

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this **Manual** is to provide transportation planners, project analysts, project engineers, project managers, and other practitioners with sufficient information to consider as they review qualifying transportation projects during the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Process Planning and Programming Screens. It is the procedure by which qualifying projects are screened through the ETDM process. This **Manual** also provides guidance for involving potentially affected communities and stakeholders in the project's transportation planning phase.

FDOT, FHWA, and state and federal partners, began developing the ETDM process in 1999 to support environmental streamlining objectives identified in **Section 1309** of the **Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) (Pub. L. No. 105-178)**. The **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)**, included a process for conducting "Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision Making" for highway projects under **Section 6002 (b)** of the bill. In December 2005, FHWA recognized the ETDM process as satisfying the statutory requirements of **SAFETEA-LU Section 6002(b)** and being acceptable for use on federal-aid projects. **SAFETEA-LU Section 6002** was codified as **23 U.S.C. § 139**. The ETDM process is consistent with the streamlining objectives of subsequent amendments to **23 U.S.C. §§ 139 and 168** through the Moving Ahead for **Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)** and the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**.

On March 16, 2006, the FDOT Secretary approved [Procedure Number 650-000-002](#), which established statewide use of the **Manual**, as well as the process by which the **Manual**, or portions thereof, will be subsequently revised and updated.

This **Manual** supports project development in conjunction with related Office of Environmental Management (OEM) Handbooks, the Environmental Screening Tool (EST), and the two-part [Project Development and Environment \(PD&E\) Manual \(Procedure Number 650-000-001\)](#). The [PD&E Manual](#) describes the process for satisfying the requirements of the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** and other related federal and state laws, rules, and regulations.

Transportation professionals use this **Manual** during the Planning phase of transportation project delivery, specifically the ETDM Planning and Programming Screens. The **Manual** is organized as follows:

**Chapter 1** – Describes the purpose and organization of the **Manual**

**Chapter 2** – Describes the ETDM process in general

**Chapter 3** – Details Planning Screen procedures

**Chapter 4** – Details Programming Screen procedures

**Chapter 5** – Discusses the transition from the ETDM process to the PD&E phase

**Chapter 6** – Describes procedures for managing data through the EST

**Acronyms** – Provides a list of acronyms used in the *Manual*

This *Manual* and the *PD&E Manual* are both available at the FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM) website (<http://www.fdot.gov/environment/>).

## 1.2 AUTHORITY

This *Manual* was developed under the authority of **Section 334.044 and Section 339.155, Florida Statutes**.

The *Manual* supports objectives identified in the following:

1. **Title 23 United States Code (U.S.C.), Highways, as amended**
2. **23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450** [Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Planning Assistance and Standards]
3. **Planning and Environmental Linkages, 23 U.S.C. § 168**
4. **Efficient Project Reviews for Environmental Decision Making 23 U.S.C. § 139**
5. **49 CFR Part 613** [Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning]
6. **23 CFR Part 771** (Environmental Impact and Related Procedures)
7. **Title 42 U.S.C. Chapter 55, National Environmental Policy, as amended**
8. **40 CFR §§ 1500 – 1508** (Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing **NEPA**)
9. State and federal agency ETDM agreements (various dates)
10. 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**

## 1.3 SCOPE

The following FDOT offices use this *Manual*: Environmental Management, Planning, and Design offices. *Manual* users outside FDOT include Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPOs), Transportation Planning Organization (TPOs), other Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) members, consultants, and other state and federal agencies.

## 1.4 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

This **Manual** is hereby incorporated by [Procedure No. 650-000-002](#) and made a part of the **Standard Operating System** of FDOT (see [Procedure No. 025-020-002](#)).

## 1.5 DISTRIBUTION

Copies of this **Manual** may be obtained by downloading and printing from the [OEM Website: http://www.fdot.gov/environment/](#).

## 1.6 REVISIONS

While OEM has the ultimate responsibility for the development of, and updates to, this **Manual**, the Districts share in this responsibility as well. OEM regularly evaluates and updates the **Manual** in response to changing environmental requirements, standards, and policies to ensure consistency with the procedures established by the FDOT Forms and Procedures Office. Revisions to chapters are made on an as-needed basis that considers the last revision date, current information, District-identified issues and suggested modifications, changes in other FDOT Manuals, or changes in federal or state law, rule, policy or guidance.

OEM annually reviews the chapters of this **Manual** to ensure they are current and up to date. Revisions are incorporated into the **Manual** over the course of the following year. As chapters are updated, they are also checked for consistency and for opportunities to clarify, simplify, and focus process and procedures.

Major changes, substantive revisions, or additions (i.e., policy changes, new chapters) to the **Manual** are approved by the Executive Team through the process established in [Procedure No. 025-020-002, Standard Operating System](#).

## 1.7 TRAINING

Training courses available from FDOT pertaining to this **Manual** include **Efficient Transportation Decision Making Overview (BT-19-0045)** and courses on the use of the EST. This training is required for users of the secure EST website and is highly recommended for others engaged in the ETDM process.

FDOT offers additional courses covering procedures supportive of the FDOT environmental programs and the ETDM process. Training opportunities on related subjects may become available based on user-identified needs. See the [OEM Training Website: http://www.fdot.gov/environment/sched/train1.shtm](#) for more training opportunities. Additional training is available for authorized users through the EST.

## 1.8 FORMS

The results of the Planning and Programming Screens completed during the ETDM process are documented within the EST. Interaction with this database system is managed by the FDOT ETDM Coordinators, who are responsible for advancing projects through the Planning

and Programming Screens and working with the Project Managers to maintain the project database during the PD&E phase. Persons involved with the Planning and Programming Screens provide input directly into forms that exist within the EST. Results are stored in the Environmental Electronic Document Management System. All forms required by the ETDM process are provided within the EST. Information about accessing and using the EST is available in the [\*Environmental Screening Tool Handbook\*](#).

## 1.9 REFERENCES

23 CFR Part 450. Planning Assistance and Standards.

23 CFR Part 450. Appendix A. Linking the Transportation Planning and NEPA Processes,

23 CFR Part 771. Environmental Impact and Related Procedures.

23 U.S.C. Highways.

23 U.S.C. § 139. Efficient Project Reviews for Environmental Decision Making

23 U.S.C. § 168. Planning and Environmental Linkages.

40 CFR §§ 1500 – 1508. Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act.

42 U.S.C. Chapter 55. National Environmental Policy.

49 CFR Part 613. Federal Transit Administration Planning.

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

Florida Department of Transportation. 2013. Standard Operating System (Procedure Number 025-020-002). Accessed at <https://fdotwp1.dot.state.fl.us/ProceduresInformationManagementSystemInternet/?viewBy=1&procType=pr#> on 10/29/2018.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2016. Environmental Screening Tool Handbook. Accessed at <https://etdmpub.fl-etat.org/est/?startPageId=493&keywords=EST&categoryList=82#> on 04/20/2017.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2016. Project Development and Environment Manual (Procedure Number 650-000-001). Accessed at <http://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubs/pdeman/pdeman1.shtm> on 04/20/2017.

Florida Department of Transportation. State and federal agency agreements regarding ETDM, various dates. Accessed at <https://etdmpub.fl-etat.org/est/?startPageId=493&categoryList=85#> on 4/20/2017.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (Pub L. 112-141) 2012.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (Pub. L. 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended by Pub. L. 94-52, July 3, 1975, Pub. L. 94-83, August 9, 1975, and Pub. L. 97-258, § 4(b), Sept. 13, 1982).

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Pub. L. 109–59). 2005.

Section 334.044, Florida Statutes. Florida Transportation Plan.

Section 339.155, Florida Statutes. Transportation Planning.

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (Pub. L. 105-178). 1998.

## **1.10 HISTORY**

**03/2006:** Original publication

**07/2013:** Updated to reflect current laws, requirements, and practices

**12/2015:** Edited to reduce redundancy with Chapter 2 and references to CEMO changed to SEMO

**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 update to FDOT website links.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ETDM PROCESS**

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## CHAPTER 2

# ETDM PROCESS

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process is to incorporate environmental considerations into transportation planning to inform project delivery. This process supports the environmental policy of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to “protect and preserve the quality of life, and the natural, physical, social and cultural resources of the State, while expeditiously developing safe, cost effective, and efficient transportation systems” ([\*Environmental Policy No.: 000-625-001-m\*](#)). The ETDM process provides agencies and other stakeholders the opportunity for early input and consideration of the environment in transportation planning. ETDM process objectives include:

- Early identification of potential issues for project scope development
- Timely decision making that includes consideration of environmental quality
- Full and early public and Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) member participation
- Linkage between planning and Project Development and Environment (PD&E) [including *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)*]
- Incorporation of appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms during the planning process

These objectives are accomplished through stakeholder involvement, early consideration of environmental effects, integrating processes which were previously conducted sequentially, and using interactive techniques and innovative technologies.

The ETDM process facilitates early interaction among transportation planners; federal, state, and local agencies; Native American Tribes; and affected communities. Through this process, FDOT provides the opportunity for early stakeholder input on qualifying<sup>1</sup> transportation projects, which helps support planning decisions and develop the PD&E project scope with a

#### Key Features of the ETDM Process

- Early and continuous agency and community involvement
- Early identification of potential avoidance, minimization and mitigation opportunities
- Access to Geographic Information System (GIS) data in standardized formats
- Identification of potential key issues
- Maximized use of technology for coordination and project screening

<sup>1</sup> Refer to qualifying criteria provided in **Section 2.3.1** of this *Manual*.

clearer understanding of the environmental setting and potential concerns.

Intergovernmental interaction is accomplished through an ETAT assigned to each of the seven FDOT Districts. Each ETAT includes representatives from Metropolitan Planning Organizations/Transportation Planning Organizations (MPOs/TPOs), federal and state agencies, and participating Native American Tribes. Agency agreements between FDOT/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other state and federal agencies document the interagency understandings and agency-specific requirements for participating as an ETAT member in the ETDM process.

ETAT members use the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) to review project information, identify potential project effects, and submit comments to FDOT. This web-based GIS database and mapping tool provides access to project information and data about natural, physical, cultural, and community resources in the project area. The comments and other information are made available to the public on the ETDM Public Access Site (<https://etdmpub.fl-a-etat.org>). See **Section 2.4** for more information about the EST.

A District ETDM Coordinator leads the ETAT in each District. MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators work with the District ETDM Coordinator and the ETAT assigned to the District in which their MPO/TPO is located. Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (Turnpike) works with different ETATs depending on the location of their projects. For example, when the Turnpike has an ETDM project in District 4, the Turnpike works with the District 4 ETAT and communicates closely with the District 4 ETDM Coordinator. The District, Turnpike, and MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators also work with other FDOT, MPO/TPO, or local government personnel to identify qualifying projects and facilitate project reviews in the ETDM process. The Office of Environmental Management (OEM) has assigned each District an OEM Project Delivery Coordinator (PDC) to assist with project delivery. The District coordinates 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, 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. Refer to **Section 2.5** for more information about the roles and responsibilities of the participants in the ETDM process.

As shown in **Figure 2-1**, the ETDM process is composed of the Planning Screen and the Programming Screen. The Planning Screen best occurs when considering projects for inclusion or prioritization within a Cost Feasible Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Not all projects require a Planning Screen and may enter the process prior to the Programming Screen. If a project is identified and prioritized where the PD&E study is expected to begin within the next few years, only a programming screen should be completed on the project. The Programming Screen supports development of the FDOT Five Year Work Program. The results of the screening events link the transportation Planning phase and the PD&E phase. Each screening event centers on a project review and includes project preparation activities and follow-up tasks occurring before and after the review.

The ETDM Coordinator for the project sponsor (i.e., FDOT District, Turnpike, or MPO/TPO) uses the EST to notify the ETAT when a project is ready for review. At the same time, the information is published on the ETDM Public Access Site. During the review period, ETAT members and the public have the opportunity to provide input about potential project effects. FDOT or MPO/TPO personnel also begin to identify potential effects on surrounding communities. They seek to develop an understanding of community desires and concerns, as well as identify potential controversies related to the project. ETAT members perform multidisciplinary reviews specific to their area of expertise (e.g., wetlands or land use). These reviews help to:

- Determine the feasibility of a proposed project.
- Identify the project's potential involvement with the natural, physical, and human environment.
- Identify potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities.
- Focus the issues to be addressed during the PD&E phase.
- Create documentation and support information which may be carried forward into the PD&E phase.
- Establish evaluation methodologies for review of potential project alternatives.
- Assure clear communication and understanding of the proposed project's description as well as its purpose and need.

At the end of the review period, the project sponsor (FDOT or the MPO/TPO) summarizes the comments gathered from the reviews. FDOT subsequently uses this information to focus the issues that need to be addressed during the PD&E phase and develop the scope of services for the PD&E Study. Toward the end of the ETDM process, preliminary technical studies may be conducted to help answer questions, address issues, and support determination of the environmental document Class of Action.

The ETDM process is described in more detail in the following sections and in **Chapters 3, 4, and 5** of this **Manual**.

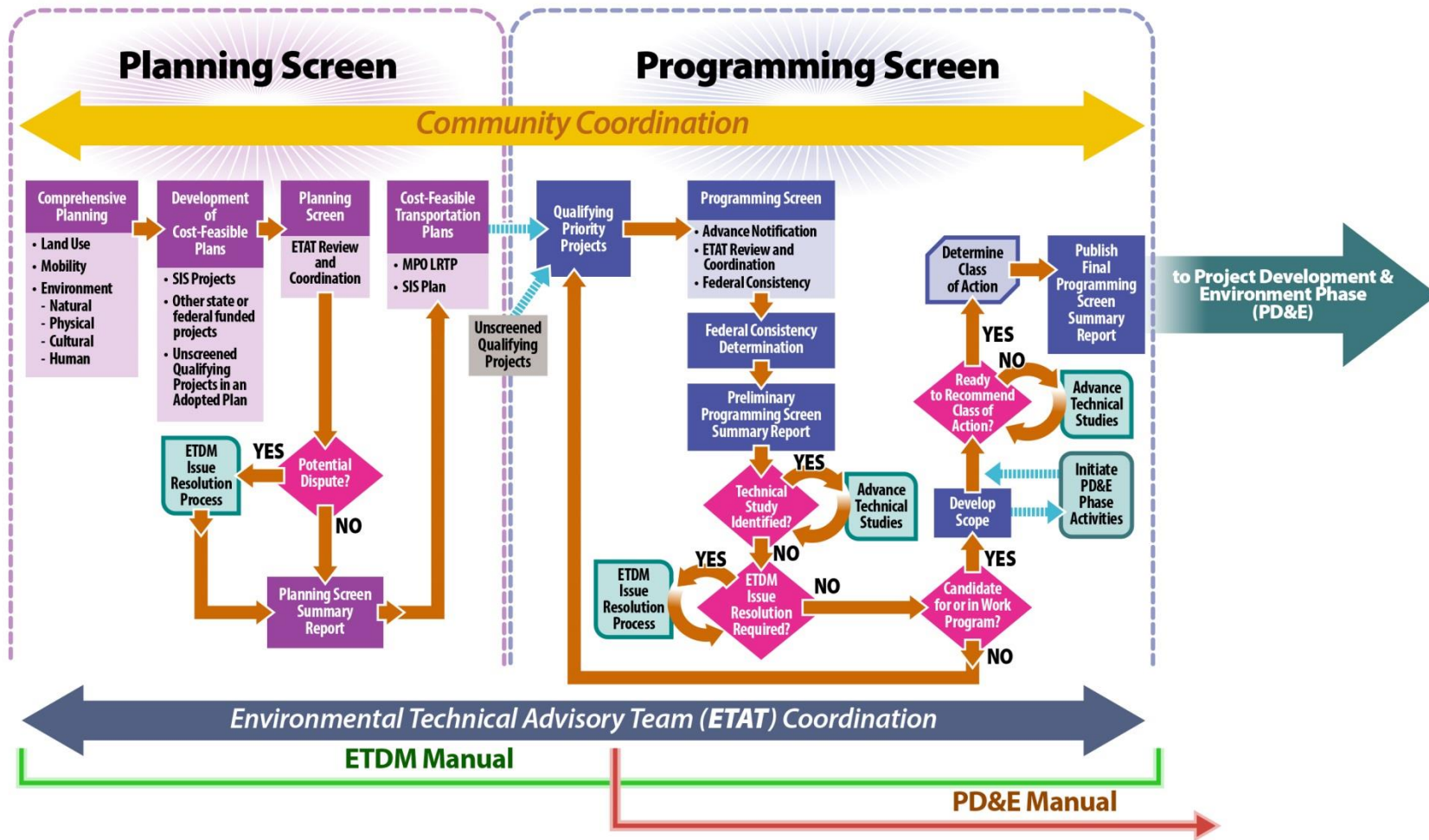


Figure 2-1: ETDM Process Diagram

## 2.2 TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

The ETDM process supports the transportation Planning phase by providing opportunities for consideration of potential environmental effects. In order to provide the context for ETDM Planning and Programming Screens, this section summarizes Florida's transportation planning process and identifies the various plans from which qualifying ETDM projects may originate.

### 2.2.1 Overview

The planning process engages civic leaders, business representatives, property owners and residents. It provides information and strategies to help guide future development, identify and help resolve community problems, promote public health and safety, and protect natural, physical, cultural, and human (including social and economic) resources. A driving force for FDOT projects is the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP), which is composed of goals and objectives that provide the framework for planning decisions in the state including local comprehensive planning. In Florida, the local comprehensive plan is a community's vision for its future which includes a transportation element that helps advance transportation priorities. Under **Chapter 163, Florida Statutes (F.S.)**, each local government must maintain a local comprehensive plan to guide future economic, social, physical, natural, and fiscal development of the area. At a minimum, these comprehensive plans address the following elements (**Section 163.3177, F.S.**):

- Future Land Use
- Transportation
- General sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and natural groundwater aquifer recharge
- Conservation, use, and protection of natural resources
- Recreation and open space
- Housing
- Coastal management (if applicable)
- Intergovernmental coordination

Transportation planning begins with the community vision and develops strategies for addressing mobility to advance the area's long-term goals. It is a cooperative process encouraging involvement by system users such as the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, the traveling public, freight operators, and the general public. **Figure 2-2** illustrates the transportation planning process (USDOT, 2015). Activities involved in transportation planning include:

- Monitoring existing conditions
- Forecasting future population and employment growth, including assessing projected land uses in the region and identifying major growth corridors
- Identifying current and projected future transportation problems and needs and analyzing, through detailed planning studies, various transportation improvement strategies to address those needs
- Developing long-range plans and short-range programs of alternative capital improvement and operational strategies for moving people and goods
- Estimating the impact of recommended future improvements to the transportation system on environmental resources
- Developing a financial plan for securing sufficient revenues to cover the costs of implementing strategies



**Figure 2-2: Transportation Planning Process (USDOT, 2015)**

Planning activities result in the identification of project priorities to address future transportation needs. These can be identified in the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Plan, a MPO/TPO

LRTP, or other long-range planning documents. As funding sources are identified, priority projects are advanced into the implementation phases through the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and in MPO/TPO areas, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The FDOT Five-Year Work Program schedules the implementation plan for these projects, as described in **Section 339.135, Florida Statutes**.

## 2.2.2 Transportation Planning Agencies

Transportation planning in Florida is a cooperative process that involves various levels of government, users of the transportation system, and the private sector.

Counties and municipalities are responsible for planning, building, and maintaining local road systems. Local governments are also responsible for most public transit systems, airports, and seaports, either directly or in conjunction with special authorities created to manage and provide services.

FDOT is responsible for planning, operating, and maintaining the State Highway System (SHS). The department is also responsible for the SIS, which consists of corridors, facilities, and services of statewide and interregional importance. FDOT also assists local governments, metropolitan and regional agencies and the private sector in providing public transit, aviation, rail, seaport, bicycle, pedestrian, and other transportation facilities and services. A number of these activities support freight initiatives.

To support these activities, FDOT prepares and maintains the FTP. Statewide modal plans maintained by FDOT include the Transit Strategic Plan, Florida Aviation System Plan, Seaport Plan, and State Rail Plan. The FTP guides transportation planning and policy decisions statewide, including the various statewide modal plans, the SIS plan, and the STIP/Work Program. FDOT maintains the SIS Plan to help guide future investments in, and the management of, the SIS. FDOT also annually adopts the STIP, and a Five Year Work Program.

Every urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 persons (as determined by the US Bureau of the Census) must have a designated MPO/TPO for transportation projects to qualify for FHWA or Federal Transit Agency (FTA) assistance (**23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 450.310(a)**). MPOs/TPOs are transportation policy-making bodies made up of representatives from local government and transportation agencies with authority and responsibility in the metropolitan planning areas. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) depends on the MPOs/TPOs to ensure that federally-funded transit and highway projects are products of a certified planning process. Within an MPO/TPO area, USDOT will not approve federal funding for urban highway or transit projects unless they are in the MPO's/TPO's plan. Each MPO/TPO is responsible for developing a LRTP, TIP, and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). For more information about Florida's MPOs/TPOs, refer to the [\*\*FDOT MPO Program Management Handbook\*\*](#).



USDOT oversees the formulation of national transportation policy. It also provides financial and technical support to state and local governments in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of federal transportation systems.

These transportation agencies must conduct their planning activities cooperatively in order to support the entire transportation system. In metropolitan areas, the MPO/TPO is responsible for actively seeking the participation of all relevant agencies and stakeholders in the planning process; similarly, FDOT is responsible for activities outside metropolitan areas. The MPOs/TPOs and FDOT also work together. For example, each FDOT District has one or more MPO/TPO Liaison(s) who works with the MPOs/TPOs within their geographic area to coordinate activities.

Pursuant to **23 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 135**, FDOT has a documented process for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials during development of the FTP and the STIP. Additional requirements for consulting with non-metropolitan local officials are included in **23 CFR § 450**. Accordingly, FDOT coordinates its statewide transportation planning process, including the STIP, with planning activities in non-metropolitan areas and considers the concerns of local elected officials representing units of general-purpose local government. FDOT confers with identified parties in non-metropolitan areas, in accordance with established processes, considers their views, and periodically informs the parties about actions taken. [Florida's Consultative Planning Process for Non-metropolitan Areas](http://www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/ruralsupport/) is available on the Office of Policy Planning website (<http://www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/ruralsupport/>).

### 2.2.3 Key Planning Documents

As illustrated in **Table 2-1**, there are four key documents produced by the federal transportation planning process. These are augmented by state required documents as described below.

**Table 2-1: Key Planning Products**

Document	Who Develops?	Who Approves?	Time/ Horizon	Contents	Update Requirements	ETDM Screening
FTP	FDOT	Governor/ FDOT	At least 20 Years	Future Goals, Strategies	Not specified	Not specified
LRTP	MPO/TPO	MPO/TPO	20 Years	Future Goals, Strategies and Projects (including cost feasible element)	Every 5 Years (4 years for non- attainment and maintenance areas)	Qualifying Projects: Planning Screen for cost feasible element
TIP	MPO/TPO	MPO/ Governor	5 Years	Transportation Investments	Annually	Qualifying Priority Projects: Programming Screen

STIP	FDOT	Governor/ USDOT	4 Years	Transportation Investments (TIP, SIS, non-MPO areas)	Annually	Qualifying Priority Projects: Programming Screen
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The FTP is the official, statewide, multimodal, transportation plan covering a period of no less than 20 years (**23 CFR § 450.214** and **Section 339.155, F.S.**). The 2060 FTP is Florida’s current long-range statewide plan. It outlines the transportation needs, policies, and strategies for the state of Florida over 50 years (beginning in 2010). The FTP contains both the short- and long-term goals and objectives designed to anticipate future conditions and meet area transportation needs.

The LRTP is the transportation plan of a MPO/TPO which addresses no less than a 20-year planning horizon and includes both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system facilitating safe and efficient movement of people and goods [**23 CFR § 450.324(a) and (b)**]. The LRTP is reviewed and updated every five years (four years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas) to confirm the transportation plan’s validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use trends and conditions and to extend the 20-year planning horizon [**23 CFR § 450.324(c)**]. Priority, qualifying projects identified for inclusion or already included in the cost feasible (fiscally constrained) element of the LRTP, should complete an ETDM Planning Screen. For projects developed using the Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process, complete an ETDM Planning Screen as early as possible (see **Chapter 3, Section 3.6** of this *Manual* for information about the ACE process during the Planning Screen).

The TIP, required by **Section 339.175(8), F.S.** and **23CFR § 450.326**, lists priority transportation projects covering a period of five years. The TIP is (a) developed and formally adopted by a MPO/TPO as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process, (b) is consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan, and (c) is required for projects to be eligible for funding under **23 U.S.C. § 134** and **49 U.S.C. Chapter 53**. The first four years of the TIP are incorporated into the federally required STIP. The fifth year of the TIP is included for informational purposes (**23 CFR § 450.326**). To develop the TIP, the MPO/TPO solicits project requests from agencies responsible for providing transportation services and facilities, cooperatively ranking them, and selecting the highest priority projects that will fit into the estimated available funding. Priority, qualifying projects complete an ETDM Programming Screen which aids in the development of the scope of services for the PD&E Study. For projects initiating the ACE process at the Programming Screen, complete an ETDM Programming Screen as early as possible.

The STIP is a statewide prioritized listing/program of transportation projects covering a period of four years that is consistent with the FTP and both LRTPs and TIPs in MPO/TPO areas [required for projects to be eligible for funding under **23 U.S.C. § 134** and **Title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53**]. For metropolitan planning areas, the STIP incorporates the TIP developed by the MPO/TPO (**23 CFR § 450.218**). Priority, qualifying projects should complete an ETDM Programming Screen to aid in the development of the scope of

services for the PD&E Study. For projects initiating the ACE process at the programming screen, complete an ETDM Programming Screen as early as possible.

Another MPO/TPO plan, the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), refers to a statement of work identifying the planning priorities and activities to be carried out within a metropolitan planning area for a two-year period. Typically this plan is not used as the basis for identifying projects to complete various screening events. However, it does relate to the other MPO/TPO plans. At a minimum, an UPWP includes a description of the planning work and resulting products, who will perform the work, time frames for completing the work, the cost of the work, and the source(s) of funds (**23 CFR § 450.104**).

As required by **Chapter 339, F.S.**, FDOT annually develops and adopts a Five Year Work Program listing the schedule of specific projects and services planned by FDOT. It includes projects from the STIP, MPO/TPO TIPs, and Priority Lists of non-MPO/TPO areas. The first four years of the Five Year Work Program are incorporated into the federally required STIP. For more information about including planning activities in the Five-Year Work Program, refer to [\*\*FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 23, Planning.\*\*](#)

## 2.2.4 Plan Consistency

As a project proceeds to the PD&E phase, it must be included in the appropriate plans and programs before receiving federal approval for its Environmental Document. Projects in MPO/TPO areas must be described in their LRTP and TIP. This may require early coordination with the MPO/TPO in case an amendment to the LRTP and/or TIP must be added, and this effort should be incorporated into the project schedule. Projects in non-MPO/TPO areas must be included into the STIP. The PD&E project team should 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. The FDOT Office of Policy Planning provides guidance about plan consistency on their website at: <http://www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/metrosupport/>.

