives are screened, that a particular alternative should be eliminated from further consideration. For instance, an alternative that does not adequately meet the purpose and need of the project or is found to be unreasonable can be eliminated with justification, documentation, and concurrence by the Lead Agency.

When the ETDM Coordinator publishes a **Planning Screen Summary Report**, ETAT members, relevant MPO/TPO and local government staff, and interested public (*https://etdmpub.fla-etat.org*) are notified by email that the report is available. ETAT members review the Planning Screen Summary Report and provide comments, if applicable, within 30 calendar days of notification.

3.6 ALTERNATIVE CORRIDOR EVALUATION (ACE) PROCESS

FDOT uses the ACE process to provide a consistent, coordinated, and documented method for corridor identification and evaluation on qualifying projects. Qualifying projects include new alignments, major realignments, major bypasses, and others based on consultation with the Lead Agency. For example, a project with the potential to be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) generally requires a corridor evaluation to identify reasonable alternatives for **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** analysis from a possible range of alternatives. Reasonable corridor alternatives can be identified that largely avoid sensitive environmental areas and still satisfy the identified transportation need. Many transportation

projects have existing corridor alternatives from completed action or master plans that should be incorporated into the Planning Screen review.

With approval from the Lead Agency, FDOT can use stakeholder comments to refine or eliminate alternatives (FHWA, April 2011). *Figure 3-4* illustrates the ACE process when initiated during the Planning Screen.

The ACE process and ETDM screenings may produce the following planning products identified in *Federal Highway Administration Guidance on Using Corridor and Subarea Planning to Inform NEPA*:

1. Purpose and need or goals and objective statements;

2. General travel corridor and/or general mode(s) definition (e.g., highway, transit, or highway/transit combination);

3. Preliminary screening of alternatives and elimination of unreasonable alternatives;

4. Basic description of the environmental setting; and/or

5. Preliminary identification of environmental impacts and environmental mitigation

23 U.S.C. § 168 provides planning decisions that may be adopted for use in the *NEPA* process. The ACE process provides the framework for advancing planning products into the *NEPA*/PD&E process. The following is the list of planning products that may be advanced to *NEPA* pursuant to *23 U.S.C. § 168(2)*:

(A) Whether tolling, private financial assistance, or other special financial measures are necessary to implement the project;

(B) A decision with respect to modal choice, including a decision to implement corridor or subarea study recommendations to advance different modal solutions as separate projects with independent utility;

(C) A basic description of the environmental setting; and

(D) A decision with respect to methodologies for analysis.

In accordance with *23 U.S.C. § 168(d)*, the following conditions must be met for adoption and use of these planning products:

(1) The planning product was developed through a planning process conducted pursuant to applicable federal law.

(2) The planning product was developed by engaging in active consultation with appropriate federal and state resource agencies and Indian tribes.

(3)   The planning process included broad multidisciplinary consideration of systems-level or corridor-wide transportation needs and potential effects, including effects on the human and natural environment.

(4)   During the planning process, notice was provided through publication or other means to federal, state, local and tribal governments that might have an interest in the proposed project, and to members of the general public, of the planning products that the planning process might produce and that might be relied on during any subsequent environmental review process. These entities should have been provided an opportunity to participate in the planning process leading to the planning product.

(5)   After initiation of the environmental review process, but prior to determining whether to rely on and use the planning product, the Lead Federal Agency has made documentation relating to the planning product available to federal, state, local, and tribal governments that may have an interest in the proposed action, and to members of the general public, and has considered any resulting comments.

(6)   There is no significant new information or new circumstance that has a reasonable likelihood of affecting the continued validity or appropriateness of the planning product.

(7)   The planning product has a rational basis and is based on reliable and reasonably current data and reasonable and scientifically acceptable methodologies.

(8)   The planning product is documented in sufficient detail to support the decision or the results of the analysis and to meet requirements for use of the information in the environmental review process.

(9)   The planning product is appropriate for adoption and use in the environmental review process for the project.