FHWA provides clarification about transportation planning requirements and their relationship to **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** Process completion on their website at: [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/tpr\\_and\\_nepa/supplementmemo.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/tpr_and_nepa/supplementmemo.cfm).

## 2.3 SCREENING PROJECTS

This section describes the general process for screening ETDM projects, including project preparation, review, and post-review tasks. More details about the Planning and Programming Screens are described in **Chapters 3 and 4**, respectively.

### 2.3.1 Identifying Qualifying Projects

ETDM projects may originate from a variety of FDOT, MPO/TPO, or local government programs and plans, such as:

- SIS Cost Feasible Plan
- Statewide Bridge Replacement Program
- Transportation Needs Plans
- Master Plans
- Action Plans
- Corridor Plans
- TIPs
- LRTP
- Local Government Comprehensive Plans
- Capital Improvement Programs
- Priority Lists
- Statewide Acceleration and Transformation (SWAT) Planning Meetings

The project sponsor (FDOT, MPO/TPO, or local government) selects qualifying projects and then enters project information into the EST for the Planning or Programming Screen. The ETDM process applies to certain types of state and federal transportation projects that meet additional conditions described in this section. To determine whether a project must complete the ETDM process, the project sponsor first considers the project type. Qualifying project types include:

- Roadway Projects
  - Additional through lanes which add capacity to an existing road
  - A new roadway, freeway or expressway
  - A highway which provides new access to an area
  - A new or reconstructed arterial highway (e.g., realignment)
  - A new circumferential or belt highway that bypasses a community
  - Addition of interchanges or major interchange modifications to a completed freeway or expressway (based on coordination with FHWA)

- A new bridge which provides new access to an area, and bridge replacements
- Public Transportation (Planning Screen only)
  - Major capital improvements, including Intermodal Centers, Rail, and Transit Centers
  - Rail - new commuter rail, passenger rail, or new freight rail extending beyond current footprint
  - Transit - new facility, new terminal, New Start/Small Start project extending beyond current footprint
  - A new seaport, airport, or non-passenger rail project on the SIS

The environmental review process for transit projects is very different than for highway projects. Therefore, qualifying transit projects complete a Planning Screen, but not a Programming Screen. See **Section 2.3.4 Federal Involvement** for more information about processing FTA projects.

After determining the qualifying project type, the project sponsor uses the **ETDM Screening Matrix for Qualifying Projects**, shown in **Table 2-2**, to consider whether screening is required based on the transportation system, potential funding source(s), and the responsible agency (i.e., the agency required to meet federal, state, and other applicable requirements). Generally, qualifying SHS and SIS projects must complete the ETDM process when FDOT is the responsible agency, as do most other qualifying projects using federal or state funds (or requiring a federal authorization). The ETDM process is either a local option or not applicable when qualifying projects are using only local funds, or if a local, non-FDOT entity is the responsible agency. In this discussion, “local” applies to any local government agency, other state agency, expressway or bridge authority, or private entity. Where “Local and FDOT” is referenced in **Table 2-2**, coordination should occur between the local agency and FDOT as the project advances.

Note that qualifying Local Agency Program (LAP) projects follow the ETDM process because they are funded with federal dollars, which necessitates FDOT oversight. For a project to be part of the LAP, federal funds must already be programmed in the Five Year Work Program. Refer to the **FDOT LAP Manual** for more information about LAP projects.

**Table 2-2: ETDM Screening Matrix for Qualifying Projects**

	Federal Dollars (any FHWA, FTA or FRA funds or federal authorization)		State Dollars (TRIP, Transit/ Intermodal System Grants, etc) No Federal Dollars Involved		Local Dollars Only	
	Responsible Agency	ETDM Screening	Responsible Agency	ETDM Screening	Responsible Agency	ETDM Screening
<b>System</b>						
Highways on the State Highway System (SHS) and on the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)	FDOT	YES FDOT Lead	FDOT	YES	FDOT	YES
	Local		Local and FDOT	Local Option	Local and FDOT	Local Option
Highways on the SHS but not on the SIS	FDOT	YES FDOT Lead	FDOT	YES	FDOT	YES
	Local		Local and FDOT	Local Option	Local and FDOT	Local Option
Highways not on SHS but on the SIS	FDOT	YES FDOT Lead	FDOT	YES	FDOT	YES
	Local		Local and FDOT	Local Option	Local and FDOT	Local Option
Highways not on SHS nor on the SIS	FDOT	YES FDOT Lead	FDOT	YES	Local	N/A
	Local		Local	Local Option		
Major Transit Projects (new fixed guideway, New Starts) or Major Freight Projects	FDOT	YES	FDOT	YES	Local	N/A
	Local	Local Option	Local	Local Option		
<b>NOTE:</b> Local applies to any local government agency, other state agency, expressway authority, bridge authority or private entity						

**Sections 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.1.2** below provide specific guidance on how to further apply the selection criteria for a Planning or Programming Screen. If there are any questions regarding whether a project should or should not be screened, please contact the Office of Environmental Management (OEM) to discuss the project details.

### 2.3.1.1 Additional Planning Screen Criteria

Qualifying projects in or expected to be included in a Cost Feasible Plan undergo a Planning Screen. Ideally, all Planning Screens should follow the formulation of the Needs Plan and be completed before final approval of the LRTP, with highest priority projects being screened first. Usually, local government priority projects in non-MPO/TPO areas and qualifying bridge projects do not complete a Planning Screen. However, a Planning Screen may be conducted

for these projects at the discretion of the District, depending on the nature of the project and whether they qualify for screening.

FDOT is responsible for screening all qualifying SHS, SIS, and non-MPO/TPO qualifying priority projects. The MPO/TPO is responsible for screening qualifying MPO/TPO projects in their jurisdiction; however, this may be completed by FDOT as well in coordination with the MPO/TPO.

### **2.3.1.2 Additional Programming Screen Criteria**

In preparation of the STIP, a MPO/TPO TIP, or a Priority List of a county or municipality, MPO/TPO and FDOT ETDM Coordinators work with appropriate MPO/TPO, FDOT District, and other local government staff to identify qualifying projects to screen from transportation plans. This includes staff responsible for coordinating with planning agencies, managing project planning or development, and others who may have information to assist with the decision-making process. Depending on the organization, this task may involve personnel such as Planning Managers, MPO/TPO District Liaisons, Rural County Liaisons, PD&E Project Managers, planners, and environmental specialists.

A Programming Screen is required for all qualifying projects that will be included in the Five Year Work Program or those that are in the Five Year Work Program but have not started the PD&E phase. The Five Year Work Program is a schedule of specific transportation projects and services that will be provided during a five-year period. Transportation projects are selected annually for inclusion in the Five Year Work Program. It identifies:

- Which projects and services will be provided during the relevant five-year period,
- When and where such projects and services will be provided, and
- How these projects and services will be funded using available revenue.

The Five Year Work Program, required by **Chapter 339, F.S.**, is developed by the FDOT Central Office from the work programs of the FDOT Districts and Turnpike, drawing projects from MPO/TPO TIPs, local government Priority Lists, and various FDOT programs. The FDOT Work Program responds to the MPO/TPO TIP priority lists, i.e., their priorities are considered for inclusion in the work program. The MPO/TPO TIP then incorporates the projects from the adopted FDOT Work Program, reconciling the two documents. (See the [\*\*\*FDOT MPO Handbook\*\*\*](#) for more information about the TIP process.) The Five Year Work Program is published annually by the Office of Work Program and is fully described in the [\*\*\*FDOT Work Program Instructions\*\*\*](#).

Before selecting projects for the Five Year Work Program, FDOT (in conjunction with MPOs, as appropriate) should set sufficient time horizons in their project schedules to allow for a Programming Screen on all qualifying projects.

Qualifying projects in or expected to move forward into the Five Year Work Program undergo a Programming Screen. This may include projects previously reviewed in a Planning Screen, as well as those not typically reviewed in a Planning Screen, such as qualifying bridge replacement projects or projects resulting from amendments to adopted transportation plans. Programming Screens should be performed before development of the project scope of services to assist in identifying the activities to be completed during the PD&E Study. Ideally, Programming Screens should occur before the PD&E Study enters the Five Year Work Program, with highest priority projects being screened first or before the start of the PD&E phase. This does not imply that the PD&E Study can only be placed in the fifth year. Rather, projects that complete a Programming Screen should be able to be prioritized in such a manner that the PD&E phase can be programmed earlier. For example, it may be possible to program the PD&E Study in Years 1, 2, or 3, with subsequent phase(s) in Years 4 or 5. Refer to [\*\*FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 23, Planning\*\*](#), for details. The scope of a project and its priority ultimately dictate how it is programmed.

### **2.3.2 State-Wide Acceleration and Transformation (SWAT)**

SWAT is a project management approach and process that streamlines FDOT's project preconstruction phases through early coordination and communication between functional disciplines within the District. The goal of the SWAT process is to shorten project delivery times and focusing work efforts. Each District has an established SWAT team that is a composed of cross-functional, multi-disciplinary staff experienced in project delivery.

Each District's SWAT team annually holds a planning meeting early in the Work Program Cycle, to review all PD&E projects that compete for funding in the coming year. The planning meeting may include the OEM project delivery staff experts at the request of the District. During the planning meeting, the SWAT team discusses the core elements of the purpose and need for each project to ensure the project aligns with the MPO's/TPO's LRTP. The outcome of the SWAT planning meeting is a recommendation of funding type for each project that is being considered in the **Work Program**. To decide whether to federalize or not federalize the project, the SWAT planning meeting considers a variety of factors including environmental considerations, anticipated permits, [\*\*Work Program Instructions\*\*](#), and expected time savings if the project would use the state project delivery process. Additionally, the SWAT planning meeting participants assign the preliminary Class of Action (COA) for each project and recommend the list of projects to be screened through ETDM. During the SWAT planning meeting, each project is recommended as either a state or federal project. Additionally, the project manager will assure a work program identifier of State Funds Only (SFO) is assigned to state funded only projects.

The SWAT team communicates frequently with the ETDM Coordinator, who may either be a standing District SWAT member or drawn upon as a resource to advance early project activities. As a result of the SWAT planning meeting, the ETDM Coordinator is provided a list of projects which should complete an ETDM Screening. The ETDM Coordinator is also advised of whether the project will advance with state funds or FHWA funds. The District will decide whether to initiate project screening with either an ETDM Planning Screen or Programming Screen event, based upon project complexity and timing. Minimally, the ETDM



Programming Screen must be completed within one year before PD&E phase funds are programmed. The ETDM Coordinator collaborates with the SWAT Team to assure ETDM screening events are run prior to PD&E Study Advertisement. Following the ETDM screening event, the ETDM Coordinator coordinates with the SWAT Team regarding content, comments and responses of the screening events. The screening event results may be used to inform further project planning, project scoping and SWAT activities prior to initiation of the PD&E Study.

See [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 10, State, Local, or Privately Funded Project Delivery](#) and [FDOT Quick Guide: Transforming our State Pre-Construction Process](#) for more information about the SWAT process.

### 2.3.3 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Assignment Program

In a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\) dated 12/14/2016](#), FHWA assigned and FDOT assumed FHWA's NEPA responsibilities for environmental review, reevaluation, consultation, or other actions required by federal environmental law pertaining to the review or approval of federal highway projects. The responsibilities were assigned under the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program (NEPA Assignment Program) codified at **23 U.S.C. §327**. Specific laws and conditions of the assignment are found in the MOU on the [OEM Website](#) at <https://www.fdot.gov/environment/NEPAAssignment.shtm>.

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. In the ETDM process, OEM staff perform reviews of the following items and provide approval and/or concurrence at specific milestones:

- Purpose and need
- Methodology Memorandums for the Alternative Corridor Evaluation process
- Alternative Corridor Evaluation Reports
- Elimination of unreasonable alternatives
- Invitations for Participating and Cooperating agencies
- COA determinations
- Adoption of planning products to be used during the PD&E Study

These early approvals and/or concurrences allow for the identification of potential project effects supporting the streamlining objectives of the ***Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st***

***Century Act (MAP-21)* and *the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*, codified in **23 U.S.C. § 139**.**

FDOT responsibilities under the NEPA Assignment Program are subject to the same procedural and substantive requirements as previously applied to FHWA.

### **2.3.4 Federal Involvement**

Prior to starting an ETAT review, the project team updates the project information in the EST to indicate the level of federal involvement by identifying the following:

- State or FHWA Environmental Review Process
- State or Federal Funding
- Federal Permits

Certain ETDM projects must follow the FHWA environmental process:

- On Interstate
- Using or involving Interstate right-of-way (e.g., air rights, adjacent, etc.)
- Projects within and impacting federal lands such as National Parks or Forests, etc.
- FHWA funds are expected to be on the project (includes any phase of project development or implementation)

Refer to [\*\*\*FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 25, PD&E\*\*\*](#), for detailed criteria.

Under the NEPA Assignment Program, the PD&E Study and approvals are carried out by FDOT. For these projects, FDOT serves as the Lead Agency and OEM assigns a Project Delivery Coordinator to work with the District's project team.

When the project team identifies that only state funds will be allocated for delivery of the project, they must also flag the project within the Work Program database as SFO. These projects must follow the state environmental review process. The FDOT District must be the lead agency and the Environmental Document must be a State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR).

Projects may still follow the **NEPA** process if a federal permit is required, even though FHWA funding or actions are not required. Coordination with OEM and the permitting agency is required to develop an appropriate Environmental Document supporting the permitting agency's decision making process.

The environmental review process is very different for transit projects led by FTA. FTA does not review projects nor provide approval of a COA within the EST. FTA recognizes the benefits

of the ETDM screenings to demonstrate agency coordination, as well as identifying and documenting environmental considerations. However, the screening results are only a portion of the information needed to supplement an FTA application requesting entry into their process. FTA has a series of “Go/No Go” points in their process. FTA funding is an openly competitive process requiring submission of an application, supporting analysis, documentation, and a proposed COA requesting entry into the FTA process. During the ETDM process, projects where FTA is anticipated to be the Lead Federal Agency and neither FHWA funding or action is expected, the project should be screened as a state project, with the FDOT District as the lead (similar to SEIR projects). These reviews should be processed as Planning Screens, not Programming Screens. The purpose of the screening is to obtain comments from the ETAT which can later support formal submission of an application to FTA. By completing a Planning Screen, the information will be available, but FTA will not be required to complete other actions associated with a Programming Screen (AN Package, cooperating/participating, purpose and need acceptance, COA, etc.) For more information about the FTA Environmental Review process, see [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 14: Transit Project Delivery](#).

### 2.3.5 Programming ETDM Activities for Funding

ETDM activities support planning decisions and are considered planning-level activities. Therefore, ETDM activities should be programmed for funding as planning projects, separate from PD&E activities for a specific project. ETDM activities may include, but are not limited to, preparation for completion of or further coordination or activities supporting ETDM Planning or Programming Screens, Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) activities, and advancement of technical or feasibility studies prior to a PD&E Study. This applies to consultant services or in-house costs to specifically perform and support the ETDM Planning and Programming Screens. FDOT has flexibility to determine the best source of funds to cover ETDM activities. Funds may be placed in a districtwide reserve box specifically for advanced activities; or the District may identify funds in other districtwide consultant contract boxes sufficient to cover the related ETDM tasks. For detailed instructions, see [FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 23, Planning, Section A.4, Efficient Transportation Decision Making \(ETDM\)](#).

### 2.3.6 Project Screening Release Schedule

Based on the list of projects selected for Planning or Programming Screens, FDOT ETDM Coordinators and Project Managers work with appropriate staff to develop a 12-month ETDM Screening schedule. The schedule identifies projects, the type of screening, and the anticipated screening release date for each project. Projects undergoing the ACE process should also be identified because they require additional activities, as discussed in **Chapters 3 and 4** of this *Manual*.

FDOT tracks ETDM work as part of the FDOT Production Schedule. The project team should work with project schedulers to use the required Project Schedule and Management (PSM) codes listed in **Table 2-3** for ETDM screening activities.

**Table 2-3: ETDM Project Schedule and Management (PSM) Codes**

PSM Code	Activity to Track	Description
700	ETDM/ETAT PROGRAMMING SCREEN START	ENTER START DATE FOR SCREENING EVENT
701	ETDM PROGRAMMING PRELIMINARY SUMMARY REPORT PUBLISHED	ENTER DATE FOR PRELIM PROGRAMMING SCREEN PUBLISH
702	ETDM PROGRAMMING FINAL SUMMARY REPORT PUBLISHED	ENTER DATE FOR FINAL PROGRAMMING SCREEN PUBLISH

The schedule should be made available to the ETAT on the EST ETDM Calendar and updated as needed. FDOT Districts are encouraged to hold annual ETAT meetings (or web meetings) to discuss project specifics, release schedules, and program objectives. As changes occur to the list of projects or schedules, the FDOT ETDM Coordinators update the screening release schedule on the EST ETDM Calendar. Refer to the [\*Environmental Screening Tool Handbook\*](#) for instructions.

It is important to ensure the ETAT has enough time to review and provide comments. Therefore, 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. In addition, four months should be allowed per project to provide time for reviews, public involvement activities, possible review extensions, and preparation of the **Summary Report**. During the development of the project screening release schedule, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator should collaborate with other Districts to ensure consideration of their needs, plan adoption dates, work program deadlines, and the workload of ETAT members who may be assigned to multiple FDOT Districts. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator should also keep the OEM PDC informed of the schedule.

### 2.3.7 Planning Screen

In preparation of adopting the Cost Feasible Plans, MPO/TPO and FDOT ETDM Coordinators work with the SWAT Team and other FDOT, MPO/TPO, or local government personnel to identify qualifying projects as described above.

Prior to initiating the Planning Screen review, the purpose and need, project description, Preliminary Environmental Discussion (PED), and logical termini for the project are added to the EST based on information from and in coordination with the applicable Planning office. The ETDM Coordinator is responsible for checking the data for completeness and accuracy. An OEM Project Delivery Coordinator reviews the information before the Planning Screen notification is distributed, providing comments within 14 days. This review may also include the OEM lead engineer and subject matter experts. During the 45-day project review period, ETAT members review a project's purpose and need and provide comments about potential project effects to the natural, physical, cultural, and community resources related to their statutory and regulatory authority. They may also begin to identify potential mitigation opportunities. ETAT members provide comments about a proposed project based on their

expertise, respective agency authority, plans, programs, and technical reports. Commentary should reflect understanding of context and intensity of potential involvement with a resource based upon the proposed activities. The PED should be prepared in a way that assists the ETAT in this understanding. Early input received during the Planning Screen enables the transportation planners to:

- Refine the initial project concept
- Refine the project's purpose and need
- Identify potential avoidance, minimization, or mitigation opportunities
- Improve project cost estimates
- Consider resource management plans and community values
- Advance technical studies, if appropriate

Following the project review, the ETDM Coordinator should review and discuss ETAT comments with the District Environmental Manager and Project Manager. If needed, the ETDM Coordinator may elect to contact the individual ETAT member(s) for additional clarification. The ETDM Coordinator prepares FDOT responses to ETAT commentary. Once internal review is complete, the ETDM coordinator publishes the **Planning Screen Summary Report**. This report serves as feedback to the ETAT members and summarizes key recommendations and results from the screening event. FDOT also has opportunity to advance studies or analysis to support the Programming Screen. It can assist with subsequent interagency dialogue and aid in the development of LRTPs, Priority Lists, and the SIS Plan. The **Planning Screen Summary Report** includes a summary of ETAT member commentary identifying potential environmental issues and considerations for advancing the project. It also provides information about how FDOT or the MPO/TPO will address issues identified during the Planning Screen review. It additionally documents information from earlier studies and community outreach activities, which would support subsequent phases.

For certain projects, such as new alignments, the ACE process may begin during the Planning Screen. The ACE process provides FDOT with a consistent, documented method for corridor evaluation. Working with ETAT members and the Lead Agency (defined in **Section 2.5**), FDOT Districts establish methodologies to help identify reasonable alternatives for detailed analysis in the PD&E phase. With concurrence from the Lead Agency, these decisions may be carried forward into subsequent **NEPA** documents.

For more information about initiating the ACE process during the Planning Screen, see **Chapter 3, Section 3.6**, of this **Manual**.

## 2.3.8 Programming Screen

The Programming Screen builds upon the information produced during the Planning Screen, if applicable (not all projects complete a Planning Screen). The Programming Screen is required for all qualifying projects (defined in **Section 2.3.1**) being considered for inclusion in FDOT's Five Year Work Program, or prior to initiation of the PD&E Study. The Programming Screen begins FDOT's Environmental Scoping Process for the PD&E phase. Environmental Scoping is "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (**40 CFR § 1501.7**). Programming Screens should be performed before creating the project scope of services so the screening results can be considered during its development.

During the Programming Screen, ETAT representatives provide technical assistance, comments about potential project effects, acknowledge understanding or ask for clarification of the purpose and need, and assist FDOT in scoping technical studies necessary to satisfy the requirements of the PD&E phase.

Prior to initiating the Programming Screen review, the project team adds or updates the project information in the EST. The ETDM Coordinator is responsible for checking the data for completeness and accuracy. An OEM Project Delivery Coordinator reviews the information before the Programming Screen notification is distributed, providing comments within 14 days. FDOT uses the EST to notify agencies and stakeholders to proceed with their review. When applicable, the notice for the Programming Screen begins a 45-day comment period to allow for the distribution, discussion, and receipt of agency responses. Upon receipt of this notice, all ETAT representatives will review and comment on the information associated with the Programming Screen. FDOT evaluates the input received and uses it to advance or focus analysis prior to the PD&E phase (as appropriate), develop the scope of services for the PD&E Study, and assist in determining the appropriate COA as described in the [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 2, Class of Action Determination for Highway Projects\*\*](#). For ACE projects, the screening assists in narrowing the list of reasonable alternatives requiring detailed study during the PD&E phase.

After the project review, the ETDM Coordinator prepares FDOT's responses to ETAT commentary in coordination with the District Environmental Manager, and the Project Manager. When this coordination is complete, the ETDM Coordinator publishes the **Preliminary Programming Screening Summary Report** to document the initial screening event and **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** when a COA determination has been made. Prior to publishing the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report**, technical studies may be conducted to help answer questions, address issues, and support determination of the environmental document Class of Action. The summary reports serve as feedback to the ETAT members and document the results of the screening. The final report also supports development of a project's scope of work based on the ETAT reviews, considerations, and recommendations received during the screening and are intended to be adopted as a planning product for use in the **NEPA** process.

### 2.3.9 Advance Notification (AN) Process

FDOT uses the AN process to inform agencies and other interested parties of a proposed transportation action, conduct the Federal Consistency Review (as appropriate), and support project scoping for **NEPA** or State Environmental Impact Reports (SEIR)]. This fulfills the project initiation notification as required by **Title 23 U.S.C.**, as amended. In addition, the AN may also provide notice of FDOT's intent to apply for federal aid on a project, initiating the Federal Consistency Review process as required by **15 CFR § 930**.

The project team develops the AN package which is distributed through the EST, or via a letter, as appropriate. Recipients of the AN package have 45 days to provide input about potential project effects, identify potential technical studies, and document the need for future agency or tribal involvement. The Florida State Clearinghouse (SCH) has another 15 days to review the Consistency Reviewer's comments in the EST. The SCH then submits a Federal Consistency Review determination with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The SCH also issues a notice of inconsistency (when applicable). The AN package may be distributed concurrently with the Programming Screen notification, or separately at any point after publishing the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**. See **Chapter 4** of this **Manual**, and **[PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#)** for details about the AN process and Federal Consistency Review.

### 2.3.10 Updating Notifications and Rescreening Projects

Recipients of the Programming Screen Notification and/or AN must be notified when one or more of the following conditions occur:

- It has been four years or longer since the previous Programming Screen review
- There is a change in project termini (expanded) and/or
- There is a change in project concept(s) (e.g., revised alignments, the addition of an interchange, etc.)

Examples of changes to the project concept to consider for rescreening may include:

- Editing line work (e.g., adding segments, deleting segments, splitting an alternative into multiple segments, and adding a new leg)
- Adding alternative modes (i.e., road, transit, pedestrian, rail, etc.)
- Changing the configuration (e.g., changing "Lanes Undivided" to "Lanes Divided", etc.)
- Changing the current or planned number of lanes

- Modifying the previously identified Needs Configuration

If the project has **not** entered the PD&E phase, the AN must be reprocessed and will include an updated Programming Screen. An updated AN package is prepared in accordance with [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification\*\*](#). On federal highway projects, the District must coordinate with OEM.

The Project Manager, in coordination with the ETDM Coordinator, updates project information in the AN package in the EST, and sends the updated package to the recipients of the original AN. The cover letter should reference the earlier AN (including the State Application Identifier number) and include the reason(s) the new AN is being transmitted.

If the project has entered the PD&E phase, the project is not required to go back through the Programming Screen. Instead, the District will prepare a project status fact sheet and distribute it to the same recipients of the Programming Screen and/or AN.

See [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification\*\*](#) for information about the project status fact sheet.

### **2.3.11 Advancing to Project Development and Environment (PD&E)**

During the PD&E phase, FDOT performs preliminary engineering, conducts environmental reviews and public involvement activities, and prepares necessary studies and reports as described in the [\*\*FDOT PD&E Manual\*\*](#). During this phase, FDOT develops alternatives, evaluates potential impacts to natural, physical, cultural, and community resources, and documents compliance with federal and state environmental laws. ETAT members provide technical assistance upon request by FDOT. The COA determination dictates the type of Environmental Document prepared during the PD&E phase. Federal Environmental Documents are developed in compliance with **NEPA**, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing **NEPA**, and the implementing regulations of the Lead Federal Agency.. See [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 2\*\*](#) for more information about environmental COA determinations. For state, local, or privately funded transportation projects, see [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 10\*\*](#).

**23 U.S.C. § 168** provides authority for, and encourages the integration of, planning information and products into the **NEPA** process. Therefore, the results of the 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)
- Distribute the Advance Notification
- Provide early input from stakeholders about transportation 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
- Advance technical studies, if appropriate
- Identify the anticipated environmental COA

Recommendations made during Planning and Programming Screens are recorded in the EST, and published in the ***Final Programming Screen Summary Report*** for use in the PD&E phase. Generally, commitments are not made during the planning phase. However, if a commitment is made, the FDOT project team follows ***FDOT Procedure No. 650-000-003 Project Commitment Tracking*** (see ***PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 22: Commitments***). At the completion of the PD&E phase, the Environmental Document is prepared, providing the environmental and engineering recommendations to guide final design. **Chapter 5** of this **Manual** describes the transition to the PD&E phase.