(10) The planning product was approved not later than five years prior to the date on which the information is adopted pursuant to *23 U.S.C. § 168*.
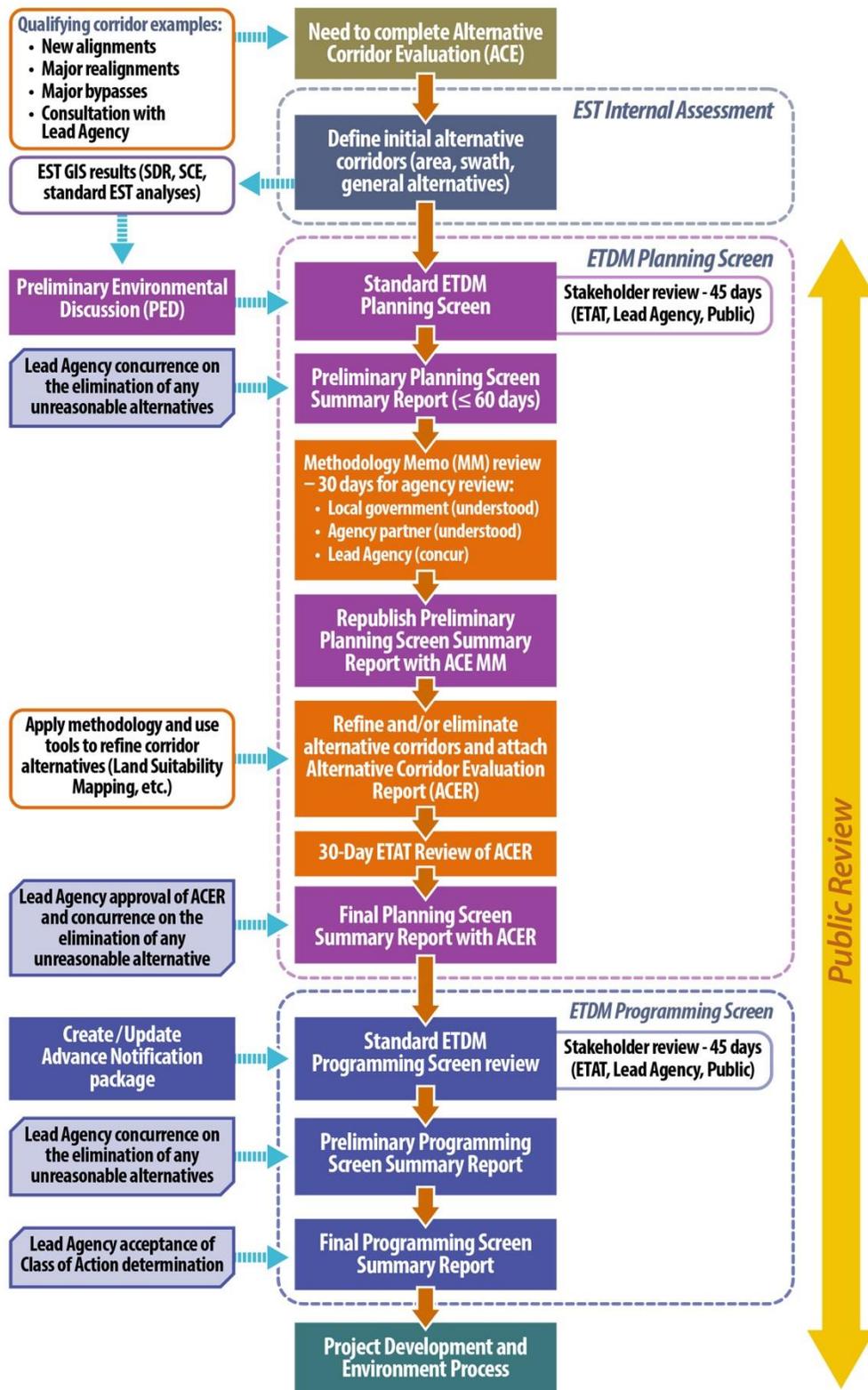
Figure 3-4: ACE Process when Initiated during the Planning Screen