FDOT's ***PD&E Manual*** details the process and technical requirements for compliance with federal and state laws during the PD&E phase.

## 2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING TOOL

The State of Florida has developed a comprehensive digital database, the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL), at the University of Florida's GeoPlan Center. The EST is a web application that uses FGDL data and provides for an interactive review of proposed transportation projects by ETAT members. Project team members and ETAT members access the EST through an internal secure site, which is password protected to allow updates to the database. Other stakeholders may view the information on the read-only ETDM Public Access Site (<https://etdmpub.flor-etat.org/est/>).

FDOT and the MPO/TPOs enter information into the EST to advance consideration of environmental effects on their qualifying transportation projects. ETAT representatives provide new and updated GIS data to the FGDL for use within the EST, as available.

The EST performs standardized GIS analyses and queries using information supplied by ETAT members and contained in the FGDL. Moreover, it:

- Integrates data pertinent to natural, physical, cultural, and community resources and transportation programs into a standardized format
- Analyzes GIS data within project buffers to support ETAT member commentary

- Provides a platform for dissemination of information among ETAT representatives and the public
- Provides storage and access to ETAT reviews

EST users receive automatic email announcements about the availability of new data or analyses, project review deadlines, and training opportunities. User guides, technical documents, program agreements, manuals, and handbooks related to the ETDM process are available within the EST Library to assist ETAT members. A staffed help desk is available during normal business hours to provide technical assistance. **Figure 2-3** schematically displays the concept for the EST.

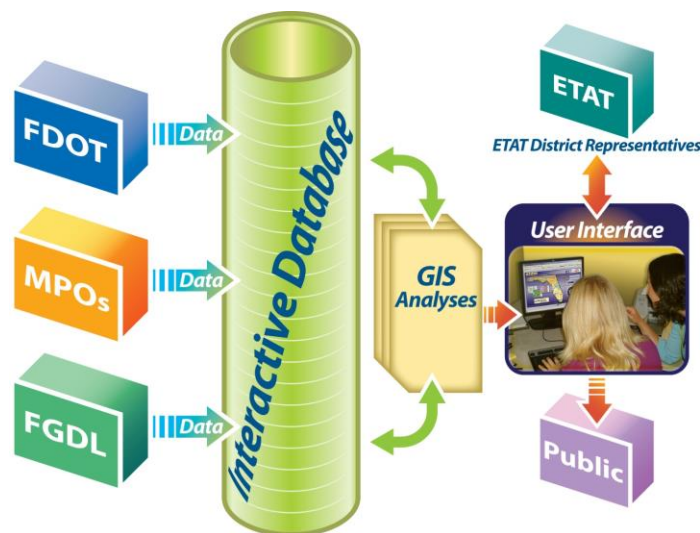


Figure 2-3: ETDM Database Technology Concept

FDOT strives to improve the quality, consistency, and currency of data available for analysis through the EST. The responsibility for data acquisition and management is further described in **Chapter 6** of this **Manual**. For instructions on how to use the EST, refer to FDOT's [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#).

## 2.5 ETDM COORDINATION

Successful interaction among those involved in the Planning and Programming Screens requires close coordination and teamwork. The EST facilitates communication and documents the results of the screening events. Additional interaction through interpersonal communication and team meetings helps to coordinate among FDOT, MPOs/TPOs, local governments, and ETAT members.

While the ETDM process requires interaction among a wide range of professionals involved in planning and project development processes, the responsibility for successful implementation rests with the following primary ETDM team members:

- PD&E Project Manager
- Environmental Manager
- Project Development Manager
- ETDM Coordinator
- Community Liaison Coordinator (CLC)
- Office of Environmental Management
- Environmental Permit Coordinator
- FDOT Planning and MPO/TPO Staff
- ETAT Members
- Lead Agency Representatives

These team members play a key role in the ETDM process by providing project information, program expertise, quality assurance, coordination, and recommendations to support the screening event or the decision-making process. The team is responsible for coordinating with District management in advancing ETDM activities, as appropriate. The FDOT District identifies the personnel, roles, and responsibilities for this team as appropriate to support the ETDM process implementation within the District. This can include assigning consultant support. FDOT Districts, MPO/TPOs, and ETAT agencies have flexibility and discretion on how activities are assigned and accomplished. For example, a task listed under the ETDM Coordinator may be performed by the PD&E Project Manager. The important point is that the activity is accomplished and the ETDM Coordinator, as administrator of the ETDM process, is able to coordinate and provide feedback and verify that the project advances through the process. The ETDM Coordinator should assure the Project Manager and District Environmental Manager have the opportunity to review ETAT commentary as well as shape and review FDOT responses and the resulting summary report. The District should also coordinate project activities that require OEM action or may need OEM support through the designated PDC.

Other staff specialists, such as planners, engineers, SIS Coordinators, MPO/TPO District Liaisons, Rural County Liaisons, environmental specialists, and managers also play key roles in the ETDM process within FDOT and other ETAT member organizations. FDOT and ETAT members are encouraged to identify personnel who will provide project information, support project development, or assist in the identification of potential project effects.

## 2.5.1 PD&E Project Manager

The PD&E Project Manager executes and completes a project through the PD&E phase. This individual should be assigned during the Programming Screen and is the leader of the project team. PD&E Project Managers have the same roles and responsibilities in the ETDM process as the ETDM Coordinator for the projects they manage.

Tasks performed by the PD&E Project Manager include, but are not limited to tasks listed below (also see ETDM Coordinator tasks listed in **Section 2.5.4**):

- Refining the project purpose and need, description, and spatial representation (geometry loaded and seen in the EST)
- Working with FDOT ETDM Coordinators and environmental specialists to determine the Summary Degrees of Effect (SDOEs)
- Working with the MPO/TPO District Liaisons, Rural County Liaisons, and District planning offices to ensure consistency with applicable transportation plans
- Working with the ETAT and environmental specialists on specific issues and comments
- Participating in issue resolution
- Providing CLCs with comments identified or community outreach activities conducted
- Reviewing project information before being finalized and advanced by the ETDM Coordinator
- Working with FDOT ETDM Coordinators, environmental specialists, Project Development Engineers, and management to prepare scopes for PD&E phase technical studies and COA determinations
- Integrating review results and planning phase outcomes into PD&E documents
- Verifying that appropriate technical studies have been or are performed to address identified project issues

If the PD&E Project Manager is not assigned until the PD&E phase, the ETDM Coordinator and PD&E Project Manager meet to discuss the outcomes from the Planning and Programming Screens. For more information about PD&E Project Manager roles and responsibilities, refer to the [\*\*\*FDOT Project Management Handbook\*\*\*](#).

## 2.5.2 Environmental Manager

The Environmental Managers provide guidance, coordination, and decisions to support every aspect of the ETDM process and the PD&E phase. These responsibilities play a vital part in the effectiveness and efficiency of ETDM operations. Their roles include, but are not limited to:

- Providing guidance on the appropriate COA and scope of services for the PD&E Study
- Determining whether a state transportation project should be classified as a State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) or a Non-Major State Action (NMSA)
- Assisting, leading, or supporting activities identified under other roles
- Reviewing and approving (signing) Environmental Documents during PD&E, when applicable
- Coordinating with District management

In some districts, these ETDM responsibilities are delegated to the Project Development Engineer.

## 2.5.3 Project Development Manager

The Project Development Manager is responsible for the Project Development program and process in the FDOT Districts. This individual is often a key member of the ETDM team, working with the Project Manager, ETDM Coordinator, and other personnel on tasks such as:

- Identifying projects for screening
- Establishing a project screening schedule
- Coordinating with the lead agency to determine the COA
- Determining the need for technical studies, permits and scope of work, including public involvement, issue resolution, and quality assurance for PD&E Studies
- Coordinating with District management

## 2.5.4 ETDM Coordinator

Each FDOT District, Turnpike, and MPO/TPO has a designated ETDM Coordinator. In general, the ETDM Coordinators are responsible for administering the ETDM process for their respective organizations. In conjunction with appropriate staff, they implement the ETDM process within their organizations.

In addition, the FDOT District ETDM Coordinators lead the ETAT for their geographic Districts. They may also conduct or coordinate ETDM training and provide technical assistance to other FDOT, MPO/TPO, local government, and ETAT members (consistent with statewide procedures and guidance).

The Turnpike ETDM Coordinator administers Turnpike projects through the ETDM process and coordinates with the geographic FDOT District office(s) where the projects are located. The ETATs for the geographic FDOT Districts also review Turnpike projects located in those areas.

MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators work closely with their FDOT counterparts as qualifying MPO/TPO projects advance from the Planning phase to the PD&E phase. Ideally, the MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinator sponsors MPO/TPO projects during the Planning Screen. As projects advance to the Programming Screen, the FDOT District takes the lead while continuing to seek input from the MPO/TPO.

Key activities of the ETDM Coordinators are listed below. Unless otherwise specified, these activities apply to all three types of ETDM Coordinators (FDOT District, Turnpike, and MPO/TPO) for their respective projects. When a Project Manager is assigned during a Planning or Programming Screen, the Project Manager can perform these activities for the specific project.

- Confirming timely information flow with CLCs, planners, environmental specialists, Project Managers, and other personnel within their organization who maintain information needed for the ETDM screens, participate in the project reviews, or use the results
- Working with appropriate staff to ensure timely exchange of project information from the MPO/TPOs and local governments to FDOT, as applicable
- Coordinating with the SWAT team and appropriate management and staff to identify projects for screening and to establish a screening schedule
- Coordinating and working with the project team to perform quality assurance checks on information entered into the EST and ensuring accurate project information is entered into the EST, including project description, purpose and need, project GIS data, plan consistency, schedules, PED, and AN information
- Coordinating with the appropriate planning staff or government liaisons to ensure the project is consistent with all relevant plans (i.e., STIP, TIP, LRTP)
- Identifying and uploading other relevant project information, such as planning studies, **Methodology Memorandum (MM)**, **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)**.
- Engaging ETAT representatives to coordinate timely and meaningful reviews

- Verifying that ETAT representatives receive information about how project plans or concepts have been adapted to address their concerns, or communicating to the ETAT representatives the rationale for not incorporating their input
- Assisting with public involvement activities during the Planning and Programming Screens
- Coordinating sociocultural effects (SCE) evaluations with the CLC and identifying prior efforts which should be documented in the EST through assistance from local government or other FDOT or MPO/TPO staff
- Coordinating considerations for a system-wide cumulative effects evaluation, when applicable
- Monitoring preliminary ETAT responses and conducting personal communication to clarify issues or respond to questions
- Monitoring relevant ETAT commentary to identify actions necessary to advance the project
- Identifying actionable commentary from the ETAT and transmitting to the appropriate staff as the project advances
- Preparing summary reports in coordination with other personnel to document potential project issues, ETAT member and public commentary, and recommendations to address those issues, including assigning a SDOE to each category within the EST

In addition to the above activities, the following activities apply to FDOT District and Turnpike ETDM Coordinators:

- Coordinating the Issue Resolution process when applicable
- Ensuring ETDM group identifier is assigned per the [\*FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 23\*](#)
- Providing summary reports to PD&E Project Managers and environmental specialists to support preparation of the scopes for PD&E phase technical studies
- Supporting FDOT Managers, the Project Development Engineer, and Project Manager with Lead Agency coordination to determine the COA for projects screened through the ETDM process
- Providing information from the Programming Screen to FDOT Environmental Permit Coordinators to support the permitting process

- Providing Programming Screen results to FDOT Project Managers to support coordination with the FDOT Work Program Administrator

## 2.5.5 Community Liaison Coordinator

Each FDOT District, Turnpike, and MPO/TPO has a designated CLC. Specific titles for this person may vary (for example, SCE Coordinator), but the roles and responsibilities are generally those described for the CLC. The CLC, in conjunction with the ETDM Coordinator and project team, analyzes potential community impacts during the Planning and Programming Screens. Also known as SCE evaluation, this includes consideration of potential social, economic, land use, mobility, aesthetics, and relocation effects. The FDOT CLC evaluates potential sociocultural effects for bridge replacement projects, SIS, SHS, and non-MPO/TPO priority projects.

During the Planning Screen, the MPO/TPO CLC has these responsibilities for projects not on the SIS or SHS in each MPO/TPO area. Preferably, prior to releasing the Programming Screen for ETAT review, the FDOT CLC performs the SCE evaluations on these projects with input from the MPO/TPO CLC. The FDOT District CLCs, MPO/TPO CLCs, and District MPO/TPO Liaisons work closely to identify and implement public involvement activities in MPO/TPO areas, as needed. In rural areas, the FDOT District CLC works with appropriate District personnel, such as the Rural County Liaison or public involvement staff, to identify and implement applicable public involvement activities based on the nature of the project and potential for community impacts. In addition, the FDOT CLC interacts with the community or MPO/TPO to verify that identified community effects are addressed in a manner consistent with community values and desires, and FDOT standards and resources. The [Sociocultural Effects Program website](#) and [Public Involvement Handbook](#) describe practical applications and provide specific techniques to accomplish CLC activities. Again, ideally, the Sociocultural Effects Evaluation/FDOT commentary should be completed prior to ETAT Screening.

The following activities may apply to the FDOT District, Turnpike, or MPO/TPO CLCs as they work on their respective projects. See **Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6** of this **Manual** for additional information.

- Working with the ETDM Coordinator and/or other staff in their organizations to gather community information required for the SCE evaluation
- Developing appropriate level of activities in consideration of potential project impacts, scope, and description, as well as potential for controversy
- Working with FDOT, MPO/TPO, and local government staff to gather public comments collected in earlier outreach activities, and documenting a summary of these comments in the EST



- Coordinating with the ETDM Coordinator assigned to the project and other FDOT District, MPO/TPO, or local government staff to develop and update community information in the vicinity of planned projects, as needed
- Coordinating community outreach activities with the FDOT or MPO/TPO public information staff
- Conducting project SCE evaluations and entering results into the EST
- Working with appropriate staff in their organizations to respond to community comments about transportation issues received during the Planning and Programming Screens
- Facilitating communication with community representatives regarding sociocultural effects in coordination with appropriate staff
- Monitoring and updating community coordination activities to improve effectiveness
- Recommending ways to resolve the community issues identified during SCE evaluations
- Updating the summary of public comments to include input received during the Planning and Programming Screens
- Provide information for the project's Public Involvement Plan

### **2.5.6 Office of Environmental Management (OEM)**

OEM management and professional staff provide guidance, coordination, and support on every aspect of the ETDM process during the Planning phase as a link to advance projects to the PD&E phase. OEM manages the ETDM program, the EST, the interagency agreements, statewide interagency coordination, and provides policy guidance, technical assistance, and training.

OEM roles during ETDM include, but are not limited to:

- Acting as Lead Agency under the NEPA Assignment Program (see details in ***Section 2.5.7 OEM Project Delivery Coordinator***)
- Developing and updating FDOT policies and procedures
- Coordinating with other functional areas within the Department
- Communicating and coordinating program activities with ETAT agencies
- Managing ETAT agency agreements

- Providing guidance and technical support
- Maintaining the ETDM Manual chapters and other supporting documents
- Conducting training
- Coordinating with District and central office staff to perform quality assurance checks on information in the EST
- Managing the ETDM performance management program, including the FDOT Quality Assurance Plan
- Managing the ETDM Help Desk
- Maintaining and enhancing the EST

### **2.5.7 OEM Project Delivery Coordinator**

When FDOT is the Lead Agency under the NEPA Assignment program, an OEM Project Delivery Coordinator reviews the following items with the lead engineer and subject matter experts as needed. Under the direction of OEM management, the OEM Project Delivery Coordinator provides approval and/or concurrence for these items at specific milestones:

- Purpose and need
- Methodology Memorandums for the Alternative Corridor Evaluation process
- Alternative Corridor Evaluation Reports
- Elimination of unreasonable alternatives
- Invitations for Participating and Cooperating agencies
- COA determinations
- Adoption of planning products to be used during the PD&E Study

The OEM Project Delivery Coordinator responsibilities during ETDM may include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing information prior to screening event notifications
- Participating as Lead Agency representative in the screening events, providing approvals and/or concurrence as directed by OEM management
- Assisting with the ETDM Issue Resolution Process, when applicable

- Providing support and guidance on FDOT policy and procedures, NEPA and other regulations

### **2.5.8 Environmental Permit Coordinator**

The involvement of the Environmental Permit Coordinator provides another important linkage between the Planning and Project Development phases in support of environmental permitting activities.

Environmental Permit Coordinator roles during ETDM may include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying anticipated permits
- Developing and reviewing ETAT responses provided during project screening
- Considering mitigation opportunities
- Coordinating with ETDM Coordinator, Environmental Manager, and Project Manager, as assigned
- Assisting in the identification of technical studies
- Providing guidance and technical support
- Engaging in interagency coordination, as needed

### **2.5.9 Other FDOT and MPO/TPO Staff**

FDOT and MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators and Project Managers may look to other FDOT and MPO/TPO staff for assistance. Below are several additional participants in the ETDM process and the tasks they may support:

- SIS Coordinators
  - Identifying projects for review
  - Ensuring consistency with applicable plans
  - Assisting in the development of project concepts, including project description and purpose and need
  - Working with the FDOT ETDM Coordinator and CLC on SCE evaluations
  - Helping to prepare summary reports, including responses and commitments and potential scope of work
- Planners:

- Providing data from early studies to support reviewed projects
- Assisting with data entry, quality assurance review, and summary report preparation
- MPO/TPO District Liaisons or Rural County Liaisons
  - Coordinating the exchange of project information between MPOs/TPOs or rural counties and Districts, including project consistency and prioritization information
  - Working with MPOs/TPOs and local governments to ensure necessary plan amendments are conducted and approved by the overseeing Board prior to requesting Lead Agency signature on the Environmental Document
- Environmental Specialists
  - Providing data from early studies to support projects completing the ETDM process
  - Assisting with data entry [including Preliminary Environmental Discussion (PED)], quality assurance review, technical studies, and summary report preparation
- SWAT Team
  - Reviewing the project's purpose and need to ensure the project aligns with the MPO's/TPO's LRTP
  - Recommending the funding type (state or federal) for each project that is being considered in the Work Program
  - Assigning the preliminary Class of Action (COA) for each project
  - Recommending the list of projects to be screened through ETDM

### **2.5.10 Environmental Technical Advisory Team**

An ETAT has been established for each of the seven geographic FDOT Districts. Each ETAT is composed of representatives from participating agencies and Native American Tribes. The ETAT representatives are appointed by their respective agency or tribal government. They are responsible for coordinating reviews and communicating to support the planning and development of transportation projects. Specific agency responsibilities are detailed in each respective Agency Operating Agreement (AOA).

The ETAT representatives review proposed transportation projects to identify potential issues; provide guidance for addressing these issues; assist in focusing future studies; and contribute

information about the natural, physical, cultural, and community resources. The ETAT representatives maintain team communications on behalf of their organization and serve as points of contact from Planning through future project development phases (unless another contact is assigned).

The ETAT representatives have authority and responsibility to coordinate internally and provide comments on behalf of their organization. Communication within their organization may include coordination of statewide plans and initiatives. The ETAT representatives are expected to use all available information and sources to develop their comments. The ETAT representatives should contact FDOT with any questions that may enhance their understanding of the project and assist in developing comments about potential project effects to resources. The role of the ETAT representatives changes from commenting during the ETDM process to coordinating during the PD&E phase and to environmental permitting during the Design phase. Example ETAT representative roles are shown in **Table 2-4**.

**Table 2-4: ETAT Representative Roles**

ETAT Typical Responsibilities	Planning Screen	Programming Screen
Verify that resource data provided by the ETAT organization is current in the EST	✓	✓
Review and comment on project purpose and need – acknowledge understanding or ask for clarification	✓	✓
Review GIS analyses available in the EST	✓	✓
Review PED and AN, when available	✓	✓
Review other uploaded ancillary documents intended to support project review	✓	✓
Identify resources of concern and provide focused comments and actionable recommendations to avoid or minimize potential effects to jurisdictional resources.	✓	✓
Evaluate whether identified resources can be eliminated from further detailed analysis during the PD&E Study	✓	✓
Identify potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities	✓	✓
Coordinate with FDOT for clarification or discussion regarding potential project effects	✓	✓
Attend and participate in ETAT meetings and project coordination meetings	✓	✓
For scoping purposes, provide comments regarding cumulative effects to a resource and provide information for the Lead Agency's consideration when evaluating cumulative effects	✓	✓
Identify potential permits and technical studies necessary to advance transportation projects		✓
Review and comment on the Methodology Memorandum (MM) and Draft Alternatives Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER) during the Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process	✓	✓
Make recommendations and provide technical assistance to FDOT to support future permit activities		✓
Participate in interagency issue resolution teams, as applicable	✓	✓

## 2.5.11 Lead Agency Representatives

The Lead Agency holds primary responsibility for the Environmental Document in the PD&E phase. FDOT is the Lead Agency for state projects and for projects conducted under the NEPA Assignment Program. For other federal projects, a federal agency will be the Lead Agency, and per **Title 23 U.S.C.**, FDOT will serve as the co-lead. For local projects (excluding LAP) the local agency may be the lead. FDOT identifies whether or not a project will be processed as a federal or state project during COA determination at the end of the Programming Screen. Potential Lead Agencies are identified during the Programming Screen to expedite the COA process. OEM should be identified as the Lead Agency when FHWA funds will be used or there is a desire to maintain federal highway funding eligibility to potentially be used on any phase of a project, or a Lead Agency action is anticipated under NEPA Assignment. Other options for Lead Agency include Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) or US Coast Guard (USCG) when their funds or approvals are needed. When FTA is anticipated as the Lead Agency during PD&E, the project should be processed through a Planning Screen as a state project during ETDM and follow the FTA Environmental Review process described in [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 14: Transit Project Delivery.\*\*](#)

See **Chapter 4** of this **Manual** for more information about selecting the potential Lead Agency. The Lead Agency representative performs specific tasks in the ETDM process, including:

- Inform and coordinate with OEM and District environmental offices on agency initiatives, programs, training opportunities, guidance, and rule changes that may impact FDOT
- Attend and participate in ETAT meetings and project coordination meetings, as appropriate
- Review and approve project purpose and need
- Review, comment and approve the Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) **Methodology Memorandum (MM)**
- Review and comment on the Draft **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)**
- Approve elimination of unreasonable alternatives not meeting the purpose and need or evaluated through application of the approved **MM** and documented in the **ACER**
- Invite Participating and/or Cooperating Agencies, as appropriate
- Review and approve the Class of Action (COA) for the federal Environmental Document development in the **NEPA** study
- Review and adopt planning products for use during **NEPA**

- Participate in interagency issue resolution teams, as applicable
- Perform agency-specific actions, reviews, and approvals during the ETDM Screenings as described in the AOA

FDOT uses the Lead Agency's responses, comments, and recommendations to support project scoping and to identify coordination needs or additional activities in future project phases.

## 2.6 ETAT REVIEW OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS

During the Planning and Programming Screens, ETAT representatives review project information and provide comments about potential direct and indirect effects to resources under their jurisdiction. ETAT members are expected to provide specific comments to support decisions as the project advances through the project delivery process. They use the EST to access information and provide comments to FDOT. ETAT members are expected to supplement information in the EST with additional sources and personal knowledge. A few examples include historical documents that are not part of any electronic database, personal knowledge of an area, information from site visits, and direct coordination with the project sponsor (for example; phone calls, emails, and webinars).

During the Planning Screen, comments should provide information regarding agency plans, resource status, and identification of potentially critical issues. In the Programming Screen, the comments help to develop a project scope of services for future PD&E Studies. The comments may also help to identify the range of reasonable alternatives by providing unique potential effect comments about each alternative, when more than one is presented. The ETAT representatives may also identify potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities, if needed, and assist with permit application coordination.

At the conclusion of both the Planning Screen and the Programming Screen, the ETAT representative selects a Degree of Effect (DOE) for each alternative and issue. The summary reports document the ETAT recommendations for avoidance, minimization, or mitigation opportunities and supplemental technical studies that may be needed. This documentation is entered into the EST, as described in **Chapters 3 and 4** of this *Manual*, using EST procedures described in the [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#). ETAT comments recorded in the EST are also available to other ETAT representatives and to the public.

The ETAT representatives provide comments about potential effects to resources and issues identified in their AOA and/or in accordance with their regulatory authority. The following sections describe these ETDM issues and correlate to the detailed environmental analyses performed in the development of technical studies, which may be prepared during the PD&E phase (refer to the [PD&E Manual](#) for additional details). See **Chapter 3 Planning Screen** and **Chapter 4 Programming Screen** for more specific details about ETAT review tasks during the ETDM screening events.

## 2.6.1 Social and Economic

FDOT has a proactive policy and philosophy regarding the identification of sociocultural effects in project planning and development that accomplishes the following:

- Captures prior MPO/TPO SCE and public involvement information and includes it in the Planning and Programming Screens
- Identifies and addresses community issues during the decision-making process
- Avoids, minimizes and/or mitigates, where feasible, adverse community effects
- Considers environmental and community effects from the earliest stages of planning and project development
- Enhances participation and consultation of communities affected by proposed projects throughout the project development process
- Identifies conceptual design issues to promote livable communities

The ETDM process supports the identification and evaluation of potential sociocultural effects of qualifying transportation projects. It is the responsibility of the FDOT and MPO/TPO CLCs to identify potential effects of transportation actions on affected communities. The issues considered and documented in the EST in support of a SCE evaluation include the following:

- *Aesthetic Effects*: Describe the area's existing aesthetic features and summarize the project's potential involvement. The aesthetic qualities of a community or area are defined by a combination of visual resources and other qualities that define the character of the community and site (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 5: Aesthetic Effects](#)).
- *Economic*: Describe the known economic condition of the area, ongoing or planned economic development efforts, and the project's potential involvement (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4: Sociocultural Effects Evaluation](#)).
- *Land Use Changes*: Describe existing and future land use in the project area and how the project may affect it (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4: Sociocultural Effects Evaluation](#)).
- *Mobility*: Describe existing travel conditions, travel modes, existing and planned transit routes in the area. Describe the project's involvement with the movement of people, goods (e.g., freight), and services (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4: Sociocultural Effects Evaluation](#)).



- *Relocation Potential:* Discuss the potential right-of-way needs for the project and whether relocations may be needed (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4: Sociocultural Effects Evaluation](#)).
- *Social:* Consider the community demographics (age, income, minority populations, etc.), underserved populations/environmental justice concerns, community cohesion, safety/emergency response, community character, community goals, etc., and describe potential involvement with them, as appropriate (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4: Sociocultural Effects Evaluation](#)).

The Sociocultural Effects evaluation considers the land use context to support decision making as the project moves forward into subsequent phases. This could be done by describing potential impacts such as:

- Affordability of transportation in the community
- Accessibility of transportation in the community for older residents and people with disabilities
- Availability of transportation options that promote physical activity
- Transportation-related barriers to accessing daily needs such as employment, schools, grocery stores, and healthcare
- Barriers to taking transit in the community
- Gaps in network connectivity for different modes that are dividing or impeding travel between neighborhoods and activity centers
- Demand for walking, bicycling, and transit in the community

The [Sociocultural Effects website](#) provides specific techniques for identifying, reviewing, and evaluating sociocultural effects. This website is available at <http://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubs/sce/sce1.shtm>.

Public involvement is an important part of the SCE evaluation process. The CLCs in cooperation with the FDOT PD&E Project Manager, and other staff (as needed) shall establish appropriate level of public involvement activities in consideration of potential project impacts, scope and description, and potential for controversy. Interactive public participation is the key to effective public involvement and includes disseminating as well as receiving vital information. To identify the most appropriate effective public involvement techniques throughout the ETDM process, refer to the [Public Involvement Handbook](#), which provides guidance to implement the FDOT [Public Involvement Policy No. 000-525-050](#). This policy meets the requirements of **23 CFR § 450.212(a) and § 450.316(b)**. (The [Public Involvement Handbook](#) is available at the FDOT OEM website (<http://www.fdot.gov/environment/>).

**[FDOT Public Involvement  
\(Policy No. 000-525-050\)](#)**

The Florida Department of Transportation recognizes the importance of involving the public in information exchange when providing transportation facilities and services to best meet the state's transportation challenges. Therefore, it is the policy of the Florida Department of Transportation to promote public involvement opportunities and information exchange activities in all functional areas, using various techniques adapted to the local area conditions and project requirements.

In addition to the six issues examined through the SCE evaluation (Social, Economic, Land Use, Mobility, Aesthetics, and Relocation), the Natural Resources Conservation Service considers potential effects on farmlands as follows:

- *Farmlands*: Describe farmlands in the project area and summarize their potential involvement (see [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 6: Farmland](#)).

## 2.6.2 Cultural and Tribal

The ETDM process incorporates consideration of cultural resources into the transportation planning process by allowing for the identification of known archaeological sites and historic resources that are in proximity to a planned project. The process also allows for the evaluation of the likelihood of unrecorded resources within a project area. As ETAT members, the Florida Department of State - Division of Historical Resources/State Historic Preservation Officer (FDHR/SHPO) and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) provide comment on potential effects to cultural resources and interact with FDOT (and MPOs/TPOs, as applicable) during both the Planning and Programming Screens and PD&E phase.

Certain information in historic and cultural database systems is protected and not accessible to the public through the EST.

The ETDM process does not replace the **Section 106** process (contained in **36 CFR § 800**) nor does it eliminate the need for a cultural resource assessment survey or other types of technical studies. Technical studies may also be recommended by the FDHR/SHPO or THPOs.

The ETDM cultural resource issues considered and documented during the ETDM process include:

### **Section 106 Process**

**Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act** requires federal agencies to consider the effects of projects they carry out, approve, or fund on historic properties. Additionally, federal agencies must provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on such projects prior to the agency's decision on them. **Section 106** procedures are contained in **36 CFR Part 800 – Protection of Historic Properties**.

- *Historic and Archaeological Sites:* Within the vicinity of the proposed project, identify known sites listed or eligible for listing on the **National Register of Historic Places**. This includes, but is not limited to historic districts, objects, archaeological remains, and historic structures, including bridges. Describe the project's potential involvement and how cultural resources will be evaluated (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 8: Archaeological and Historical Resources](#)).
- *Recreation Areas:* Identify recreation areas, the project's potential involvement, and how they may be evaluated. It should be noted that for USDOT projects these properties may be potentially protected by **Section 4(f)** (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 7: Section 4\(f\) Resources](#)).
- *Section 4(f) Potential:* For USDOT projects, identify properties potentially protected by **Section 4(f)**. Also, identify public parks, publicly-owned recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges located within the vicinity of the proposed project. Describe the potential involvement and how it may be evaluated in the PD&E phase (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 7: Section 4\(f\) Resources](#)).

With respect to Native American Tribal coordination, **Section 106** of the **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)**, and its implementing regulations, **36 CFR § 800: Protection of Historic Properties** (effective January 11, 2001) require that federal agencies consult with federally recognized Native American Tribes in all phases of the **Section 106** process when an agency undertaking *may* have the potential to affect Native American historic properties on or off tribal lands. While FHWA cannot assign government-to-government tribal consultation responsibilities to FDOT under the NEPA Assignment MOU, FDOT is entrusted with responsibility for coordination with multiple tribal governments as described on FDOT's [Native American Coordination](#) website. Certain tribes have agreed to participate as members of the ETAT. FDOT has developed

a good working relationship by meeting with the tribes (including one-on-one meetings, field meetings and construction meetings) on project activities which may involve tribal resources. FHWA's responsibilities for government-to-government consultation with Indian tribes [as defined in **36 C.F.R. §800.16(m)**] are not assigned to or assumed by FDOT. If, at any time, a tribe requests FHWA government-to-government consultation, FDOT works through FHWA. Please refer to the Native American Coordination website for the latest contacts, protocols, and guidance; located at:

<https://www.fdot.gov/environment/NA-Website-Files/index.shtm>

### 2.6.3 Natural

The EST natural resource issues considered and evaluated in the Planning and Programming Screens include the following:

- *Coastal and Marine:* Identify Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the project vicinity and potential for involvement with managed species inhabiting, or migrating through, the project vicinity as required by the **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA)**. Identify possible involvement with Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). Describe how the project may affect EFH (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 17: Essential Fish Habitat](#)). Identify if the project is located in the vicinity of, or is located within, a coastal barrier resource as defined by the **Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA)** (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 15: Coastal Barrier Resources](#)).
- *Floodplains:* State if the project is in the base floodplain or involves a regulated floodway, the project's potential involvement, and how they may be evaluated (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 13: Floodplains](#)).
- *Water Quality and Quantity:* Provide a brief description of existing stormwater treatment, the project's potential involvement, and how they may be evaluated. Identify if the project is located within a sole source aquifer, and provide the name of the aquifer (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 11: Water Quality and Quantity](#)).
- *Wetlands and Surface Waters:* Discuss potential involvement with wetland and surface water resources. If known, identify the location of jurisdictional wetlands as determined by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Water Management Districts, and/or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 9: Wetlands and Other Surface Waters](#)).
- *Wildlife and Habitat:* Identify threatened and endangered species that may inhabit or migrate through the project corridor, designated critical habitat involved with the project, wildlife habitat for listed species, and describe the project's potential involvement, and how they may be evaluated (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 16: Protected Species and Habitat](#)).

## 2.6.4 Physical

FDOT and applicable ETAT agencies, consider and evaluate the following physical environment issues during the Planning and Programming Screens. These issues can also be considered early in PED development or may relate to early coordination with the work program office or other agencies.

- *Air Quality*: Describe the air quality conformity designation of the project area. State if an air quality screening will occur (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 19: Air Quality](#)).
- *Contamination*: Identify by industry or commercial type known Hazardous Material Generators and/or potentially contaminated sites (i.e., petroleum) within the vicinity of the project. State whether a Contamination Screening Evaluation will be conducted for the project (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 20: Contamination](#)).
- *Infrastructure*: Provide a brief description of existing infrastructure (e.g., utilities, railroads, and transit), the project's potential involvement, and how it may be evaluated (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 21: Utilities and Railroads](#)).
- *Navigation*: Identify if the project intersects a potentially navigable waterway, the project's potential involvement, and how it may be evaluated. During the Programming Screen, FDOT and USCG begin to coordinate on navigational determinations in accordance with **23 CFR § 650**. Coordination continues during the PD&E Study when applicable.
- *Noise*: Identify potential noise sensitive sites within the vicinity of the project. Identify the likelihood of traffic noise impacts and if a noise study will be performed (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 18: Highway Traffic Noise](#)).

## 2.6.5 Special Designations

ETAT representatives with jurisdiction over any of the resources listed below submit comments about potential involvement with these features through the EST Special Designations issue:

- Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW): Identify potential involvement with OFW (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 10: Aquatic Preserves and Outstanding Florida Waters](#)).
- Aquatic Preserves: Identify potential involvement with Aquatic preserves (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 1910: Aquatic Preserves and Outstanding Florida Waters](#)).

- Scenic Highways: Identify, by formal name, designated or candidate Scenic Highways in the project vicinity and potential involvement (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 5: Aesthetic Effects](#)).
- Wild and Scenic Rivers: Identify potential involvement with rivers listed in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory including Wild and Scenic Rivers (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 12: Wild and Scenic Rivers](#)).

## 2.7 ETDM ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS

### 2.7.1 Overview

The ETDM Issue Resolution process seeks to find solutions to complex issues among agencies by identifying mutually agreeable activities or conditions that will address a resource concern (natural, physical, social or cultural) while meeting the transportation need. Issue resolution activities may continue through future project delivery phases as detailed analysis begins and more information becomes available. Participation in the ETDM process does not abrogate or limit an agency's authority or responsibility to protect resources over which it has jurisdiction or authority or require it to act in a way contrary to law, regulation, rules, policy or practice.

A strong commitment exists among the participants in the ETDM process to resolve issues within the ETAT, prior to elevating them to higher level management (see **Figure 2-4**). To facilitate meeting this commitment, potential disputes should be addressed as early as possible to make the best use of agency skills and resources. Projects with unresolved issues following the ETAT review and publication of the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** require commencement or continuation of the ETDM issue resolution process.

Initially, the ETDM Coordinator works with OEM and the appropriate ETAT representative(s) to informally resolve the disputed issue(s) at the agency staff level before elevating the discussion to the Formal Issue Resolution process. The agency heads (or governing board, as applicable), will make the final decision on how to address unresolved issues.

Once resolved, the ETAT member who originally assigned the Dispute Resolution DOE can document concurrence by lowering the DOE (i.e., "Dispute Resolution" to "Substantial" or "Moderate") for the issue, and the FDOT ETDM Coordinator can do the same by lowering the SDOE and republishing the summary report. Alternatively, should all parties agree, the ETAT representative may decide to not modify the original DOE, and only have the FDOT ETDM Coordinator lower the SDOE. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator records activities and results in the Issue Resolution Log on the EST. The [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) provides additional guidance on tracking and documenting the Issue Resolution process.

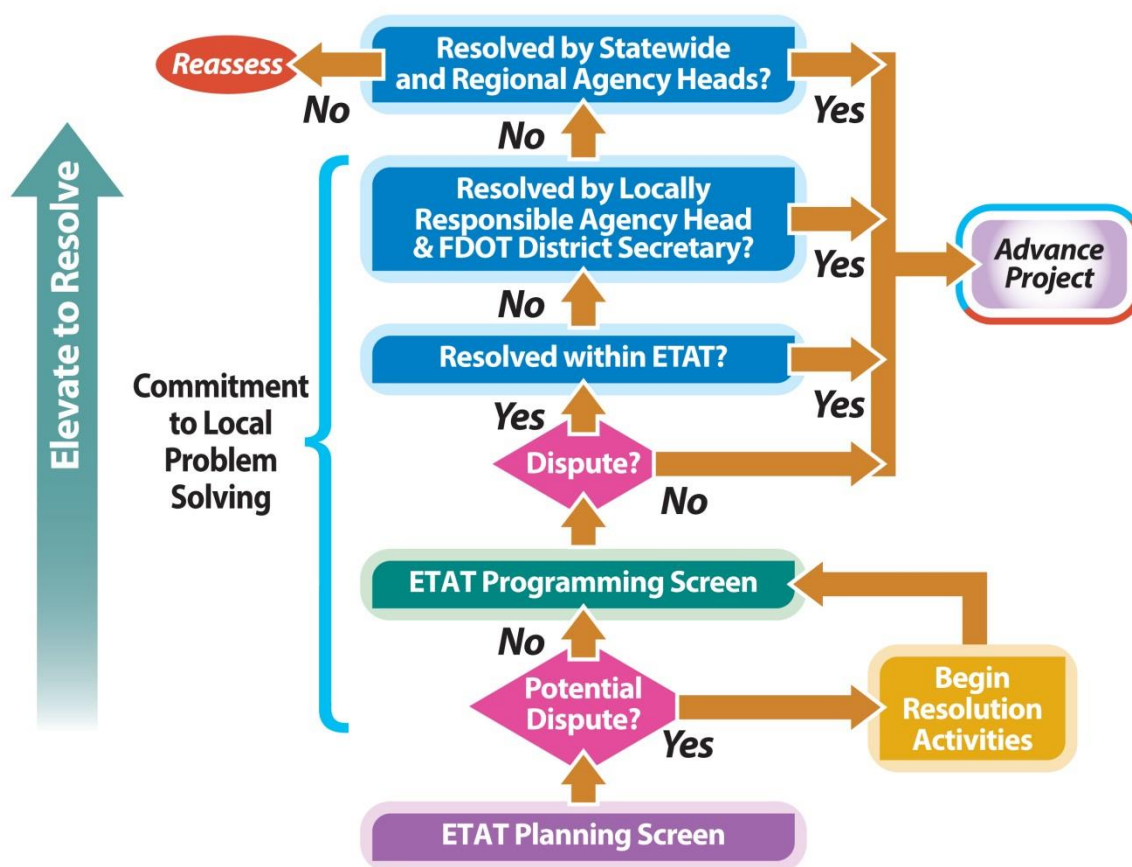


Figure 2-4: Issue Resolution Process

NOTE: Issue Resolution identifies mutually agreeable activities or conditions addressing a resource concern while meeting the transportation need. Issue resolution activities may continue through future project delivery phases

## 2.7.2 Initiating Issue Resolution

The informal issue resolution process begins when the FDOT ETDM Coordinator, in consultation with OEM, assigns a Potential Dispute SDOE in the Planning Screen or Dispute Resolution SDOE during a Programming Screen review. When assigning the SDOE, the ETDM Coordinator uses known information including comments and DOEs from ETAT members. The ETDM Coordinator reviews the ETAT commentary to determine its consistency with the definitions of Potential Dispute or Dispute Resolution, and in conjunction with the agency’s regulatory authority. For definitions, see **Chapter 3, Table 3-1, Potential Project Effects Degree of Effect Guidance – Planning Screen** or **Chapter 4, Table 4-1, Potential Project Effects Degree of Effect Guidance – Programming Screen**

An ETAT representative may, on its jurisdictional or regulatory authority, flag a project as potentially needing issue resolution with the following triggers:

1. Project is considered to be unpermittable (applicable to permitting agencies)

2. Project is identified to be contrary to a state or federal resource agency's program, plan, or initiative (including Florida's Coastal Management Program or Local Government Comprehensive Plans).
3. Project has the potential for significant environmental cost (e.g., monetary, environmental effects, or quality of life)
4. Project purpose and need is questionable (only applicable to the Lead Agency - identified by the Lead Agency not accepting the purpose and need)

### 2.7.3 Process to Resolve Potential Issues

After reviewing potential dispute commentary received during a Planning Screen Review, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator contacts the ETAT representative that raised the potential issue to discuss the concern and identify potential solutions to address the issue and advance the project.

When there is an inability to reach a suitable resolution, the issue is elevated to FDOT or MPO/TPO upper management, who then may:

1. Resolve the issue through coordination and documentation
2. Advance the project with or without conditions (for a Planning Screen project)
3. Revise the project concept
4. Complete a technical or feasibility study to address concerns
5. Reject the project

Agreements, understandings, and/or recommendations resulting from the issue resolution efforts are documented in the **Planning Screen Summary Report** and accompany the project as it moves to the Programming Screen.

An unresolved issue during the Planning Screen, however, does not prevent a project from advancing to the Programming Screen or into PD&E. It simply identifies the project as having potential issues that may require attention during the Programming Screen or in PD&E. The Planning Screen Potential Issue Resolution process is diagrammed in **Figure 2-5**.



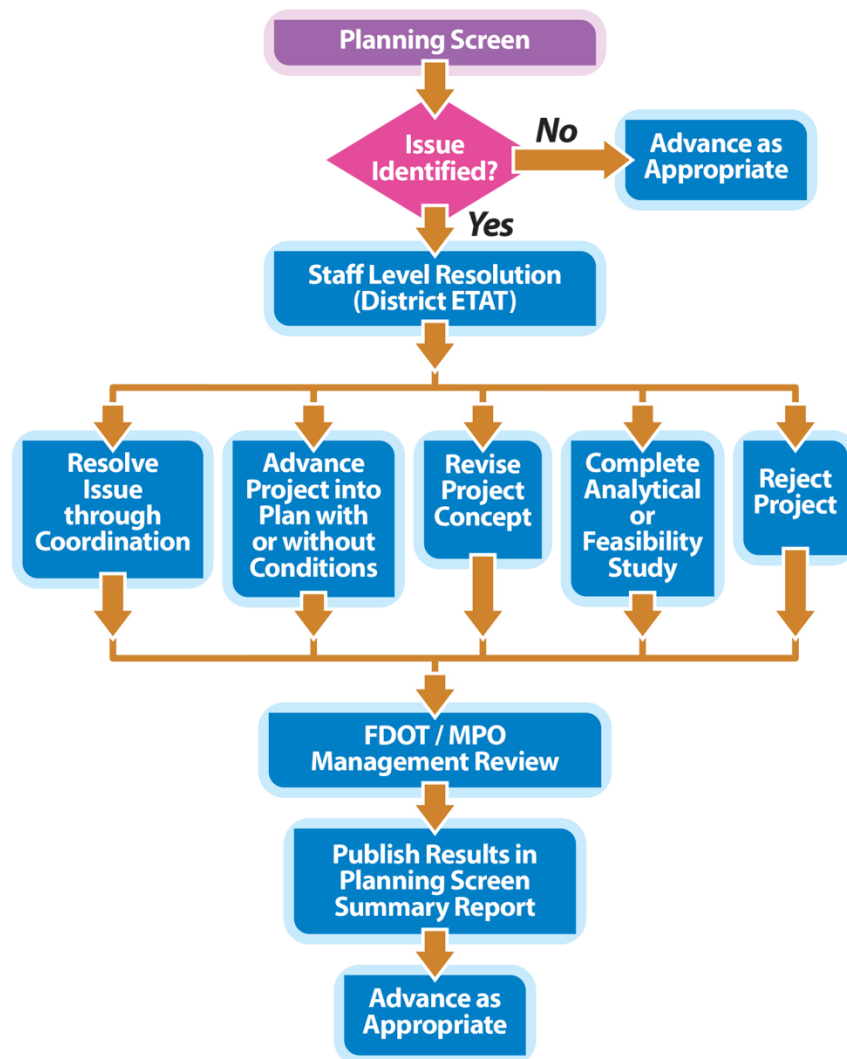


Figure 2-5: Planning Screen Potential Issue Resolution Process

### 2.7.4 Informal Issue Resolution

After assigning a Dispute Resolution SDOE during the Programming Screen, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator consults with OEM and forms a sub-team of the ETAT (including the State Clearinghouse, if consistency is an issue) to review each issue as part of the Informal Issue Resolution process. FDOT leads this sub-team; participation is at the discretion of each agency, depending on the level of interest or concern. The sub-team includes those agencies that identified the concerns for a given project, plus one or more willing and neutral ETAT representatives to help mediate discussions. The sub-team undertakes a course of action to address identified issues, which may include:

1. Resolving the issue through consultation and documenting the resolution

2. Recommending FDOT complete an environmental or technical study for ETAT review
3. Advancing the project with conditions

Agreements, understandings, and/or recommendations resulting from the Informal Issue Resolution process are documented in the **Programming Screen Summary Report** and accompany the project as it moves to PD&E. **Figure 2-6** diagrams the Informal Issue Resolution process.

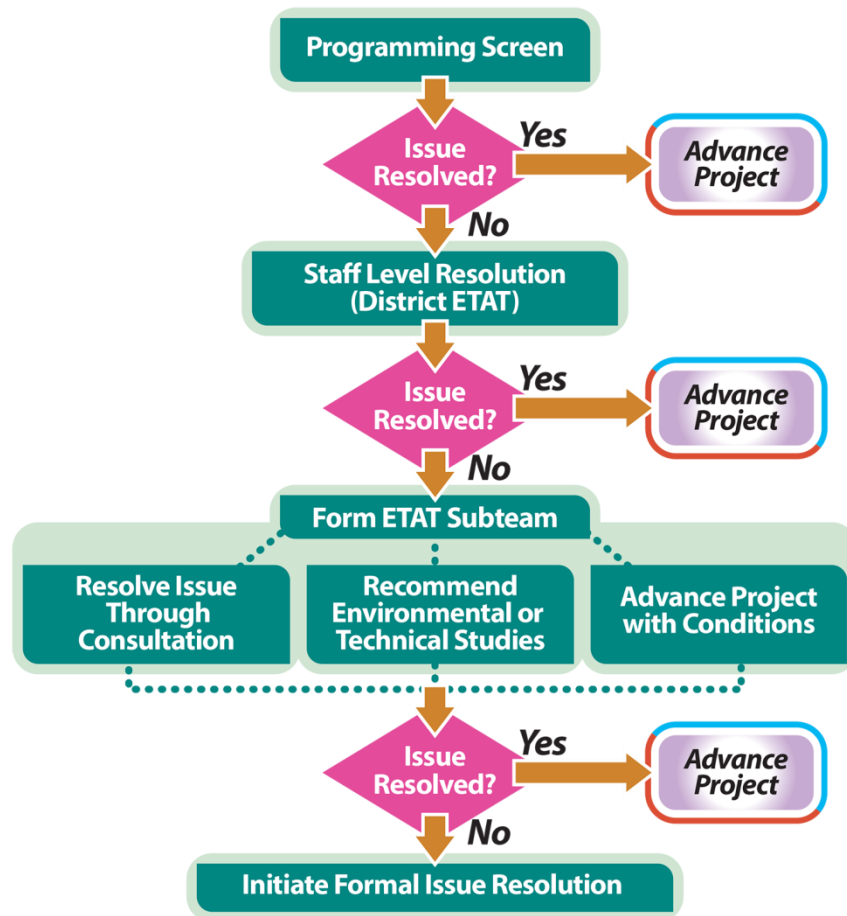


Figure 2-6: Informal Issue Resolution Process

### 2.7.5 Formal Issue Resolution

If an issue cannot be resolved through the Informal Issue Resolution process, the discussion enters into the Formal Issue Resolution process diagrammed in **Figure 2-7**. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator prepares a **Position Paper**, and the agency with the issue or conflict prepares an **Issue Paper**. The locally responsible ETAT agency head (or governing board, as applicable) who raised the issue and the FDOT District Secretary review both papers and then attempt to resolve the issue(s), if possible.

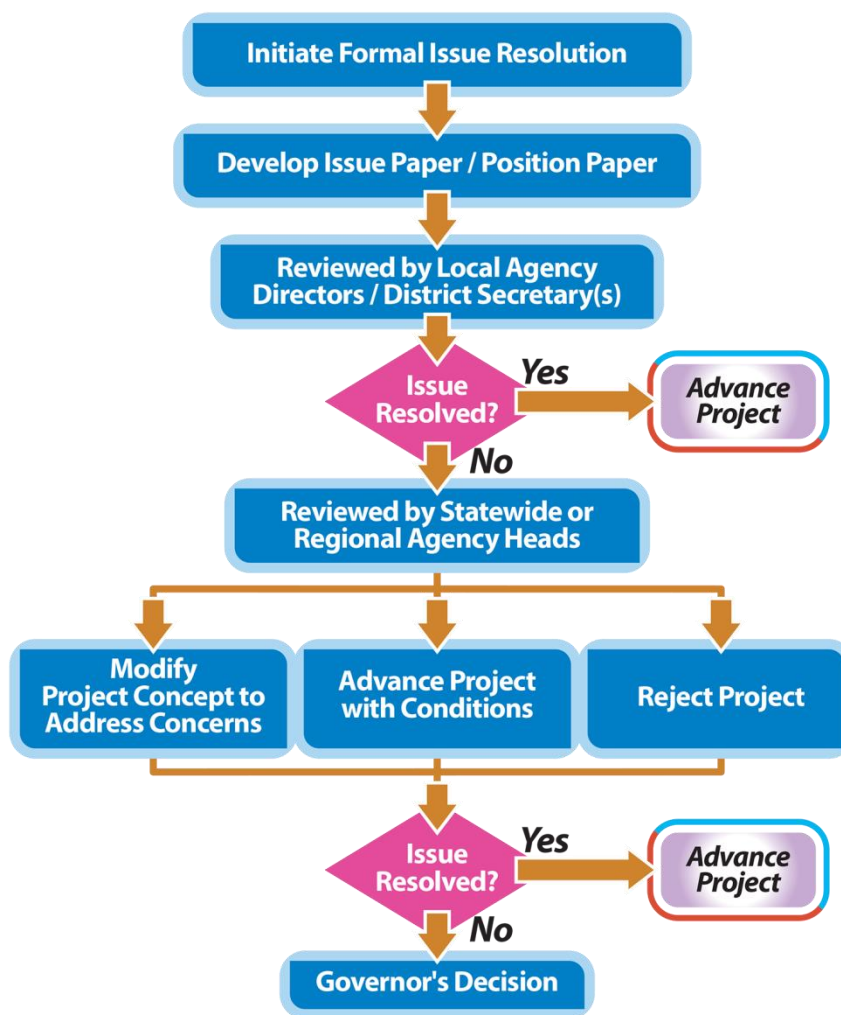


Figure 2-7: Formal Issue Resolution Process

If they are not able to do this, the issue moves to the statewide or regional agency heads (or governing board, as applicable), who will make the final decision on how to address unresolved issues. The course of action may include:

1. Resolving the issue through consultation and documenting the resolution
2. Recommending FDOT to complete an environmental or technical study for relevant and appropriate ETAT agency review
3. Advancing the project with conditions
4. Rejecting the project

Should a federal agency disagree with the decision, the Federal Dispute Resolution process may be initiated. If there are unresolved issues for FHWA projects undergoing **NEPA** review,

then the “issue resolution” process set out in **23 U.S.C. § 139**, will be applicable. The process in **23 U.S.C. § 139** establishes a series of forums for issues to be resolved, and if not resolved, to which the issues would then advance, including potential financial penalties for unexcused delays by participating agencies.

Nothing in this Issue Resolution process affects the statutorily prescribed duties and obligations of any agency or any agency’s responsibility or ability to discharge fully such duties and obligations under all applicable laws and regulations. The ETDM Issue Resolution process seeks to fulfill all statutory obligations in seeking solutions to complex issues among agencies.