3.6.1　Identify the Need to Complete the ACE Process

As illustrated in *Figure 3-4*, the first step of the ACE process is to determine whether the project involves a corridor improvement on an applicable project such as a new alignment, major realignment, or major bypass. Generally, MPO/TPO LRTPs, Rural County Master Plans, and the FDOT SIS Plan identify corridor improvement needs. Other local agencies and the public influence these assessments. Based on project characteristics, including the level of potential public controversy, the planning organization determines, in consultation with the potential Lead Agency, whether a corridor evaluation would support decisions about advancing a project to a Cost Feasible Plan or adopted Priority List. This determination will either facilitate the ACE process when the project is entered into the EST or the activities of non-ACE process Planning Screen reviews.

3.6.2　Define Initial Alternative Corridors

Appropriate FDOT managers, planners, engineers and other SWAT team members coordinate internally to identify a reasonable range of candidate alternative corridors. At this point in the process, there may only be a single study area based upon the ability to meet purpose and need or more specific corridor alternatives from earlier Planning phase studies. Both types of corridor alternatives (i.e., a study area or specific corridor alternatives) can help identify sensitive resources and other fatal flaws that should be avoided.

The project team enters the corridor alternatives into the EST, runs the standard GIS Analysis, and then develops the PED. See the ***Environmental Screening Tool Handbook*** for instructions regarding data entry in the EST for study areas, as well as standard corridor alternatives. Refer to *Section 3.4* of this *Manual* for information about preparing project data and ***Part 1, Chapter 3 Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification*** of the ***PD&E Manual*** for information about developing the PED.

3.6.3　Conduct Standard EST Planning Screen Review

Next, the Planning Screen review proceeds as described above in *Section 3.5* of this *Manual*. For ACE process reviews, the ETDM Coordinator assigns SDOEs following ETAT review and then publishes a *Preliminary Planning Screen Summary Report* (see *Section 3.5.6* of this *Manual*).

3.6.4　Methodology Memorandum Review

Following the Planning Screen review, the project team develops and documents the analysis methodology they will use to either replace the reviewed study area with more refined corridor alternatives or eliminate the already refined corridor alternatives in order to avoid and minimize potential impacts. The *Methodology Memorandum (MM)* provides guidance on how to integrate local land use plans, public involvement and ETAT member commentary, and Planning phase analyses. It also highlights specific data, tools [e.g., Land Suitability Mapping (LSM) and Corridor Analysis Tool (CAT)], and timelines to govern corridor refinements. The following outline should be used when creating the MM:

Topic No. 650-000-002   March 16, 2006
ETDM Manual   Revised: December 1, 2015
Planning Screen

1. **Background**

   a. Contact personnel

   b. Basic project information

      i. Include any previous planning studies or relevant information

      ii. Include any known issues of concern

   c. Brief project description

   d. Brief Purpose and Need of the project

2. **Describe the goals and objectives of the ACE**

   a. Provide the status in project delivery

   b. Define the intent of the study

   c. Identify the decision points/milestones

3. **Describe the methods that will be used to analyze the alternatives and make decisions**

   a. Describe alternative corridors

   b. Describe screening criteria

   c. Briefly describe the data and analyses that will be used and how it will support the decision making process going forward

   d. Describe the rationale that will be used to eliminate alternatives

   e. Describe the data tools that will be used in the analysis [i.e., EST, Land Suitability Mapping (LSM), Quantum, etc.]