## 2.8 REFERENCES

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- 23 CFR § 450. Planning Assistance and Standards.
- 23 U.S.C. Highways.
- 23 U.S.C. §135. Statewide and nonmetropolitan transportation planning.
- 23 U.S.C. § 139. Efficient Project Reviews for Environmental Decision Making.
- 23 U.S.C. § 168. Planning and Environmental Linkages.
- 36 CFR § 800(b). Protection of Historic Properties, The Section 106 Process.
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## 2.9 HISTORY

**03/2006:** Original publication

**07/2013:** Updated to reflect current legal requirements and practices

**12/2015:** Updated to reflect current legal 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 and figure numbers.

## CHAPTER 3

### PLANNING SCREEN

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## 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. The Planning Screen 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. Planning Screen projects may also originate from Transit project applications.

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 an MPO/TPO or FDOT considers 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.

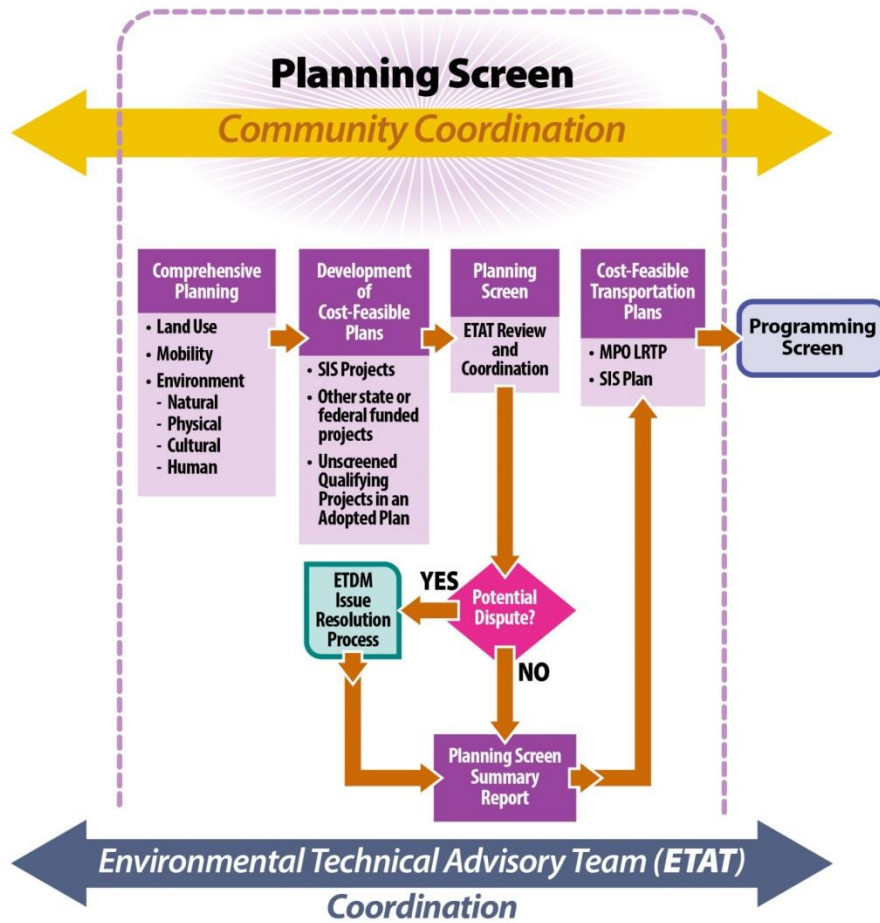


Figure 3-1: Planning Screen

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**.

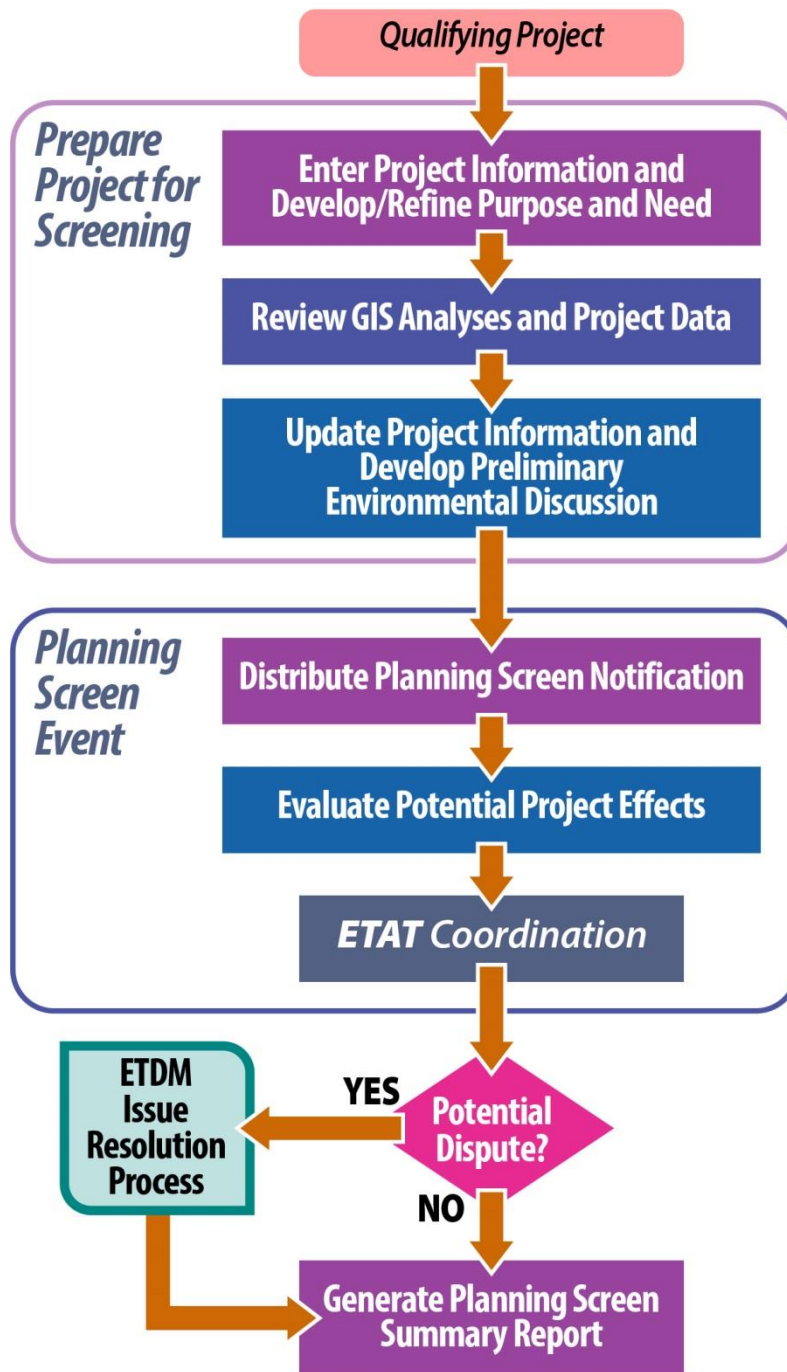


Figure 3-2: Planning Screen Process Flow

### 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 2.3.6**, 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 and OEM Project Delivery Coordinators 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 or FTA projects) 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 1, 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. (See **Section 2.3.2** of this **Manual** for more information about the SWAT Team.)
  - Develop a project description, which includes:
    - Project name;
    - Name of the city(ies) and county(ies) where the project is located;
    - Name of the planning organization responsible for the project;
    - Limits of the proposed project, such as its logical termini and length;
    - Description of the existing or general characterization of a new facility; and
    - Description of the proposed 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 1, 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 ETDM projects (See **Section 2.3.4 Federal Involvement** of this *Manual* and **[PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 14 Transit Project Delivery](#)** when preparing FTA projects for screening). Other agencies that may be exempt from a review include United States Forest Service, and National Park Service. Due to the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** Assignment Program (described in **Section 2.3.3** of this *Manual*), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is automatically exempt from ETDM reviews and therefore, does not need to be designated as exempt.

- 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 in the EST in the **Project Description** report. Confirm, for example, that:

- The beginning and ending locations of linear alternatives recorded in 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 for each EST review issue (**Section 3.5.3.2** of this *Manual*) and proposed project alternative 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](#).

#### **3.4.4 OEM Pre-Screening Review**

The ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager is responsible for checking the data for completeness and accuracy. Coordination and review by other District representatives is strongly encouraged. Other District representatives may include the Environmental Manager, Environmental Administrator, District Project Development Engineer, and District Permits Coordinator for example. After the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager verifies the project purpose and need, project description, and PED are each complete and accurate, they will then use the EST to initiate an independent OEM review. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinator and Project Development Engineer review and provide comments about the project description, purpose and need, and PED before the screening event notification is distributed. Following notification from the District, OEM reviewers have up to 14 days to provide comments. This review may also include subject matter experts. OEM and the project team work together to resolve any comments provided. When the OEM review is complete, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager updates the information and distributes the Planning Screen review notification to the ETAT.

### **3.5 PLANNING SCREEN REVIEW**

Before initiating a Planning Screen review, the ETDM Coordinator should consider holding an online meeting or webinar to introduce the project 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](mailto: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 Planning Screen. 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.flas-etat.org>.

### **3.5.2 Review Time Frame**

As established in the ETDM agency operating agreements (AOAs), 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 OEM for more information. When an extension is granted, it applies to all ETAT members 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.

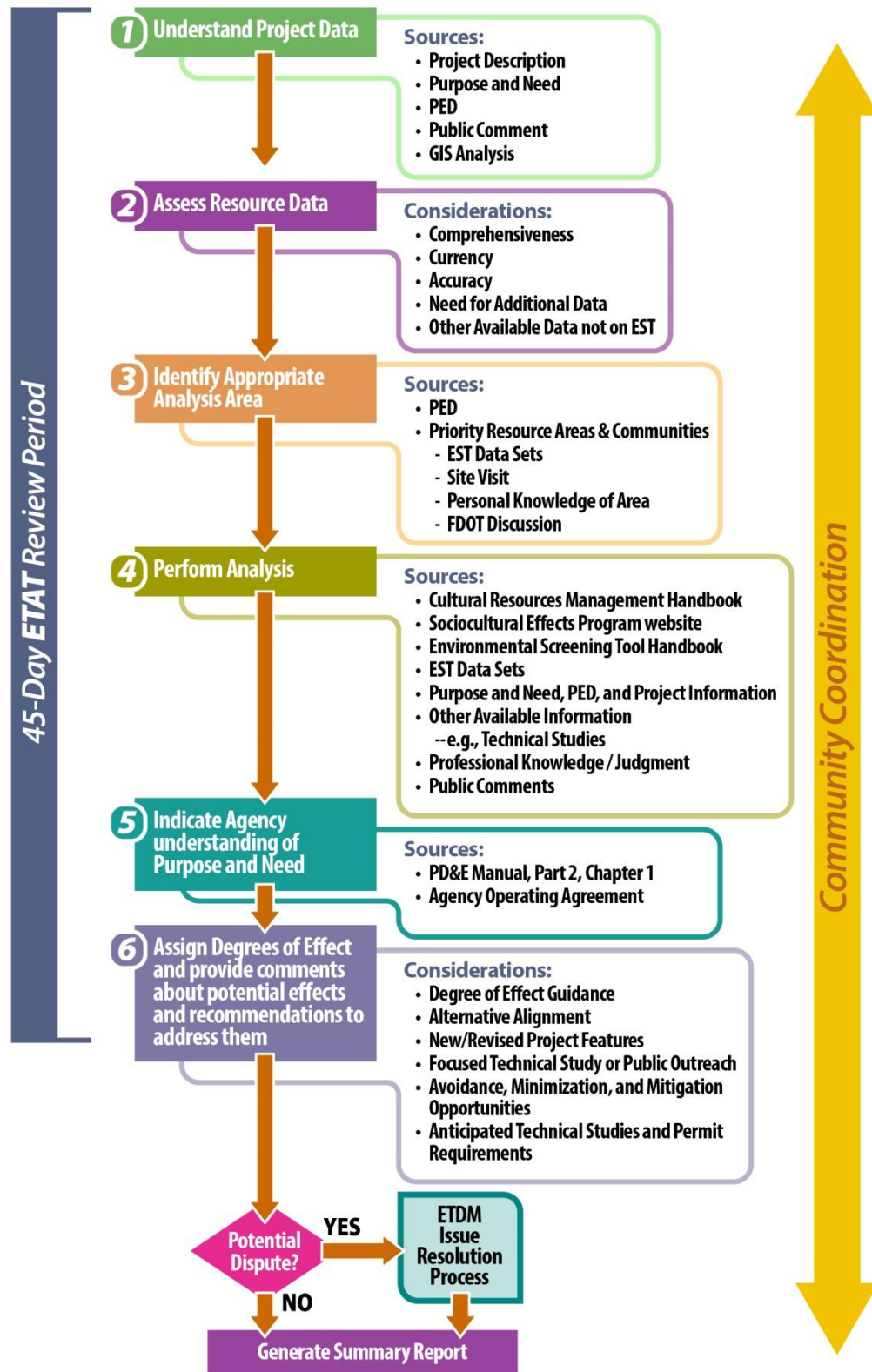


Figure 3-3: Planning Screen Review Tasks

### 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.
- 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

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” as used in CEQ regulations are synonymous (**40 CFR § 1508.8**) and are used interchangeably in this



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 AOA's 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, and 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 and PD&E Project Manager use the ETAT DOEs and comments to help identify potentially critical issues and determine how to address them. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinator may need to be involved if questions or conflicting issues exist. The ETAT responses, along with the internal coordination help the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager assign a Summary Degree of Effect (SDOE). When FDOT is not

the Lead Agency, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager coordinates with the Lead Agency representative to identify potential issues and assign the SDOE.

**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 4, 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 8, 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 7, Section 4\(f\) Resources](#).

### 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. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinator may need to be involved if questions or conflicting issues exist.

### 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 OEM and 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 OEM and other 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 OEM (or other Lead Agency representative when FDOT is not the Lead Agency).

When the ETDM Coordinator publishes a **Planning Screen Summary Report**, ETAT members, OEM, relevant MPO/TPO and local government staff, and interested public (<https://etdmpub.flh-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 identify, evaluate, and eliminate alternative corridors on qualifying projects prior to the PD&E phase. The decisions made in ACE can be used to refine the purpose and need for a project; determine the project area; define general travel modes or corridors; describe general environmental setting for a project; identify preliminary environmental impacts and environmental mitigation; and, develop and refine a range of alternatives to be considered in detail during the PD&E Study. The ACE process links planning

and **NEPA**. However, adoption and use of ACE decisions in the **NEPA** process is subject to a determination by the Lead Agency. (Note that OEM makes this determination and performs other Lead Agency actions under the **NEPA** Assignment Program.)

The ACE process is typically performed as part of the ETDM screening efforts that precede the PD&E phase. The Districts should use the ACE process in support of potential Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and certain Environmental Assessment (EA) projects. The ACE process may also be used to eliminate corridors that are part of the State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) when new alignments are under consideration. Projects that qualify for the ACE process include:

1. New alignments – new roadways; new roadway connections or extensions
2. Major realignments
3. Major bypasses – truck bypasses, city/town bypasses
4. Other alignments based on consultation with the Lead Agency

Additionally, new alignments or major realignments for transit corridors, freight corridors (that are not bypasses), and bicycle or trail corridors can be evaluated using the ACE process. See [Part 1, Chapter 14, Transit Project Delivery](#), for guidance on corridor analysis for transit projects.

The ACE identifies and evaluates corridor alternatives using *the Methodology Memorandum (MM)* agreed upon by the project stakeholders. The results of the ACE are documented in the *Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)*. The **ACER** is used in the **NEPA** process to support a federal decision to eliminate from further study corridors that are not feasible or do not meet the purpose and need for the project. Public involvement and resource agency coordination in the ACE process is done through the ETDM screening process. The ETDM screening can demonstrate and document that alternatives considered during the ACE process followed appropriate consultation and received support from regulatory and resource agencies and affected stakeholders.

The level of detail in the analysis of an ACE is higher than that used to prepare a typical planning product, but less than that of a PD&E Study. The ACER must establish and document criteria and the public involvement process used to evaluate and eliminate alternatives that are not feasible or do not meet the purpose and need for the project. Such documentation is essential to incorporate **ACER** results into the **NEPA** process.

Many transportation projects have identified existing corridor alternatives from completed action or master plans that should be incorporated into the Planning Screen review. These analyses should be evaluated and considered prior to advancing into the ACE process. Decisions made in these action or master plans should be included in the project documentation, and during the PD&E Phase, should become part of the **NEPA** project record (e.g., project file, environmental document, etc.). All planning products incorporated into the

**NEPA** process must follow the conditions of **23 U.S.C. § 168** as discussed below in Section 3.7. The ACE process varies depending on whether it is started in the Planning Screen, Programming Screen, or PD&E. The following sections explain how to conduct the ACE process during the Planning Screen. **Figure 3-4** illustrates the ACE process when initiated during the Planning Screen. See **Chapter 4** of this **Manual** when conducting ACE during the Programming Screen. Refer to **[PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 4: Project Development Process](#)** for a summary of the ACE process during PD&E.

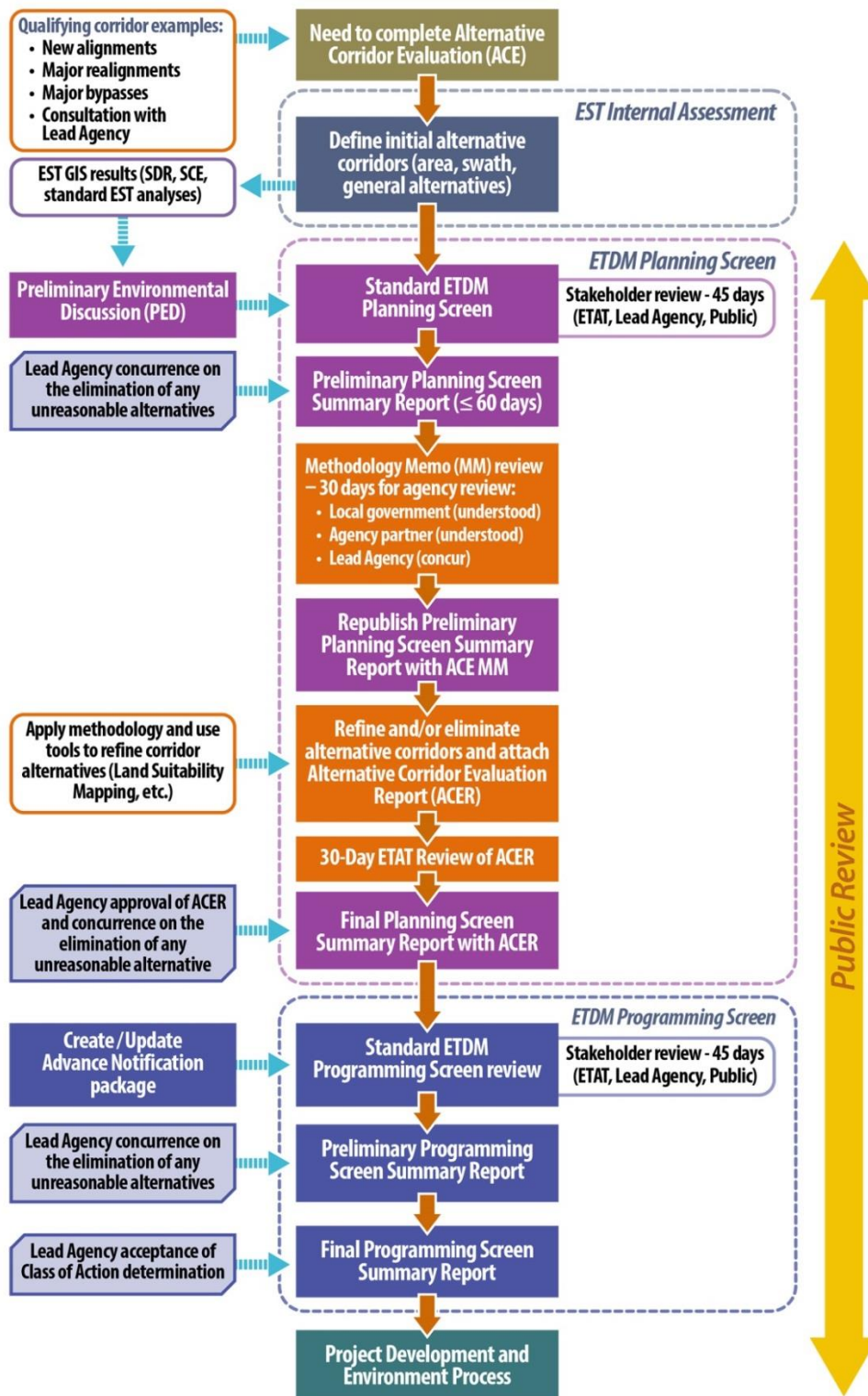


Figure 3-4: ACE Process when Initiated during the Planning Screen



### 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 Corridors

Appropriate FDOT Project Managers, planners, engineers and SWAT team members coordinate internally to identify and define a reasonable range of candidate alternative corridors that address project needs. 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 naming of each corridor or alternative must remain consistent throughout the ACE and be carried through the PD&E phase. The District must consider any initial corridor alternatives from previously completed planning activities such as planning-level corridor/subarea/feasibility studies, multimodal corridor plans, vision plans, or master plans that might inform the ACE process. The District can add additional corridors at its discretion after consideration of known environmental issues, comments from ETAT members, and the ability of the corridor to meet the purpose and need for the project.

When evaluating major urban corridors, the District must consider the need for public transportation systems, facilities and services, and alternative corridors that will address multimodal transportation needs consistent with [Major Urban Corridor Studies Policy, Topic No. 000-725-010](#). Such consideration can include analysis for reasonable corridors based on the presence of alternative transportation modes and the feasibility of developing an interconnected multimodal transportation system. Multimodal options that must be considered include, but are not limited to, fixed guide way facilities and expanded bus service with supporting facilities. The policy requires each major urban corridor study to determine if there is justification for continued consideration of public transportation systems, and facilities or services in conjunction with the development of the corridor.

Consideration of alternative transportation modes, particularly in urban areas, should include the need for bicycle and pedestrians facilities. See [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 6, Engineering Analysis](#) for more guidance.

The project team enters the corridor alternatives into the EST, runs the standard GIS Analysis, develops the PED, and reviews the project information. 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 and verifying project data. See [Part 1, Chapter 3 Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification of the PD&E Manual](#) for information about developing the PED.

### 3.6.3 Decide to Advance Project

The District considers the involvement and potential impacts to environmental issues/resources and the presence of any fatal flaws on the project to decide if the project should be advanced. In making decisions, the District may consider GIS data, known environmental issues in the area, and early project stakeholders' comments, and other data and information that would help establish the appropriate level of detail of analysis for the range of alternatives being considered. Once the decision has been made to advance the project, the District defines the goals for the ACE process (e.g., performing an action plan level corridor analysis or determining reasonable alternatives for the PD&E Study).

### 3.6.4 Conduct Standard EST Planning Screen Review

Following OEM's pre-screening review (**Section 3.4.4**), 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*).

### 3.6.5 Develop the Methodology Memorandum

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. When FDOT is the Lead Agency under the **NEPA** Assignment Program, the project team coordinates with OEM regarding the analysis methodology.

The District develops a **Methodology Memorandum (MM)** based on stakeholder comments and other information regarding the project environmental context. The **MM** is a technical memorandum which describes the goals of the ACE, identifies alternative corridors, and details the data and procedure the District will use to develop, evaluate, and screen alternative corridors. The MM also details the process, including public involvement, and criteria that form the basis for decision-making. It also highlights specific data, tools [e.g., Land Suitability Mapping (LSM) and Corridor Analysis Tool (CAT)], and timelines to govern corridor refinements. The MM includes the following:

#### 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**

### **3.6.6 Conduct Methodology Memorandum Review**

The MM is distributed through the EST. 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**. Subsequently, the District uses the EST to distribute the **MM** to the Lead Agency for review. For federal highway projects, OEM serves as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency is expected to review and respond to the **MM** within 30 days.. Following Lead Agency concurrence of the **MM**, the ETDM Coordinator also republishes the **Preliminary Planning Screen Summary Report**.

### 3.6.7 Refine or Eliminate Corridor Alternatives

Once the Lead Agency concurs with the **MM**, the District begins the process of applying the methodology to refine or eliminate corridor alternatives. The District evaluates the corridors using the criteria established and agreed upon in the MM. In studying the alternatives and considering input from ETAT and other project stakeholders, the District may refine corridors to avoid potential environmental effects. The refinement of corridors to avoid potential effects also considers the corridor vision, purpose and need, and potential environmental impacts.

### 3.6.8 Prepare Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report

The District documents the application of the **MM** in the **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)**. The **ACER** summarizes the alternative corridors analysis and documents the alternatives that are eliminated or carried forward to the PD&E Study (pursuant to **23 U.S.C. § 168** and **Appendix A of 23 CFR Part 450**). The **ACER** documents the basis for eliminating alternatives. Documentation regarding the elimination of alternatives in the **ACER** is part of the project's Administrative Record for the **NEPA** process. It is critical to properly document the analysis, public and agency involvement, and resulting planning decisions in the **ACER** to ensure that these analyses meet requirements for use in the **NEPA** process. The **ACER** must document assumptions supporting planning analysis such as travel demand forecast year; forecast method and its rationale, and future year data. Additionally, the **ACER** must document policy assumptions related to land use, socio-economic factors, transportation costs, and transportation network. The **ACER** also documents unresolved project issues with the public, stakeholders or agencies, if known. The following standard statement is included in the ACER:

*This planning product may be adopted into the environmental review process, pursuant to Title 23 USC § 168 of the state project development process.*

When completed, the **ACER** is uploaded into the EST for comment. 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 concurrence. When FDOT is the Lead Agency under the **NEPA** Assignment Program, the ACER is submitted to OEM for acceptance and concurrence.

The Lead Agency considers the **ACER** for adoption and reviews the recommendations of the alternatives eliminated from further study or considered for additional study in the subsequent PD&E phase or concurrence. When the ACE process is conducted during the Planning Screen, the District makes a formal request for adoption through the EST.

### 3.6.9 Publish Final Planning Screen Summary Report

Corridor alternatives can only be eliminated with Lead Agency and Cooperating 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 and Cooperating Agency concurrence on any corridor alternatives recommended for elimination.

### **3.6.10 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 LINKING PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Linking Planning and ***NEPA*** provides a connection between planning-level and project-level decisions. Planning decisions and the environmental review process should be seamlessly integrated to eliminate duplication of effort and delays in project delivery. The benefit of linking planning decisions and the PD&E Study is the ability to reuse data gathered, methodology used, results obtained, and decisions made during the Planning phase to streamline the project delivery by minimizing duplication of efforts and data. Other benefits include the ability to identify environmental issues before developing the Scope of the PD&E Study and focus the analyses and technical studies conducted during the PD&E Study to issues that have potential to impact the project.

Pursuant to ***23 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 168*** and ***23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 450.318***, results or decisions from a system-level corridor or subarea planning study may be used in the NEPA analysis if they meet certain conditions. ***Appendix A of 23 CFR Part 450 - Linking the Transportation Planning and NEPA Processes*** details how to adopt or incorporate by reference information from transportation planning into ***NEPA*** documents and/or environmental review process under existing laws. ***Appendix A of 23 CFR Part 450*** is intended to be non-binding and voluntary.

The ACE process and ETDM screening may produce products which can be adopted for use in the ***NEPA*** process. The following decisions from a planning product for a transportation project, codified in ***23 U.S.C. § 168(c)(1)***, may be adopted or incorporated by reference into the ***NEPA*** process:

1. Whether tolling, private financial assistance, or other special financial measures are necessary to implement the project;
2. A decision with respect to general travel corridor or modal choice, including a decision to implement corridor or subarea study recommendations to advance different modal solutions as separate projects with independent utility;
3. The purpose and need for the proposed action;
4. Preliminary screening of alternatives and elimination of unreasonable alternatives;
5. A basic description of the environmental setting;
6. A decision with respect to methodologies for analysis; and/or
7. An identification of programmatic level mitigation for potential impacts of a project, including a programmatic mitigation plan developed in accordance with **23 U.S.C. § 169**, that the relevant agency determines are more effectively addressed on a national or regional scale, including:
  - a. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts at a national or regional scale of proposed transportation investments on environmental resources, including regional ecosystem and water resources; and
  - b. Potential mitigation activities, locations, and investments.

The following planning analyses from a planning product for a transportation project, codified in **23 U.S.C. § 168(c)(2)**, may be adopted or incorporated by reference into the **NEPA** process:

1. Travel demands;
2. Regional development and growth;
3. Local land use, growth management, and development;
4. Population and employment;
5. Natural and built environmental conditions;
6. Environmental resources and environmentally sensitive areas;
7. Potential environmental effects, including the identification of resources of concern and potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on those resources; and

8. Mitigation needs for a proposed project, or for programmatic level mitigation, for potential effects that the Lead Agency determines are most effectively addressed at a regional or national program level.

The degree to which information, analyses, or decisions from the planning process can be adopted or incorporated by reference into the **NEPA** process depends upon how well the planning products meet standards applicable under the **NEPA** and associated implementing regulations (**23 CFR Part 771 and 40 CFR §§ 1500-1508**). The relevant agency in the environmental review process may adopt or incorporate by reference decisions from a planning product when the Lead Agency determines that the conditions set forth in **23 U.S.C. § 168(d)** and restated below are met:

1. The planning product was developed through a planning process conducted pursuant to applicable federal law.
2. The planning product was developed in 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. The planning process included public notice that the planning products produced in the planning process may be adopted during a subsequent environmental review process in accordance with this section.
5. During the environmental review process, the relevant agency has:
  - a. Made the planning documents available for public review and comment by members of the general public and federal, state, local, and tribal governments that may have an interest in the proposed project;
  - b. Provided notice of the intention of the relevant agency to adopt or incorporate by reference the planning product; and
  - c. 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 or incorporation by reference and use in the environmental review process for the project and is incorporated in accordance with, and is sufficient to meet the requirements of, the **NEPA** and **40 CFR § 1502.21** [as in effect on the date of enactment of the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**].
10. The planning product was approved within the 5-year period ending on the date on which the information is adopted or incorporated by reference.

Linking planning and **NEPA** does not mean the planning products should be prepared to a level comparable to a **NEPA** analysis. Pursuant to **23 U.S.C § 134(o)**, **23 U.S.C. § 135(j)** and **49 U.S.C. § 5305(h)**, transportation plans and programs are exempted from **NEPA** review. Environmental evaluations that are conducted during the Planning phase are not required to address all regulatory requirements that should be addressed by the **NEPA** analysis.

If the planning product to be adopted into the **NEPA** analysis is older than 5 years (from the date the product was approved), the information used to prepare the planning study must be reviewed to check whether conditions or planning context have changed since approval of the planning product. If the conditions or planning context have not changed, the PD&E Study may use the information from the planning product and explain why that information is valid to the **NEPA** decision-making process. The Lead Agency must be consulted when making this decision.

### 3.8 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 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.

### 3.9 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**.



### **3.9.1 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).

### **3.9.2 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.

### **3.9.3 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.

### 3.9.4 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.

## 3.10 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. Highways.

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

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### **3.11 HISTORY**

**03/2006:** Original publication

**07/2013:** Updated to reflect current requirements and 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

## CHAPTER 4

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## CHAPTER 4

# PROGRAMMING SCREEN

### 4.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter details the process for completing the Programming Screen of the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process. The Programming Screen aids the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in the development of the FDOT Five Year Work Program by identifying environmental considerations. The Five Year Work Program is required by **Chapters 338 and 339, Florida Statutes (F.S.)** and lists the schedule of specific projects and services planned by FDOT. It includes projects from the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), and Priority Lists of non-MPO/TPO areas.

As described in **Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1** of this *Manual*, a Programming Screen is required for all qualifying projects that will be included, or are already included in the Five Year Work Program but have not started the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. This does not imply that the PD&E Study can only be placed in the fifth year. It may be possible to complete relevant technical studies prior to initiating the PD&E Study to aid in addressing issues identified through the project screening events and to focus the PD&E Study scope of services. Refer to [FDOT Work Program Instructions, Part III, Chapter 23, Planning](#), for details. The scope of a project and its priority ultimately dictates how and in what year the project is programmed.

Importantly, the Programming Screen supports the project development process by concurrently addressing the following requirements:

1. Providing for early involvement of federal, state, and local agencies, as well as federally recognized Native American Tribes and the public, under **23 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 139**.
2. Assisting with scope of services development for preparation of the PD&E phase environmental evaluation and documentation.
3. Identifying studies that can be advanced prior to the PD&E phase.
4. Distributing the Advance Notification (AN) package when applicable. FDOT uses the AN process to inform stakeholders about a proposed transportation action and to provide opportunity for their input and involvement in the project. This fulfills the project initiation notification as required by **23 U.S.C. § 139**, the **President's Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs)**, and the **Governor's Executive Order 95-359 (Florida State Clearinghouse)**. The AN process may be initiated with the Programming Screen review or later,



prior to beginning the PD&E Study. In addition, the AN may also provide notice of FDOT's intent to apply for Federal-aid on a project, in which case the AN process includes the Federal Consistency Review as required by **15 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 930**. See Section 4.5.4.1 for more information about Federal Consistency Reviews.

During the Programming Screen, interaction with MPOs/TPOs, federal and state agencies, and participating Native American tribes occurs through the Environmental Technical Advisory Teams (ETATs). 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. These project effects include potential direct and indirect effects. The ETAT members may also provide cumulative effect considerations during the screening.

**Figure 4-1** provides an overview of the Programming Screen process. In many cases, projects entering the Programming Screen have been previously reviewed during the Planning Screen, as described in **Chapter 3** of this **Manual**. The **Planning Screen Summary Report** documents the results of the earlier review and is available through the EST.

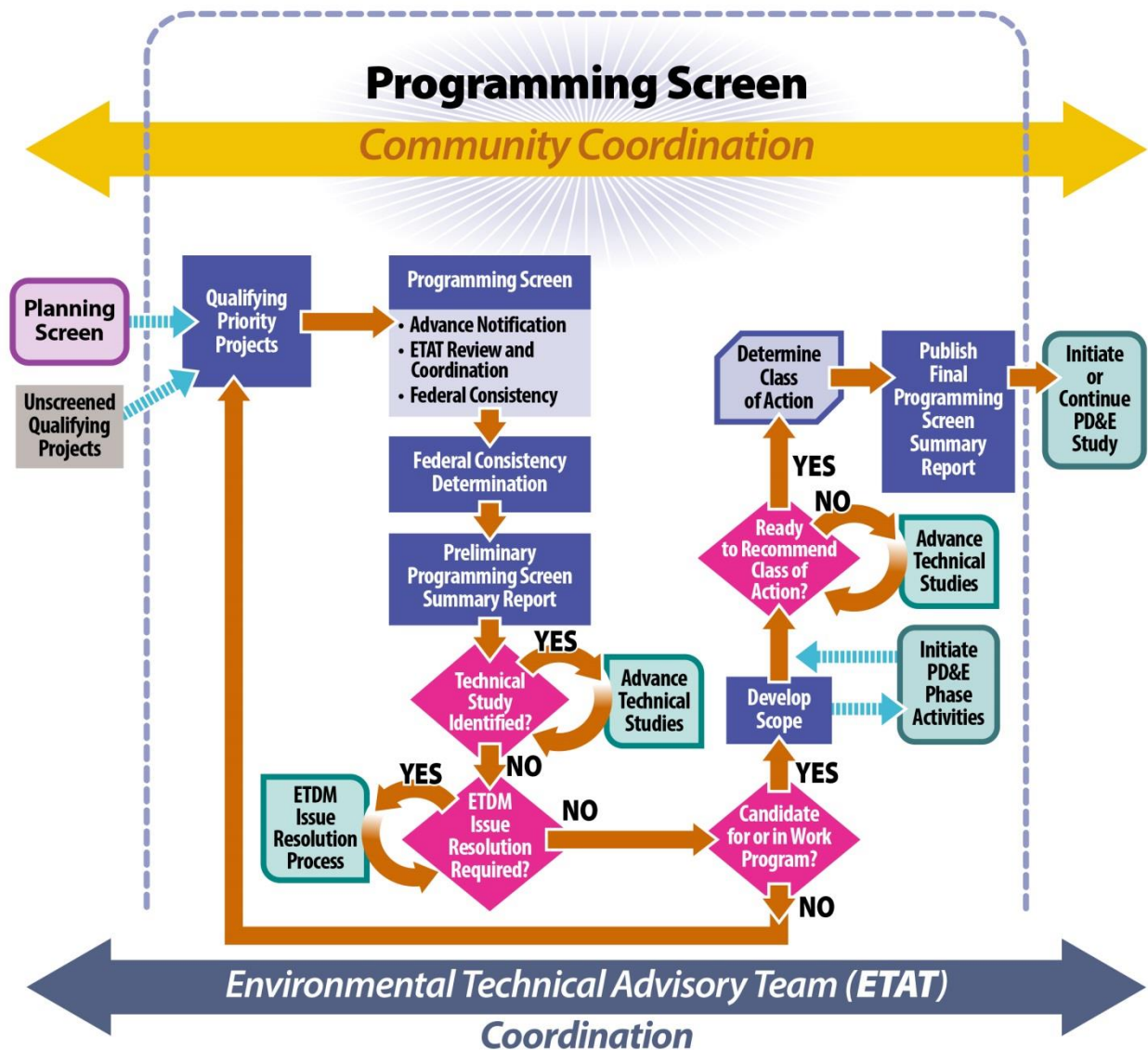


Figure 4-1: Programming Screen

At the beginning of the Programming Screen review, the respective FDOT District enters project information into the EST. Once internally coordinated and ready, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager (if assigned) uses the EST to notify ETAT members to proceed with their Programming Screen review and inform interested parties through the ETDM Public Access Site. When the Programming Screen review is scheduled at the same time as the AN review, the email notification will initiate both processes.

The ETDM Public Access website (<https://etdmpub.fl-etat.org/est/>) provides an opportunity for the public to view project information and maps. The public can submit project comments to the contact person listed on the website for the project or through other public involvement activities coordinated by FDOT.

The **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** documents the results of the review. For federal projects, FDOT, in conjunction with the Lead Agency (see **Section 2.5.10** of this **Manual**), reviews Programming Screen results to:

- Refine project alternatives (where applicable),
- Develop the PD&E Study scope of services, and
- Determine a Class of Action (COA).

The COA determination establishes the level of environmental documentation [e.g., Type 2 Categorical Exclusion (Type 2 CE) Environmental Assessment (EA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)] needed during the PD&E phase to satisfy the requirements of the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969** and all other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. For projects using only state funds, the District determines whether the proposed project is a State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) or Non-Major State Action (NMSA). SEIRs are screened through the EST. If the project is a Non-Major State Action, it is not screened and a checklist for non-major transportation projects will be required. Local projects may be screened and processed as a Project Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). For more information about COA determinations, see [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 2: Class of Action Determination for Highway Projects](#).

Publication of a **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** follows, and documents the Lead Agency approval of the COA. The final report also supports development of a project's scope of service based on ETAT reviews, considerations, and recommendations received from the agencies.

## 4.2 PROGRAMMING SCREEN PROCESS

During the Programming Screen, FDOT provides opportunities for ETAT members and the public to comment on qualifying priority projects being considered for inclusion in the Five Year Work Program, or prior to being advanced to the PD&E phase. ETAT member comments assist with project scoping; identify opportunities for avoidance, minimization, and mitigation; and highlight potential "fatal flaws." Ideally, before projects are selected for the Five Year Work Program, FDOT and the respective MPOs/TPOs should set sufficient time horizons into project schedules, because all qualifying projects must complete a Programming Screen.

ETDM Programming Screen reviews may or may not include the simultaneous delivery of the AN package. This optional timing helps to prevent duplicate reviews, additional work associated with reprocessing the AN packages, while also providing up-to-date information throughout the entire project delivery process.

The following sections detail the steps of the Programming Screen, as shown in **Figure 4-2**.

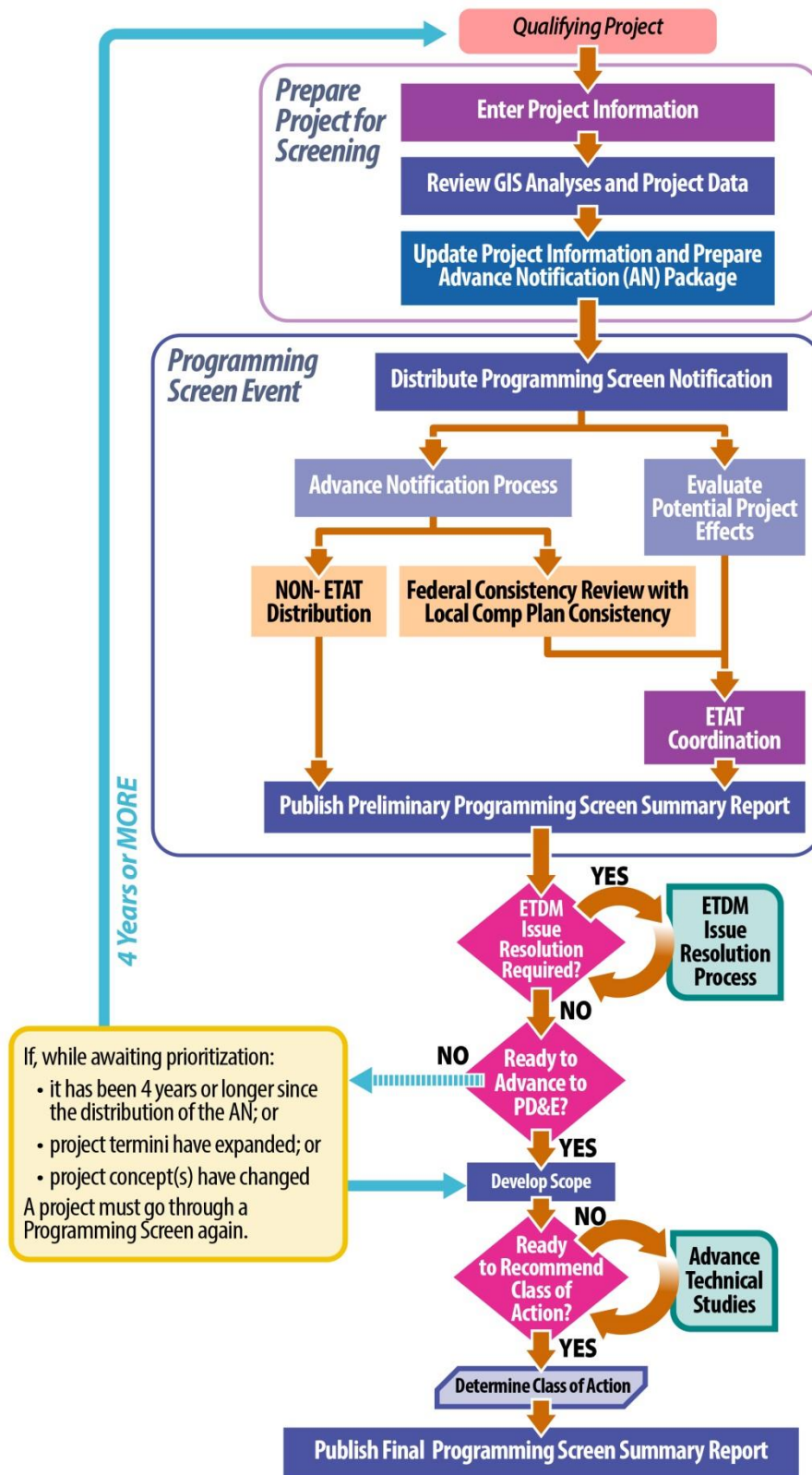


Figure 4-2: Programming Screen Process Flow

## 4.3 PROGRAMMING SCREEN PROJECTS

The Programming Screen is required prior to initiating the PD&E Study for qualifying state and federal transportation projects that are candidates for inclusion in the Five Year Work Program.

### 4.3.1 Identify Qualifying Projects

Qualifying projects come from a variety of plans, for example:

- FDOT STIP
- FDOT Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Plan
- FDOT Statewide Deficient Bridge List
- MPO/TPO Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs)
- MPO/TPO TIPs and Project Priority Lists
- Rural County Project Priority Lists

Annually, MPOs/TPOs develop a list of priority projects (TIP Priority List) derived from their LRTPs and other sources for consideration of inclusion in the Five Year Work Program (refer to the FDOT Office of Policy Planning's [Metropolitan Planning Organization Program Management Handbook](#) for additional guidance on selecting MPO/TPO projects for inclusion in the Five Year Work Program). Concurrently, FDOT selects priority projects from other plans and programs, including the SIS Plan and Statewide Deficient Bridge List, and also works with local governments in non-MPO/TPO areas to identify priority projects for inclusion in the Work Program.

FDOT ETDM Coordinators work with planners, FDOT MPO/TPO and Rural County Liaisons, managers, environmental staff and the District Statewide Acceleration Transformation (SWAT) team to identify transportation projects based on criteria such as project type, transportation system designation, potential funding source (federal, state, or local), and responsible agency. In this context, "transportation system designation" 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.

Unlike a Planning Screen, a FDOT ETDM Coordinator (or Project Manager) initiates and manages all Programming Screen reviews in the EST regardless of the project's location and whether it is on system or off system; therefore, in some cases the planning organization designation transitions from the purview of an MPO/TPO to that of FDOT.

Refer to the [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) for instructions on screening projects in the EST.

### 4.3.2 Project Review Release Schedule

Based on the list of qualifying projects, FDOT ETDM Coordinators and PD&E Project Managers work with appropriate staff to develop/update a 12-month release schedule as described in **Chapter 2 Section 2.3.2** of this *Manual*. Programming Screens should ideally occur one fiscal year prior to a project moving into the Five Year Work Program. If a project is placed in the Five Year Work Program before it completes a Programming Screen review, the project is still required to undergo Programming Screen prior to the PD&E Study being initiated. The schedule should be made available to the ETAT on the EST ETDM Calendar and updated as needed. FDOT Districts are also encouraged to hold periodic ETAT meetings (or webinars) to discuss projects included in their release schedule. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinators should be included in these meetings or webinars.

It is important to ensure that the ETAT has enough time to review and provide comments. Therefore, when scheduling a Programming 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. In addition, four months should be allowed per project to provide time for reviews, public involvement activities, possible review extensions, and preparation of the **Programming Screen Summary Report**.

### 4.3.3 Non-Qualifying Projects

FDOT and MPOs/TPOs can also use the EST to assist in identifying issues and prioritizing non-qualifying transportation projects. These projects do not qualify for the ETDM process and are not intended to be released to the ETAT for a formal review (see **Chapter 2** for the criteria used to identify projects that qualify for the ETDM process). 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). Moreover, the EST may be used at the local option for any case highlighted in the ETDM Review Matrix shown in **Chapter 2, Table 2-2**, of this *Manual* where a formal screening is not applicable.

## 4.4 PREPARE PROJECT FOR SCREENING

In preparation for an ETAT review, FDOT enters transportation project information into the EST and runs the standardized GIS analyses while MPOs/TPOs and FDOT Community Liaison Coordinators (CLCs) gather and enter community data. For MPO/TPO projects, the FDOT project team works closely with the MPO/TPO to transition project sponsorship to FDOT. 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.

#### 4.4.1 Identify Timeframe for Delivering the Advance Notification

The specific project and expected timeframe when the corresponding environmental study is slated to begin will be the determining factor as to whether the Programming Screen and AN will be reviewed together or separately.

When the environmental study is scheduled to occur within two years of the Programming Screen review, the Programming Screen notification includes the AN package.

When the environmental study is not expected to begin within the two years of the Programming Screen review, the AN package is distributed separately. In that scenario, the FDOT Project Team distributes the AN package separately right before the environmental study is scheduled to begin. This removes the need to process the same document multiple times (as there is a requirement to reprocess the AN if too much time has elapsed since it was originally distributed). It also provides an opportunity to communicate any new information that may have surfaced since the Programming Screen was completed.

For Federal-aid projects, the AN also begins the Federal Consistency Review process (see **Section 4.5.4.1**).

#### 4.4.2 Enter or Update Project Information

FDOT ETDM Coordinators work with FDOT and MPO planners to enter or update project information in the EST and capture previous planning and public involvement activities as part of a general effort to link the Planning and PD&E phases. Information for projects not typically screened during the Planning Screen, such as bridge replacement projects or projects that result from amendments to adopted transportation plans is also entered.

To prepare a project for a Programming 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 1, Project Description and Purpose and Need](#). Transportation planning data are used to assist in establishing the purpose and need. These data are drawn from LRTPs, MPO,/TPO TIPs, corridor plans, subarea plans, analyses of travel and safety conditions, public sentiment, and other sources that help identify corridors and facilities where transportation improvements are needed. This information may be available from the MPO/TPO and other regional and local agencies. Staff preparing the purpose and need for the Planning Screen should coordinate with the MPO/TPO liaison or other appropriate planning staff to identify the proposed project purpose and need as they 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, supporting an updated purpose and need. Only describe the appropriate purpose and need categories that are applicable to the project.

- Develop a project description, which includes:
  - Project name;
  - Name of the city(ies) and county(ies) where the project is located;
  - Name of the planning organization responsible for the project;
  - Limits of the proposed project, such as its logical termini and length;
  - Description of the existing or general characterization of a new facility; and
  - Description of the proposed 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).
  - If this project replaces, supersedes, or includes a portion of a previously screened project, provide the ETDM number of the previous project(s).

Refer to [\*\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 1, Project Description and Purpose and Need\*\*\*](#) and ***Chapter 3*** of this ***Manual*** for additional guidance on project descriptions.

- Enter information showing the location of each project alternative using the EST Map Editor or by uploading a GIS file. For Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process projects, delineate or refine general corridor alternatives. 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 project alternative(s). 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 of 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 on a SIS facility. In addition, highlight information from the Preliminary Environmental Discussion (PED), such as the potential for Section 4(f) involvement (for federal projects), number of relocations, relationship to any special, unique or significant features, community needs that will be impacted, and right-of-way involvement.
- Provide project plan consistency status information known to date and the steps toward achieving consistency, as appropriate. Consistency with the approved LRTP should be identified for projects in MPO/TPO areas. Also identify whether the project is included in the STIP and MPO/TPO TIP. For



projects in non-MPO areas, identify consistency with the STIP. The requested information reflects the **Planning Requirements for Environmental Document Approvals** form that must be submitted with federal draft and final environmental documents (refer to the form found in the [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 4, Project Development Process](#)). 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. Additional guidance is available on the FDOT Office of Policy Planning web page at:

<http://www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/metrosupport> .

- Indicate whether the project is being developed under the Local Agency Program (LAP) (LAP requires federal funds already allocated in the adopted Five Year Work Program).
- Identify whether or not federal funds have been allocated for the project in the Five Year Work Program. Add Financial Project Identification number(s), if known.
- Indicate whether the project is being developed through the ACE process.
- For federal projects, identify the Lead Agency and any Cooperating or Participating agencies, as appropriate
- Designate exempted agencies (if applicable). Exempted agencies are notified about the Programming 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, a landlocked project may not require a review from the United States Coast Guard (USCG). Additionally, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has requested exemption from reviewing projects in the ETDM process (See **Section 2.3.4 Federal Involvement** of this **Manual** and [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 14 Transit Project Delivery](#) when preparing FTA projects for screening). Other agencies that may be exempt from a review include United States Forest Service, National Park Service, and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Pursuant to the **NEPA** Assignment MOU, FDOT, specifically OEM staff are taking over Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) responsibilities during the ETDM process and therefore FHWA is not included in the ETDM process.
- Contact the Work Program Office to establish an ETDM identifier if not previously done for a Planning Screen (refer to [Work Program Instructions Part III, Chapter 23](#)).
- Identify whether the AN package will be distributed with the Programming Screen review notification or separately.

### 4.4.3 Designate Agency Roles

During the Programming Screen, agencies may request, or be invited, to serve as Participating or Cooperating Agency on a project. These designations describe various levels of involvement in the environmental review process. For federal projects, three important roles must be designated prior to the COA determination:

1. **Lead Agency** – The Lead Agency is the agency having primary responsibility for the Environmental Document, determining the preferred alternative in the PD&E phase, and inviting Cooperating and Participating Agencies. FDOT is the Lead Agency for non-federal projects with the applicable District providing approvals. For federal highway projects, FDOT serves as the Lead Agency under the **NEPA** Assignment Program with OEM providing approvals. When FDOT is not the Lead Agency, a federal agency will be the Lead Agency and under **Title 23 U.S.C.**, FDOT serves as the co-lead. FDOT identifies whether or not a project will be processed as a federal or state project through consideration and coordination during the District SWAT team’s planning meeting. .
2. **Cooperating Agency** – According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (**40 CFR § 1508.5**), a cooperating agency is defined as any federal agency, other than a Lead Agency, that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications (or a Native American Tribe when the effects are on lands of tribal interest) may, by agreement with the Lead Agency(ies), also become a cooperating agency.

Cooperating Agencies have a higher degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process. Because the Cooperating Agencies have legal/jurisdiction requirements tied to the preparation of the Environmental Document, The Cooperating Agencies must also concur on the elimination of alternatives.