4. **A brief description of stakeholder involvement**

The ETAT members have 30 days to acknowledge their understanding of the *MM* and submit comments within the EST. Their commentary may necessitate updates to the *MM* before it is sent to the Lead Agency for review and concurrence. Depending on the nature of the ETAT comments, the Lead Agency may recommend that the ETAT review the revised *MM*. Once the Lead Agency concurs with the *MM*, the ETDM Coordinator begins the process of applying the methodology to refine or eliminate corridor alternatives. Following Lead Agency concurrence of the *MM*, the ETDM Coordinator also republishes the *Preliminary Planning Screen Summary Report.*

3.6.5 Refine or Eliminate Corridor Alternatives

The team documents the application of the **MM** in the **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report** (**ACER)**. The **ACER** should be a stand-alone document providing support material and justification for replacing a study area with more refined corridor alternatives or for eliminating already existing corridor alternatives (refer to the **PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 6, Alternatives**). When completed, the **ACER** is uploaded to the EST as a project attachment. The ETAT members have 30 days to acknowledge their understanding of the **ACER** and submit comments in the EST. After ETAT review, the ACER is submitted to the Lead Agency for acceptance along with the request for concurrence to eliminate unreasonable alternatives not satisfying the approved criteria in the **MM**.

3.6.6 Publish Final Planning Screen Summary Report

Corridor alternatives can only be eliminated with Lead Agency concurrence. Study areas replaced by more refined corridor alternatives do not require Lead Agency concurrence but still must be accompanied by an **ACER** detailing the outcomes from applying the evaluation methodologies agreed upon in the **MM**. The ETDM Coordinator publishes a **Final Planning Screen Summary Report** after:

- Uploading the **ACER** and replacing the study area with more refined corridor alternatives; or

- Uploading the **ACER** and receiving Lead Agency concurrence on any corridor alternatives recommended for elimination.

3.6.7 Advancing the Project to Programming Screen

The corridor alternatives resulting from the actions described in **Section 3.6.5** of this **Manual** move into the Programming Screen. The Programming Screen provides another opportunity to further refine alternatives prior to detailed analysis in the PD&E phase. At the end of the Programming Screen, the Lead Agency determines the Class of Action (COA) and issues a concurrence determination for any new corridor alternatives recommended for elimination. During the PD&E phase, the environmental document summarizes and references the **ACER** which is made available for public review.

For more details about the Programming Screen, see **Chapter 4** of this **Manual**. For procedures used during the PD&E phase, refer to the **PD&E Manual**.

3.7 POTENTIAL ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS

ETAT commentary regarding potential project effects during the Planning Screen review offers the first opportunity to identify potential project issues that will need to be resolved. The ETDM Coordinator reviews the commentary, coordinates with the ETAT member who provided the comments, and when applicable, assigns a Potential Dispute Resolution SDOE to initiate the ETDM Issue Resolution process in the Planning Screen. A strong commitment

Topic No. 650-000-002   March 16, 2006
ETDM Manual   Revised: December 1, 2015
Planning Screen

exists among the ETAT to resolve disputes at the local level, prior to elevating them to higher level management. Refer to **Chapter 2, Section 2.7,** of this **Manual** for guidance on the ETDM Issue Resolution process.

3.8 PLANNING SCREEN ACTIVITIES

The ETDM process involves participants from a wide range of professions. As detailed throughout this chapter, ETDM process participants are engaged in a variety of activities to accomplish the Planning Screen. The list below provides a quick reference, summarizing the activities during the Planning Screen. For details, refer to the preceding sections of this chapter and **Chapter 2, Section 2.5, ETDM Coordination** of this **Manual**.

3.8.1 Planning Screen Preparation

ETDM Project Information (FDOT or MPO/TPO)

- Facilitate timely information flow among FDOT, MPOs/TPOs, local governments (as applicable), and Districts.

- Identify and develop review schedule of qualifying transportation projects.

- Develop project description and purpose and need.

- Document planning consistency information.

- Map the location of each project.

- Identify previous studies and documents that can be included with project reviews.

- Prepare the PED

- Enter information into the EST or coordinate with the GeoPlan Center to upload batch files of project data.

- Perform quality assurance checks of project data and mappings (including project geometry and termini).

- For SIS projects, work with the SIS Central Office to ensure candidate projects are consistent with Florida transportation goals and objectives.

ETAT Member Resource Data (ETAT members and GeoPlan Center)

- Identify new or updated environmental resource information and coordinate with the GeoPlan Center to upload or secure these GIS files.

- Perform quality assurance check of information provided to the GeoPlan Center after it has been made available through the EST.