The CEQ regulations [**40 CFR § 1501.6(b)(3)**] allow a Cooperating Agency to “assume on request of the lead agency responsibility for developing information and preparing environmental analyses including portions of the environmental impact statement concerning which the cooperating agency has special expertise.” An additional distinction is that, pursuant to **40 CFR § 1506.3(c)**, “a Cooperating Agency may adopt without re-circulating the environmental impact statement of a Lead Agency when, after an independent review of the statement, the Cooperating Agency concludes that its comments and suggestions have been satisfied”.

Due to a programmatic approach agreed to by FHWA and the USCG (Shapley, 2007) the USCG will be designated as a Cooperating Agency for ETDM projects involving a bridge permit when FDOT is designated as the Lead Agency under the **NEPA** Assignment Program.

3. **Participating Agency** – Other agencies with expertise or jurisdiction relevant to the project that are invited by the Lead Agency (pursuant to **23 U.S.C. § 139**) to respond to requests for technical assistance, attend scoping and coordination meetings, attend joint field reviews, provide substantive and early input on issues of concern, scope agreements for issues and required technical studies, review - approved draft/final environmental documents. Designation as a Participating Agency does not indicate project support and does not provide an agency with increased oversight or approval authority above its statutory limits. It is not necessary to invite agencies as Participating Agencies that have only a tangential, speculative, or remote interest in the project. Examples of a participating agency include: federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies. Nongovernmental organizations and private entities cannot serve as Participating Agencies.

Per **23 U.S.C. §139(d)** the Lead Agency is responsible for inviting and designating Participating Agencies in the **NEPA** process. An agency may request to serve as a Participating Agency. The Lead Agency may invite agencies that are not ETAT members to be involved as Participating Agencies.

Please note that while ETDM Master Agreements designate ETAT members as Participating Agencies, this is not analogous to the federal designation made by the Lead Agency pursuant to **23 U.S.C § 139, as amended** (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#) for additional information about Participating Agency responsibilities).

Prior to the Programming Screen review, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager identifies a potential Lead Agency to expedite the COA process. Alternatively, a federal agency may also request the Lead Agency designation. For example, the USCG may serve as Lead Agency on a bridge project. The selection should be made based upon project type and funding source and, when FDOT is not the Lead Agency, in coordination with the applicable federal agency. FDOT must designate a potential Lead Agency prior to identifying potential Cooperating and Participating Agencies, or initiating an ACE process **Methodology Memorandum (MM)** review (when applicable). In cases where a project may fall under multiple agency jurisdictions (for example, a project has both transit and highway components), the FDOT ETDM Coordinator works with the applicable agencies to identify one as the Lead Agency and one as a Cooperating Agency. The potential Lead Agency becomes the official Lead Agency once the COA determination is made.

During the Programming Screen, an agency can request to be a Cooperating or Participating Agency during project review. Following the review period, FDOT Districts can recommend Cooperating or Participating Agencies to the Lead Agency. Upon receipt of the recommendation, the Lead Agency officially invites and approves the Cooperating and Participating Agencies. Cooperating and Participating Agencies may also be identified during the PD&E Study. **Table 4-1** identifies ETAT agencies that are most likely to be recommended as potential Lead, Cooperating, and Participating Agencies based

on the COA. Invitations to Participating and Cooperating Agencies must be processed before submitting a proposed COA determination. The recommendations include requests received by FDOT from ETAT members to serve in one of these capacities during the review period. As appropriate, the Lead Agency accepts or declines the recommendations; the Lead Agency may also invite other ETAT members. The Lead Agency has 30 days to accept or decline the recommendations and send official invitations using the Manage Participating/Cooperating Invitations page in the EST. ETAT members have 30 days to respond to an invitation from the Lead Agency.

**Table 4-1 Guidance for Identifying Potential Lead, Cooperating, and Participating Agencies**

ETAT Agency	Lead /Co Lead	Federal NEPA Environmental Document Class of Action Participation					
		Cooperating Agency			Participating Agency		
		EIS	EA	Type 2 CE	EIS	EA	Type 2 CE
FL Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services							
FL Department of Economic Opportunity							
FL Department of Environmental Protection		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FL Department of State					✓	✓	✓
FL Department of Transportation	✓	✓	✓				
FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northwest Florida Water Management District		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Saint Johns River Water Management District		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Florida Water Management District		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southwest Florida Water Management District		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suwannee River Water Management District		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Federal Rail Administration	✓	✓	✓				
Federal Transit Administration	✓	✓	✓				
National Marine Fisheries Service		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
National Park Service		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Natural Resources Conservation Service		✓	✓		✓	✓	
US Army Corps of Engineers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
US Coast Guard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
US Environmental Protection Agency		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
US Fish and Wildlife Service		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
US Forest Service		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Micosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Seminole Tribe of Florida		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Military Bases (Eglin, Whiting, etc)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

#### 4.4.4 Review Standardized EST 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 quantify and summarize the

amount of resources (for example, wetlands acreage and demographic statistics) found within 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 of the buffer analyses 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 the project location and selected environmental resources.

Prior to initiating the Programming Screen review, the FDOT project team studies the results of the EST GIS analyses, along with site visits, local knowledge, and any other available information sources, to gain an understanding of the project area and to support the development of the PED (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#), for more information about PED). For projects on the SIS, the SIS Coordinators from 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 control review. The PD&E Project Manager (if assigned), environmental specialists, and ETDM Coordinator perform quality control reviews to verify the accuracy and completeness of all project information.

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

1. The logical termini of alternatives recorded in the EST **Project Description** report match the beginning and ending locations on the map.
2. Project features follow an existing facility, such as a highway or rail line, if intended.
3. 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 intent).

Specific data quality review procedures depend on project context and scope; refer to **Section 6.4** of this *Manual* for further guidance.

#### 4.4.5 Develop the 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 PED. The PED conveys FDOT's knowledge of a project area and potentially affected resources prior to the Programming Screen review. This involves a multi-disciplinary approach based on local knowledge, FDOT analysis, and may include a field review of the project for potential involvement.

FDOT uses the PED to inform the ETAT members and other agencies, as appropriate, of FDOT's initial assessment of a project's potential effects on the environment and how FDOT intends to address or evaluate these effects as the project advances. The PED

provides ETAT reviewers with context to aid them in providing actionable comments. FDOT bases the PED on local knowledge, planning studies, previous screening information, and any other evaluations relevant to the project area. The PED may be provided at both the project and alternative level, but the Districts should develop alternative specific PEDs when multiple alternatives are screened. If applicable, the FDOT District can view their Summary Degrees of Effect (SDOEs) from previous screens as a starting point when developing the PED.

For additional instructions on completing a PED, refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#).

#### 4.4.6 Prepare Advance Notification Package

The AN process may be initiated with the Programming Screen review or later, prior to initiating the PD&E Study. For Federal-aid projects, the AN also begins the Federal Consistency Review process under *the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972*, which authorizes Florida to review certain federal activities for consistency with the adopted Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). **Figure 4-3** provides an overview of the AN process. Refer to **Section 2.3.4** of this *Manual* and [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#), for more information about the AN process.

Prior to distributing the AN (either with the Programming Screen review or later), the FDOT ETDM Coordinator, Project Manager, or a member of the project team creates the AN package. The AN package consists of a cover letter, transmittal list, Application for Federal Assistance (if appropriate)<sup>1</sup>, location maps, and a Fact Sheet. The AN Fact Sheet includes the project description, purpose and need, and PED (refer to [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#) for additional guidance). The AN package is created using the EST (with the exception of the cover letter). Information entered for the Fact Sheet that corresponds to other reports in the EST (e.g., project description) is reflected in those reports. Any other reports or supporting materials used to develop the AN package should be uploaded to the EST for reference.

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<sup>1</sup> The SF-424 form is only required in the AN package if there are federal funds or the desire to maintain federal funding eligibility.

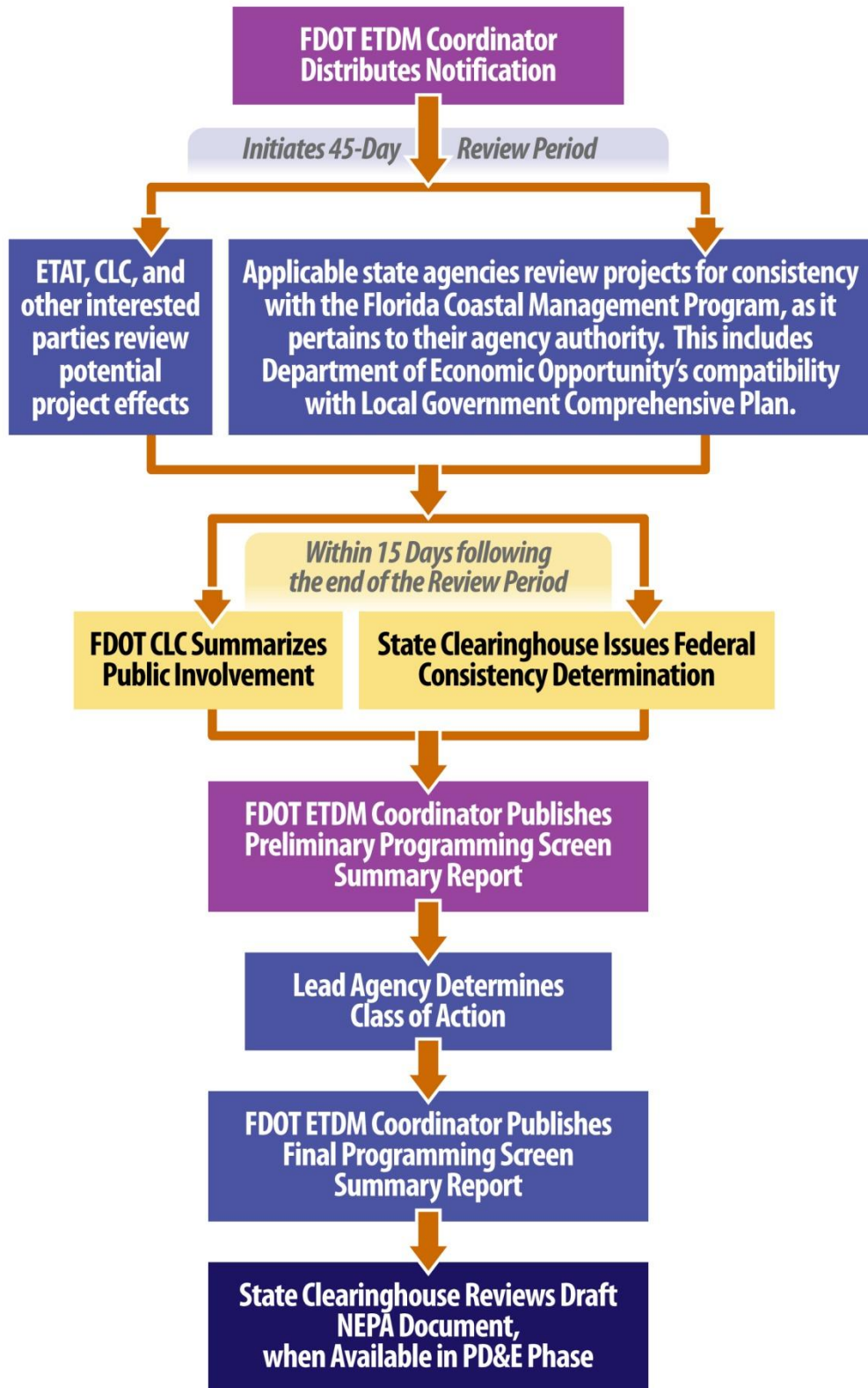


Figure 4-3: ETDM Advance Notification Process



A transmittal list is a record of the recipients of the AN, and must be provided in the AN package. Recipients of the AN include: ETAT members, Federal Consistency Reviewers, elected officials, federally-recognized tribes, and other local, state, and federal agencies that need, or have requested, to be notified. The OEM maintains contact information on the EST for mandatory state and federal agencies and federally-recognized Native American Tribes receiving AN packages. The responsibility for adding local or project-specific contacts falls to the FDOT project team.

The AN package is available as a draft document for internal review. Once distributed and published through the EST, all users of the EST can view and download the AN package. The public may also view the AN package on the ETDM Public Access Site (<https://etdmpub.flas-etat.org/est/>). This makes it possible to distribute it upon request to non-ETAT members. Whenever possible, the AN package should be sent electronically after coordinating with the recipient. The AN package should be sent to Native American tribes according to their requested method of communication as established on the [OEM Native American Coordination website](#). More information about distributing the AN package through the EST is included below in **Section 4.5.1**.

#### **4.4.7 OEM Pre-Screening Review**

The ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager is responsible for checking the data for completeness and accuracy. Coordination and review by other District representatives is strongly encouraged. Other District representatives may include the Environmental Manager, Environmental Administrator, District Project Development Engineer, and District Permits Coordinator for example. After the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager verifies the project purpose and need, project description, and PED are complete and accurate, they use the EST to send the information to OEM for an independent review. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinators and Project Development Engineer review and provide comments about the project description, purpose and need, and PED before the screening event notification is distributed. OEM reviewers have up to 14 days to provide comments. This review may also include subject matter experts. OEM and the ETDM coordinator and Project Manager work together to resolve any comments provided. When the OEM review is complete, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager updates the information and distributes the Programming Screen Notification and begin the screening event.

### **4.5 PROGRAMMING SCREEN AND ADVANCE NOTIFICATION REVIEWS**

Before initiating a Programming Screen review, the ETDM Coordinator should consider holding an online meeting or webinar to introduce the project 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 understand the project and provide quality comments. For assistance with setting up these meetings, contact the ETDM Help Desk by emailing [help@fla-etat.org](mailto:help@fla-etat.org).

During the Programming Screen review and the AN commenting period, the public, ETAT members, and Federal Consistency Reviewers (when applicable) have an opportunity to provide comments to FDOT about potential project effects, recommended technical studies and permits, and the need for further ETAT member involvement. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator also begins to work with FDOT CLC and, as appropriate, MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators and CLCs to evaluate sociocultural effects.

#### 4.5.1 Distribution of Notifications

After completing the OEM pre-screening review of project data, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager uses the EST to notify project stakeholders to proceed with their review. An email notification is automatically customized according to the type of review the recipient conducts and may be tailored further to include project-specific review instructions. When applicable, the email includes a link to the AN package. The email is sent to the following recipients:

- ETAT members
- FDOT CLC
- Interested parties who may set up notification preferences through the ETDM Public Access website
- Advance Notification recipients (when applicable):
- SCH
- Agencies on the SCH contact list when the Consistency Reviewer of the agency is not the same as the ETAT reviewer (if the project requires a Federal Consistency Review)
- Other AN transmittal list recipients not included in the above, such as regional planning council and local government officials

Certain agencies may be exempt from performing a project review based on the type of project being screened and their jurisdiction. For example, a completely landlocked project may not require a review from the USCG. In these instances, the agency will still receive the Programming Screen review start notification and AN package but will be designated as exempt in the Fact Sheet and ***Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report***.

#### 4.5.2 Review Time Frame

As established in the ETDM agency operating agreements (AOAs), reviews occur for 45 calendar days following the distribution of the email notification from the EST. 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 OEM for assistance. An extension 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.

For projects involving a Federal Consistency Review determination (See **Section 4.5.4.1**), the SCH has 15 days following the end of the 45-day review period to complete their consistency review. An inconsistency finding by any review agency requires a discussion with the SCH and possibly initiation of the Issue Resolution process.

### **4.5.3 Programming Screen Review**

Upon receipt of the Programming 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. Project effects include direct, indirect, and (when appropriate) cumulative.

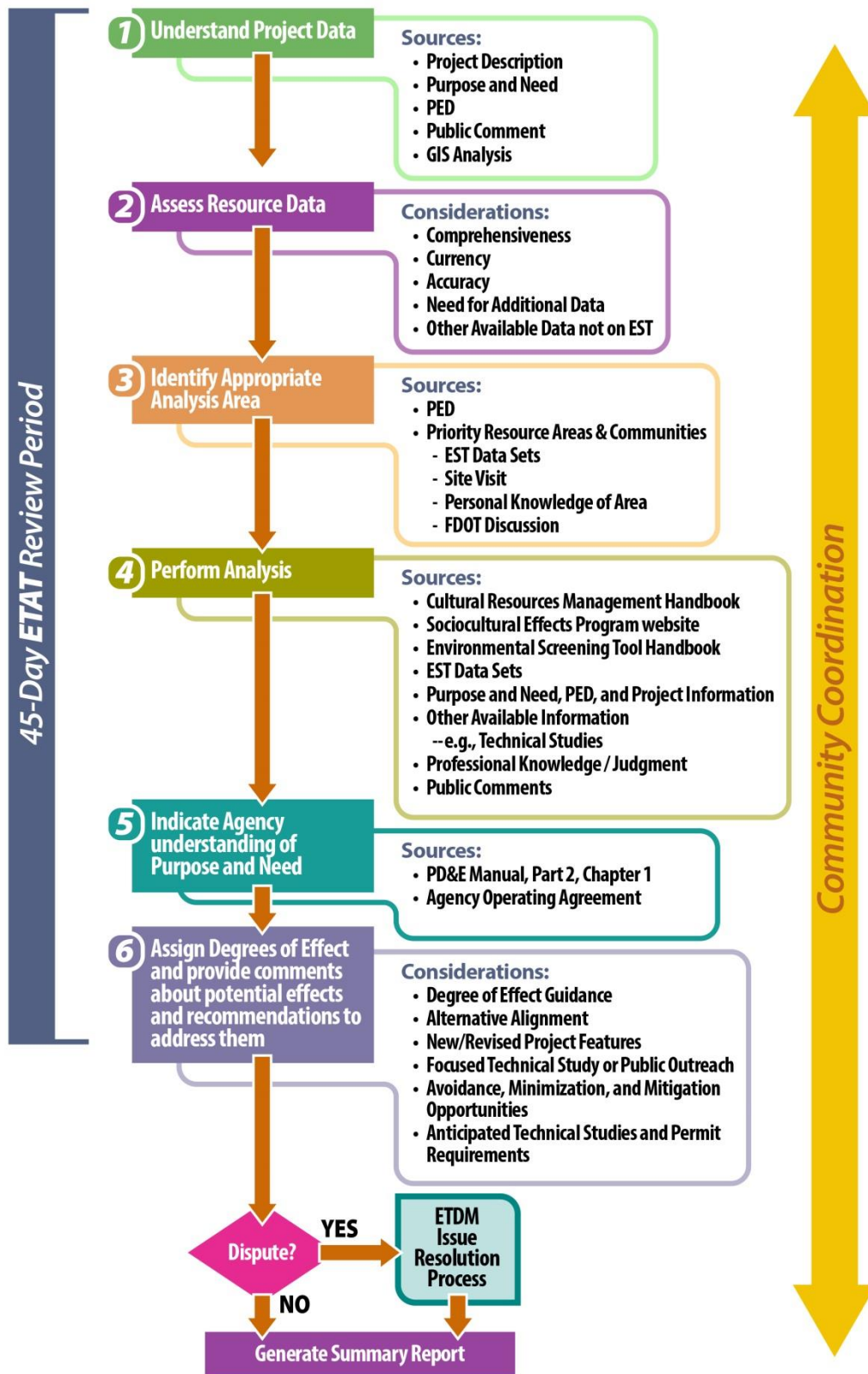


Figure 4-4: ETAT Review Tasks

### 4.5.3.1 ETAT Review Tasks

ETAT members perform the following tasks when evaluating a project (refer to **Figure 4-4** for a summary flow chart):

- 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 and locational information, and comments from previous activities.
- 2. Assess Resource Data** – Verify 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 one mile (5,280 feet) 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

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*.

agency coordination in subsequent project phases. Each ETAT member performs analyses consistent with the criteria and methodologies established by the member's organization 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. During the Programming Screen review, the Lead Agency indicates acceptance of the purpose and need. In the event the Lead Agency does not accept the purpose and need, the Lead Agency provides guidance with the objective of leading to its acceptance. Before determining a COA, the Lead Agency must accept the purpose and need. Under the **NEPA** Assignment Program, OEM provides purpose and need acceptance for federal highway projects.

During this step, Federal Consistency Reviewers enter their Federal Consistency Review determinations into the EST, as well.

6. **Provide Comments about Potential Effects and Recommendations to Avoid or Address Effects** – Comment on project concepts and alternatives based on analysis in Task 4. Be as specific as possible. Submit comments in the EST for each screened alternative for the issues identified in the AOA. Comments should not only list resources found within the standard EST buffer areas but reflect historical documentation, previous studies, site visits, and personal knowledge of the project area. For example:
  - a) If potential direct and indirect effects could exist, comment on the type, quality, and sensitivity of the resources involved in relation to the resources' 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.
  - b) If there is a concern about potential 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). ETAT members are not expected to evaluate cumulative effects during the Planning and Programming Screen reviews nor assign Degrees of Effect (DOEs). Cumulative effects can be both positive and negative. See the [\*\*FDOT Cumulative Effects Evaluation Handbook\*\*](#) for more information.
  - c) Provide information about agency plans, studies, or other data and regulatory information that may affect the project or are affected by the project. Fill in data gaps and validate data, as needed.
  - d) Provide specific recommendations to address resource concerns which may arise during permitting, such as potential avoidance, minimization, or mitigation opportunities; be specific.

- e) Specifically identify differences in potential jurisdictional resource impacts among alternatives.
- f) Identify specific activities FDOT or other ETAT members can complete between the Programming Screen and the PD&E phase to answer questions, address concerns, or fill in data gaps (e.g., seasonal studies, site inspections, and advancing technical studies). Identify required permits or technical studies along with sufficient detail to document any unique conditions.
- g) Indicate a DOE for each alternative and issue being reviewed. A DOE reflects the magnitude of both potential direct and indirect effects caused by a particular alternative to a resource. **Table 4-1** provides guidance for assigning a DOE. Include the rationale for selecting a DOE. More specific evaluation criteria should be used by each ETAT member for the resources under the member's jurisdiction.
- h) Indicate the need for future coordination (e.g., permits and technical studies). Request Participating or Cooperating Agency status per the directives in **Section 4.4.2** of this **Manual** for consideration by the Lead Agency.
- i) Identify technical studies, permits, authorizations, or approvals which may be required, and any potential concerns, or available mitigation opportunities.

#### 4.5.3.2 ETDM Issues/Resources

ETAT members comment on the potential project effects to one or more of the following ETDM issues as defined by their respective AOA's 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.

#### **4.5.3.3 Assigning a Degree of Effect**

ETAT representatives 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, communication with agency experts and FDOT District staff, as well as personal knowledge of the project area. The potential effects inform 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 FDOT ETDM Coordinator, PD&E Project Manager, and the District SWAT team use DOEs and comments to help identify potentially critical issues and determine how to address them. Involve the OEM Project Delivery Coordinators if questions or conflicting issues exist. The ETAT comments, along with the internal coordination help the FDOT ETDM Coordinator and PD&E Project Manager assign a SDOE and assist the Lead Agency in determining an appropriate COA at the conclusion of the Programming Screen. When FDOT is not the Lead Agency, the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager also coordinates with the Lead Agency representative to identify potential issues and assign the SDOE.

**Table 4-2** provides guidance on assigning a DOE. ETAT members are encouraged to develop specific guidance describing their organizations' DOE selection criteria and coordinate it with FDOT for mutual understanding and partnering. This promotes consistency when ETAT members from the same organization assign a DOE.

**Table 4-2: Potential Project Effects Degree of Effect Guidance – Programming Screen**

Degree of Effect*	Guidance	
	ETAT Resources	Sociocultural Resources
<b>Not Applicable/ No Involvement</b>	The issue/resource in question is not a part of, in any way involved with, or affected by the proposed alternative.	
<b>Enhanced</b>	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.
<b>None</b>	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 effects and there is no concern about the alternative.
<b>Minimal</b>	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.
<b>Moderate</b>	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.
<b>Substantial</b>	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.
<b>Dispute Resolution</b>	Potential effects are anticipated to the degree that the proposed alternative may need to be modified or eliminated. Issue Resolution is required before the project proceeds to final design.	

Degree of Effect*	Guidance	
	ETAT Resources	Sociocultural Resources

\***Note:** The Degree of Effect (DOE) reflects the potential magnitude of both direct and indirect project impacts.

The responsibility for performing Sociocultural Effects (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 Programming Screen review and made available to the ETAT as part of the PED. [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4, 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 8, 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 7, Section 4\(f\) Resources](#).

#### 4.5.4 Advance Notification Review

Recipients of the AN package may provide input to FDOT about the AN package during the 45-day review period. ETAT members and Consistency Reviewers submit comments through the secure EST site. All other recipients email or mail comments to the contact provided on the AN cover letter or listed on the ETDM Public Access Site (<https://etdmpub.flas-etat.org>).

The FDOT ETDM Coordinator and the PD&E Project Manager review all provided comments to determine if any unresolved or conflicting issues exist. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinator may need to be involved if questions or conflicting issues exist. Reviewers failing to respond by the end of the review period, but having jurisdiction by law or anticipated to have an interest in the proposed action may be contacted directly (verbal, electronic, or written form) for input.

##### 4.5.4.1 Federal Consistency Review

Federal Consistency Review refers to the authority given to Florida under the **Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972** to review certain federal activities for consistency with the adopted Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). Federal consistency reviewers assess project consistency based on the laws under their jurisdiction and issue their findings and recommendations to the Florida State Clearinghouse (SCH) managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), which issues the Federal Consistency Review determination on behalf of Florida. The FCMP addresses the

requirements of 24 Florida Statutes administered by nine state agencies and the five water management districts.

Projects requiring federal funding or the desire to maintain federal funding eligibility, or involving a federal action need a Federal Consistency Review determination. A state-funded project involving a federal action, such as a connection to an Interstate, or a federal permit, also requires a Federal Consistency Review determination. When a federal permit is involved, consistency is verified and finalized during permitting.

Upon receipt of the Advance Notification, the Consistency Reviewers have 45 days to indicate a project's consistency with jurisdictional statutes and requirements as outlined under the FCMP. Inconsistency findings must cite the relevant statute's section under the agency's authority with which the project is inconsistent, and must identify actions that can be taken to resolve the conflict. Prior to issuing an inconsistency finding, the reviewing agency should immediately notify the SCH of identified problems.

At the end of the 45-day comment period, the SCH has another 15 days to review the Consistency Reviewers' comments in the EST. The SCH then submits a Federal Consistency Review determination with the FCMP. The SCH also issues a notice of inconsistency (when applicable). If the SCH finds the project to be inconsistent with the FCMP and an inconsistency determination is provided during the AN review, the project will go through the ETDM Issue Resolution process (see **Section 4.11**).

Additional information about the Federal Consistency Review process may be found in [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#) and [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 14, Coastal Zone Consistency](#).

#### **4.5.4.2 Other Interested Parties**

Local or project-specific recipients of the AN package have the same 45-day review period to comment on the AN package. They send their responses to the project contact indicated on the cover letter.