Community Information (FDOT or MPO/TPO)

- Identify activities to gather community information to support the SCE Evaluation.

- Gather or identify community characteristics data required for SCE Evaluation.

- Enter community characteristics data into the EST or coordinate with the GeoPlan Center to upload or secure GIS files.

- Perform quality assurance check of community characteristics data and mappings (including project geometry and termini).

3.8.2 Planning Screen Reviews

ETAT members perform the following tasks for their resources; the CLC performs the tasks for the six SCE issues:

- Conduct project reviews of potential direct and indirect effects using the EST.

- Recommend cumulative effects considerations, as appropriate.

- Recommend potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities.

- Conduct purpose and need reviews.

- Electronically submit comments within the 45-day review period.

- Review and comment on MMs and ACERs within 30 days, when requested.

Lead agencies perform these additional tasks during the Planning Screen reviews:

- Review, comment, and approve the MM, within 30 calendar days when requested.

- Approve elimination of unreasonable alternatives not meeting the purpose and need or criteria established in the approved methodology MM and documented in the ACER.

3.8.3 ETAT Coordination

The ETDM Coordinator, Project Manager, or designee performs the following tasks during the Planning Screen:

- Initiate Planning Screen.

- Promote awareness of the proposed project, including the purpose and need and the project description, and how the public can provide input.

- Coordinate with ETAT members to ensure timely reviews of direct and indirect effects.

- Monitor relevant ETAT commentary to identify actions necessary to advance the project.

- Identify actionable commentary from the ETAT and transmit it to the appropriate staff as the project advances.

- Communicate responses about transportation issues to the community during the Planning Screen.

- For ACE process projects, coordinate reviews and Lead Agency concurrence for *MM* and *ACER.*

- Participate in discussions regarding potential project effects or clarification of comments, as needed.

- Conduct or participate in ETAT meetings and webinars.

- Participate in issue resolution activities, if needed.

- Initiate technical studies to support consultation process, if needed.

- Convey to the ETAT members information about how project plans or concepts have been adapted to address their concerns, or communicate the rationale for not incorporating their input.

3.8.4 Planning Screen Summary Report

The ETDM Coordinator, Project Manager, or designee, performs the following tasks related to developing and publishing the Planning Screen Summary Report:

- Review and respond to commentary received during the Planning Screen review.

- Assign an SDOE to each ETDM resource issue.

- Summarize public comments received during the Planning Screen review.

- Publish the *Planning Screen Summary Report* (including Preliminary and Final, if applicable).

- Provide *Planning Screen Summary Report* to MPOs/TPOs and local governments for planning purposes, if applicable.

3.9   REFERENCES

23 CFR Part 450. Planning Assistance and Standards.

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

23 U.S.C. § 168. Integration of Planning and Environmental Review.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2011. Guidance on Using Corridor and Subarea Planning to Inform NEPA. Accessed at http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/corridor_nepa_guidance.asp on 8/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2013. Cultural Resources Management Handbook. Accessed at www.dot.state.fl.us/emo on 11/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2005. Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Handbook. Accessed at www.dot.state.fl.us/emo on 8/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2011. Public Involvement Handbook. Accessed at www.dot.state.fl.us/emo on 8/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2012. Metropolitan Planning Organization Program Management Handbook. Accessed at www.dot.state.fl.us/planning/policy/metrosupport/ on 8/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2012. Cumulative Effects Evaluation Handbook. Accessed at www.dot.state.fl.us/emo on 8/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2012. Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Manual. Accessed at http://www.dot.state.fl.us/emo on 8/12/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2015. Environmental Screening Tool Handbook. Accessed at https://etdmpub.fla-etat.org/est/?startPageId=493&keywords=EST&categoryList=82# on 11/11/2015.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2015. ETDM Public Access Site. Accessed at http://etdmpub.fla-etat.org on 8/12/2015.

3.10 HISTORY

03/2006: Original publication

07/2013: Updated to reflect current requirements and practices

12/2015: Updated to reflect current requirements and practices