#### **4.5.5 ETAT Coordination**

During the Programming 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 FDOT ETDM Coordinator, CLC, and PD&E Project Manager assess ETAT commentary to assign a SDOE for each issue and prepare the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator works with the ETAT to gain a better understanding of identified concerns, clarify any instances where DOEs for an issue differed between ETAT members, and address commentary that raised additional questions or need for additional information. When differences in DOE

assignment occur between agencies for an issue, greater consideration should be given to the ETAT member with jurisdictional authority over the resource of concern. The OEM Project Delivery Coordinator may need to be involved if questions or conflicting issues exist.

Additionally, after the Programming Screen review, the ETAT member may be asked to:

1. Participate in identifying solutions to project concerns
2. Provide technical assistance during the PD&E phase and subsequent project phases
3. Serve as a Participating or Cooperating Agency
4. Review and approve the COA determination (if Lead Agency)
5. Provide feedback to FDOT regarding the ***Preliminary and Final Programming Screen Summary Reports***.

#### **4.5.6 Publish Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**

The ***Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report*** documents key recommendations and results from the review, including the assigned SDOE for each issue, the Federal Consistency Review determination, and comments received about the AN package (when available).

The FDOT ETDM Coordinator and PD&E Project Manager generate and publish the ***Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report*** within 60 days from the end of the 45-day review period. The FDOT project team reviews comments, coordinates with the ETAT, and assigns a SDOE to all issues and alternatives based on project comments and ETAT DOE selections.

The SDOE represents the position of FDOT and is based on all 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 an SDOE lower than an ETAT member's assigned DOE the ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager should include a rationale for the decision. Coordination with an agency is expected when selecting a lower SDOE than an ETAT member's assigned DOE and should be documented in the EST during the development of the SDOE; email exchanges can be uploaded to the EST as a project attachment. 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 Dispute Resolution DOE, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager begins coordination with the ETAT member to seek a mutually agreeable avoidance and minimization option. If they cannot identify a mutually agreeable

option, the ETDM Coordinator, in consultation with OEM (or other Lead Agency representative when FDOT is not the Lead Agency), assigns Dispute Resolution as the SDOE and initiates the ETDM Issue Resolution process. See **Chapter 2, Section 2.7**, of this **Manual** for more information about the ETDM Issue Resolution process.

In the event that no reviews are received on a specific ETDM issue assigned to an ETAT member through an executed AOA and there appears to be involvement with a resource under their jurisdiction, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator or PD&E Project Manager should contact the respective ETAT member(s) and ask for 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 the FDOT's knowledge regarding the issue should be the basis for determining the SDOE. If coordination attempts fail, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator should seek assistance from OEM and other FDOT staff (particularly the PD&E Project Manager) 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 **Preliminary Programming 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 OEM (or other Lead Agency representative when FDOT is not the Lead Agency).

When the AN process is completed after the Programming Screen review and before the COA determination, the FDOT project team responds to AN comments in the EST and then re-publishes the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**. The project phase cannot be changed in the EST from Programming Screen to Project Development until the summary report is re-published.

When the FDOT ETDM Coordinator publishes a **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**, ETAT members, OEM, Consistency Reviewers, relevant MPO/TPO and local government staff, and interested public (<https://etdmpub.flas-etat.org>) are notified that the report is available.

## 4.6 ALTERNATIVE CORRIDOR EVALUATION (ACE) PROCESS

FDOT uses the ACE process to identify, evaluate, and eliminate alternative corridors on qualifying projects prior to the PD&E phase. The decisions made in ACE can be used to:

- Refine the purpose and need for a project
- Determine the project area
- Define general travel modes or corridors
- Describe general environmental setting for a project

- Identify preliminary environmental impacts and environmental mitigation
- Develop and refine a range of alternatives to be considered in detail during the PD&E Study.

The ACE process links planning and **NEPA**. However, adoption and use of ACE decisions in the **NEPA** process is subject to a determination by the Lead Agency. (Note that OEM makes this determination and performs other Lead Agency actions under the **NEPA** Assignment Program.)

The ACE process is typically performed as part of the Planning or Programming Screens, prior to the PD&E phase. The Districts should use the ACE process in support of potential Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and certain Environmental Assessment (EA) projects. The ACE process may also be used to eliminate corridors that are part of the State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR). Different corridors are often considered when a new route is needed between two locations and may include multimodal options. Corridors can be identified that largely avoid sensitive environmental areas and still satisfy the identified transportation need. Projects that typically require the ACE process include the following:

- New alignments – new roadways; new roadway connections or extensions; new transit and rail lines
- Major realignments
- Major bypasses – truck bypasses; city/town bypasses
- Other types of projects based on consultation with the Lead Agency

Additionally, new alignments or major realignments for transit corridors, freight corridors (that are not bypasses), and bicycle or trail corridors can be evaluated using the ACE process. See [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 14, Transit Project Delivery](#), for guidance on corridor analysis for transit projects.

The ACE process identifies and evaluates corridor alternatives using the **MM** agreed upon by the project stakeholders. The results of the ACE are documented in the **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)**. The **ACER** is used in the **NEPA** process to support a federal decision to eliminate from further study corridors that are not feasible or do not meet the purpose and need for the project. Public involvement and resource agency coordination in the ACE process is done through the ETDM screening process. The ETDM screening facilitates demonstration and documentation that alternatives considered during the ACE process followed a proper consultation and received support from regulatory and resource agencies and affected stakeholders.

The level of detail in the analysis of an ACE is higher than that used to prepare a typical planning product, but less than that of a PD&E Study. The ACER must establish and document criteria and the public involvement process used to evaluate and eliminate

alternatives that are not feasible or do not meet the purpose and need for the project. Such documentation is essential to incorporate **ACER** results into the NEPA process.

Many transportation projects may already have existing corridor options from completed action or master plans, for example, projects located on the existing SIS. These analyses should be evaluated and considered prior to advancing into the ACE process. Decisions made in these action or master plans should be included in the project documentation, and during the PD&E Phase, should become part of the **NEPA** project record (e.g., project file, environmental document, etc.). All planning products incorporated into the **NEPA** process must follow the conditions of **23 U.S.C. § 168** as discussed below in **Section 4.7**.

The ACE process varies depending on whether it is started in the Planning Screen, Programming Screen, or PD&E. **Figure 4-4** outlines the ACE process when conducted during the Programming Screen. The following sections further describe the ACE process when conducted during the Programming Screen. For details about ACE during the Planning Screen, see **Chapter 3** of this **Manual**. For information about the ACE process during the PD&E phase, refer to [\*\*PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 4, Project Development Process\*\*](#).

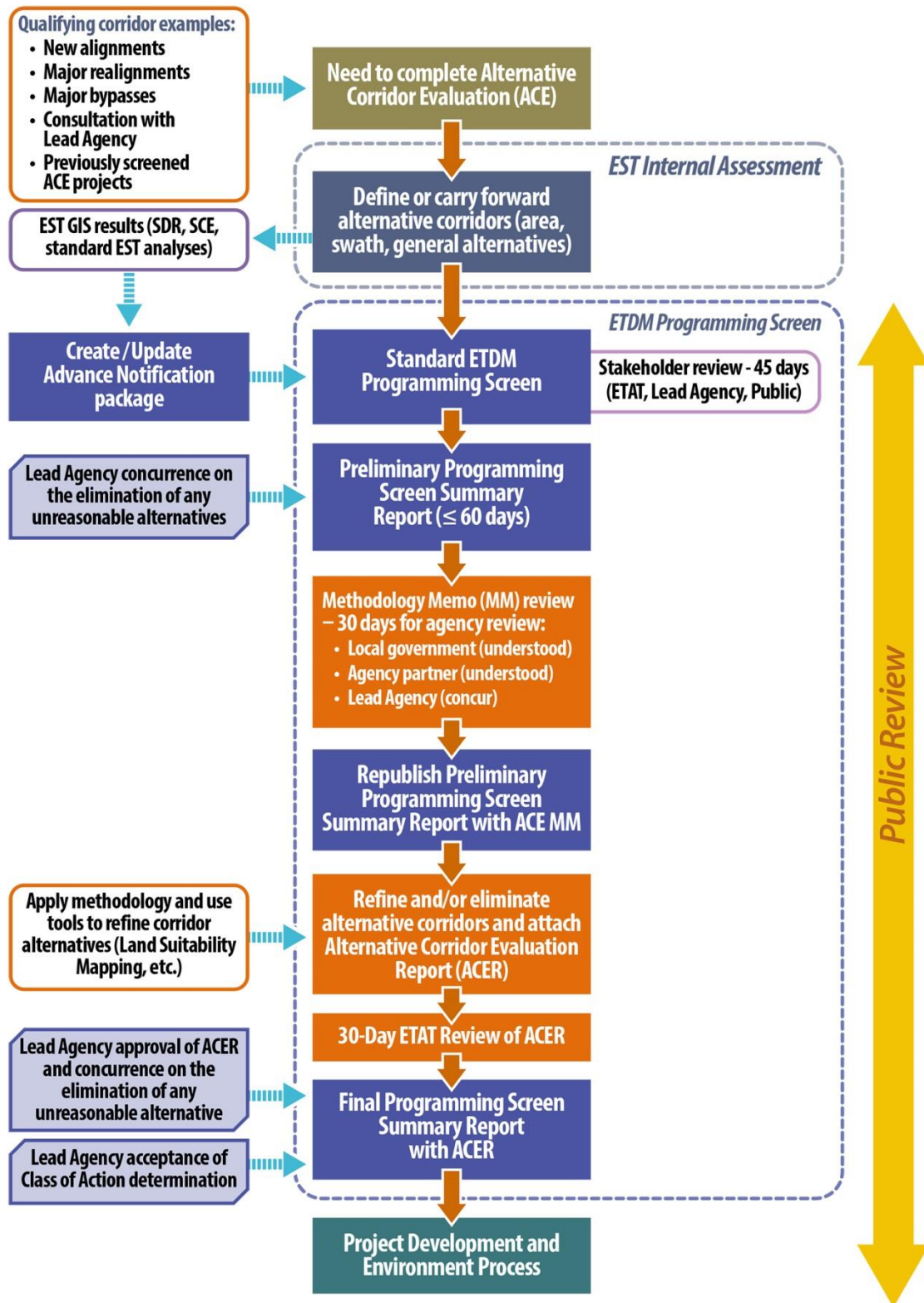


Figure 4-5: ACE Process During the Programming Screen



## 4.6.1 Identify the Need to Complete the ACE Process during Programming Screen

The ACE process may begin or continue during the Programming Screen. FDOT makes the determination of designating a project to go through the ACE process in coordination with the Lead Agency. Projects with the potential for multiple corridor alternatives requiring detailed analysis in PD&E are typically recommended. The Districts can use ACE for non-federal projects at their discretion.

## 4.6.2 Define Initial Corridors

Regardless of when the District begins the ACE process, the next step is to define corridors. Appropriate District Project Managers, planners, engineers and SWAT team members coordinate internally to identify and define a range of alternative corridors that address project needs. The corridors can range from swaths to broad corridors to narrower alignments. The naming of each corridor or alternative must remain consistent throughout the ACE and be carried through the PD&E phase. The District must consider any initial corridor alternatives from previously completed planning activities such as planning-level corridor/subarea/feasibility studies, multimodal corridor plans, vision plans, or master plans that might inform the ACE process. If no corridor alternatives were previously developed, the District must define initial corridors within the ACE study area. The District can add additional corridors at its discretion after consideration of known environmental issues, comments from ETAT members, and the ability of the corridor to meet the purpose and need for the project.

When evaluating major urban corridors, the District must consider the need for public transportation systems, facilities and services, and alternative corridors that will address multimodal transportation needs consistent with [Major Urban Corridor Studies Policy, Topic No. 000-725-010](#). Such consideration can include analysis for reasonable corridors based on the presence of alternative transportation modes and the feasibility of developing an interconnected multimodal transportation system. Multimodal options that must be considered include, but are not limited to, fixed guide way facilities and expanded bus service with supporting facilities. The policy requires each major urban corridor study to determine if there is justification for continued consideration of public transportation systems, and facilities or services in conjunction with the development of the corridor.

Consideration of alternative transportation modes, particularly in urban areas, should include the need for bicycle and pedestrians facilities. See [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 6, Engineering Analysis](#) for more guidance.

When continuing the ACE process from the Planning Screen, FDOT uploads the resulting corridor alternatives to the EST prior to the beginning of the Programming Screen. These reflect the changes presented in the **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)**, which can be found on the EST as an attachment to the **Project Description** report. If the project began as a study area analysis, by the time it reaches the Programming Screen, more refined corridor alternatives replace the study area.

When the ACE process begins in the Programming Screen, the project team defines corridor alternatives. While these corridor alternatives are still rather conceptual, they provide enough detail to allow analysis. Standard GIS analyses are run against this geometry (see **Section 4.4** of this *Manual, Prepare Project for Screening*, for more information) and the project team develops the AN package (see **Section 4.4.4, Prepare the Advance Notification Package** of this *Manual*).

### 4.6.3 Decide to Advance Project

The District considers the involvement and potential impacts to environmental issues/resources and the presence of any fatal flaws on the project to decide if the project should be advanced. In making decisions, the District may consider GIS data, known environmental issues in the area, and early project stakeholders' comments, and other data and information that would help the determination of the appropriate level of detail of analysis for the range of alternatives being considered. Once the decision has been made to advance the project, the District defines the goals for the ACE process (e.g., performing an action plan level corridor analysis or determining reasonable alternatives for the PD&E Study).

### 4.6.4 Conduct Standard EST Programming Screen

Following OEM's pre-screening review (**Section 4.4.7**), the Programming Screen review proceeds as described in **Section 4.5**. For ACE process reviews, the ETDM Coordinator assigns SDOEs following ETAT review and then publishes a **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** (see **Section 4.5.5** of this *Manual*).

### 4.6.5 Develop Methodology Memorandum (MM)

Using the Programming Screen results, the District develops or refines the **MM** detailing the goals of the evaluation, the alternatives analysis methodology, how coordination with stakeholders will occur, and the basis for decision-making. Under the **NEPA** Assignment Program, the District project team coordinates with OEM regarding the analysis methodology. The **MM** integrates local land use plans, public involvement and ETAT member commentary, and Planning phase analyses, as well as highlights specific data, tools (e.g., Land Suitability Mapping and Corridor Analysis Tool), and timelines to govern corridor refinements. The **MM** includes:

#### 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 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**

### **4.6.6 Conduct Methodology Memorandum Review**

When the ACE process is conducted as part of the Programming Screen, the District submits the **MM** to the OEM PDC for a 14 day review before the **MM** is sent out to the ETAT for review through the EST. The ETAT members have 30 days to provide comments and indicate if the **MM** is understood. The District then revises the **MM**, as necessary, to address any comments received before sending the document for Lead Agency review. Depending on the nature of the ETAT comments, the Lead Agency may recommend that the ETAT review the revised **MM**.

In certain situations, the **MM** may need to be reviewed by project stakeholders more than once. This may take place when one or more of the following apply:

- 1. There is a change in project termini (expanded).
- 2. There is a change in purpose and need.
- 3. There is a change in project concept(s) (e.g., number of lanes, adding interchanges, etc.).

4. There is a change in supporting data that may affect the methodology and any resulting decisions made from it (e.g., population changes, economic changes, land use changes, etc.).
5. When stakeholder input results in significant revisions to the methodology.

After the Lead Agency accepts the **MM**, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator republishes the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** with the approved **MM** to document concurrence.

#### 4.6.7 Refine or Eliminate Corridors

The District evaluates the corridors using the criteria established and agreed upon in the **MM**. In studying the alternatives and considering input from ETAT and other project stakeholders, the District may refine corridors to avoid potential environmental effects. The refinement of corridors to avoid potential effects also considers the corridor vision, purpose and need, and potential environmental impacts.

#### 4.6.8 Prepare Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report

The District documents the application of the **MM** in the **Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report (ACER)**. The **ACER** summarizes the alternative corridors analysis and documents the alternatives that are eliminated or carried forward to the PD&E Study (pursuant to **23 U.S.C. § 168** and **Appendix A of 23 CFR Part 450**). The **ACER** documents the basis for eliminating alternatives. Documentation regarding the elimination of alternatives in the **ACER** is part of the project's Administrative Record for the **NEPA** process. It is critical to properly document the analysis, public and agency involvement, and resulting planning decisions in the **ACER** to ensure that these analyses meet requirements for use in the **NEPA** process. The **ACER** must document assumptions supporting planning analysis such as travel demand forecast year; forecast method and its rationale, and future year data. Additionally, the **ACER** must document policy assumptions related to land use, socio-economic factors, transportation costs, and transportation network. The **ACER** also documents unresolved project issues with the public, stakeholders or agencies, if known. The **ACER** will include, on the cover page the following statement:

*This planning product may be adopted into the environmental review process, pursuant to Title 23 USC § 168, or the state project development process.*

When completed, the **ACER** is uploaded into the EST and sent to the OEM PDC for a 14 day review prior to being distributed to the ETAT for review and comment. 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 concurrence. Under the **NEPA** Assignment Program, the **ACER** is submitted to OEM for acceptance and concurrence.

The Lead Agency considers the **ACER** for adoption and reviews the recommendations of the alternatives eliminated from further study or considered for additional study in the subsequent PD&E phase or concurrence. When the ACE process is conducted during the Programming Screen, the District makes a formal request for adoption through the EST.

#### 4.6.9 Publish Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report

The Lead Agency and Cooperating Agencies must concur with any eliminated corridor alternatives not advancing into the PD&E phase. The ETDM Coordinator publishes a **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report** after uploading the **ACER** and receiving Lead Agency and Cooperating Agency concurrence on any corridor alternatives recommended for elimination.

During the PD&E phase, the environmental document summarizes and references the **ACER** (see [PD&E Manual, Part 1 Chapter 4, Project Development Process](#)).

### 4.7 LINKING PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Linking Planning and **NEPA** provides a connection between planning-level and project-level decisions. Planning decisions and the environmental review process should be seamlessly integrated to eliminate duplication of effort and delays in project delivery. The benefit of linking planning decisions and the PD&E Study is the ability to reuse data gathered, methodology used, results obtained, and decisions made during the Planning phase to streamline the project delivery by minimizing duplication of efforts and data. Other benefits include the ability to identify environmental issues before developing the Scope of the PD&E Study and focus the analyses and technical studies conducted during the PD&E Study to issues that have potential to impact the project.

Pursuant to **23 U.S.C. § 168** and **23 C.F.R. § 450.318**, results or decisions from a system-level corridor or subarea planning study may be used in the NEPA analysis if they meet certain conditions. **Appendix A of 23 CFR Part 450 - Linking the Transportation Planning and NEPA Processes** details how to adopt or incorporate by reference information from transportation planning into **NEPA** documents and/or environmental review process under existing laws. **Appendix A of 23 CFR Part 450** is intended to be non-binding and voluntary.

The ACE process and ETDM screening may produce products which can be adopted for use in the **NEPA** process. Pursuant to **23 U.S.C. § 168(c)(1)**, the following decisions from a planning product for a transportation project may be adopted or incorporated by reference into the NEPA process:

1. Whether tolling, private financial assistance, or other special financial measures are necessary to implement the project;

2. A decision with respect to general travel corridor or modal choice, including a decision to implement corridor or subarea study recommendations to advance different modal solutions as separate projects with independent utility;
3. The purpose and need for the proposed action;
4. Preliminary screening of alternatives and elimination of unreasonable alternatives;
5. A basic description of the environmental setting;
6. A decision with respect to methodologies for analysis; and/or
7. An identification of programmatic level mitigation for potential impacts of a project, including a programmatic mitigation plan developed in accordance with **23 U.S.C. § 169**, that the relevant agency determines are more effectively addressed on a national or regional scale, including:
  - a. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts at a national or regional scale of proposed transportation investments on environmental resources, including regional ecosystem and water resources; and
  - b. Potential mitigation activities, locations, and investments.

The following planning analyses from a planning product for a transportation project, codified in **23 U.S.C. § 168(c)(2)**, may be adopted or incorporated by reference into the NEPA process:

1. Travel demands;
2. Regional development and growth;
3. Local land use, growth management, and development;
4. Population and employment;
5. Natural and built environmental conditions;
6. Environmental resources and environmentally sensitive areas;
7. Potential environmental effects, including the identification of resources of concern and potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on those resources; and
8. Mitigation needs for a proposed project, or for programmatic level mitigation, for potential effects that the Lead Agency determines are most effectively addressed at a regional or national program level.

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The degree to which information, analyses, or decisions from the planning process can be adopted or incorporated by reference into the **NEPA** process depends upon how well the planning products meet standards applicable under the **NEPA** and associated implementing regulations (**23 CFR Part 771 and 40 CFR §§ 1500-1508**). The relevant agency in the environmental review process may adopt or incorporate by reference decisions from a planning product when the Lead Agency determines that the conditions set forth in **23 U.S.C. § 168(d)** and restated below are met:

1. The planning product was developed through a planning process conducted pursuant to applicable federal law.
2. The planning product was developed in 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. The planning process included public notice that the planning products produced in the planning process may be adopted during a subsequent environmental review process in accordance with this section.
5. During the environmental review process, the relevant agency has:
  - a. Made the planning documents available for public review and comment by members of the general public and federal, state, local, and tribal governments that may have an interest in the proposed project;
  - b. Provided notice of the intention of the relevant agency to adopt or incorporate by reference the planning product; and
  - c. 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 or incorporation by reference and use in the environmental review process for the project and is

incorporated in accordance with, and is sufficient to meet the requirements of, the **NEPA** and **40 CFR § 1502.21** [as in effect on the date of enactment of the ***Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act***].

10. The planning product was approved within the 5-year period ending on the date on which the information is adopted or incorporated by reference.

Linking planning and **NEPA** does not mean the planning products should be prepared to a level comparable to a **NEPA** analysis. Pursuant to **23 U.S.C § 134(q)**, **23 U.S.C. § 135(k)**, **49 U.S.C. §5303(q)** and **49 U.S.C. § 5304(j)**, transportation plans and programs are exempted from **NEPA** review. Environmental evaluations that are conducted during the Planning phase are not required to address all regulatory requirements that should be addressed by the **NEPA** analysis.

If the planning product to be adopted into the **NEPA** analysis is older than 5 years (from the date the product was approved), the information used to prepare the planning study must be reviewed to check whether conditions or planning context have changed since approval of the planning product. If the conditions or planning context have not changed, the PD&E Study may use the information from the planning product and explain why that information is valid to the **NEPA** decision-making process. The Lead Agency must be consulted when making this decision.

#### **4.8 ADVANCING THE PROJECT TO PD&E**

Based on the results of the ***Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report*** and any ACE process activities, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator and PD&E Project Manager work with FDOT management (and MPO/TPO management if the project is in an MPO/TPO area) to determine whether to advance the project to the PD&E phase. Should FDOT decide to delay moving the project forward, a COA determination and subsequent publishing of the ***Final Programming Screen Summary Report*** is not required until the project advances. Delays typically occur as a result of project reprioritization, funding availability, or when uncertainty exists regarding the appropriate COA.

When advancing a project to PD&E, it must be included in a long range plan (e.g., LRTP in an MPO area) or priority list (if in a non-MPO area) and be in the TIP/STIP. The PD&E phase must be in the adopted Five Year Work Program in the year the PD&E Study is scheduled to begin. The project must use the ETDM identifier as described in the [\*\*\*Work Program Instructions Part III Chapter 23, Planning\*\*\*](#). Additionally, prior to requesting **NEPA** approval, at a minimum, the next phase of the entire project must be fully funded in the TIP or STIP; or if the project has multiple segments, at least one segment must be fully funded all the way through construction.

A project may advance if less than four years have elapsed since the project was reviewed and no changes have occurred regarding the project's concept or termini.

Recipients of the Programming Screen Notification and/or AN must be notified when one or more of the following conditions occur:



1. It has been 4 years or longer and no project activities have occurred since the distribution of the AN,
2. There is a change in project termini (expanded), and/or
3. There is a change in project concept(s) (e.g., new or revised alignments, addition of a new interchange, addition of express lanes)

If the project has **not** entered the PD&E phase, the AN must be reprocessed and will include an updated Programming Screen. An updated AN package is prepared in accordance with [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#). On federal highway projects, the District must coordinate with OEM.

The Project Manager, in coordination with the ETDM Coordinator, updates project information in the AN package in the EST, and sends the updated package to the recipients of the original AN. The cover letter should reference the earlier AN (including the State Application Identifier number) and include the reason(s) the new AN is being transmitted.

If the project has entered the PD&E phase, the project is not required to go back through the Programming Screen. Instead, the District will prepare a project status fact sheet and distribute it to the same recipients of the Programming Screen and/or AN. See **Chapter 2, Section 2.3.10** of this *Manual* for more information about rescreening projects. See [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 3, Preliminary Environmental Discussion and Advance Notification](#) for information about the project status fact sheet.

## 4.9 BEGIN DEVELOPING PD&E SCOPE OF SERVICES

At the end of the Programming Screen, the FDOT project team and District SWAT team members begin to identify technical studies which may be needed for the scope of services in the PD&E phase. The scope of services reflects the activities necessary to complete the PD&E Study and focuses on addressing the issues raised and technical studies identified by the ETAT during the review. It is important when writing the scope of services for an EA not to assume that the decision will be a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), but rather that the result could be either a FONSI or the need to prepare an EIS. The **Programming Screen Summary Report** lists project recommendations and anticipated permits and technical studies. **Chapter 5** of this *Manual* provides additional guidance for transitioning to the PD&E phase.

## 4.10 DETERMINE CLASS OF ACTION

Transportation projects involving a federal action must comply with **NEPA** and require a COA determination. The process for identifying the appropriate COA generally occurs after the publication of the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**. There

may be instances when it is prudent to delay the COA in order to perform additional studies or coordination prior to or during the PD&E Study to better inform the COA determination. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator and PD&E Project Manager and others as appropriate consult with the Lead Agency to determine the COA. OEM serves as the Lead Agency for federal highway projects. This is a critical decision to the advancement of a project and should be fully considered prior to entering the COA proposal in the EST. The three COA determination categories as defined in **23 CFR 771.115** are Categorical Exclusions (CEs), EAs, and EISs. The environmental document for FDOT non-federal projects reviewed through the EST is a State Environmental Impact Report (SEIR). The environmental document for local projects screened through the EST is a PEIR. These five documents and procedures for determining the appropriate COA are described in detail in [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 2, Class of Action Determination for Highway Projects](#), [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 10, State, Local, or Privately Funded Project Delivery](#), or [PD&E Manual, Part 1, Chapter 14 Transit Project Delivery](#).

The FDOT ETDM Coordinator uses the **Environmental Class of Action Recommendation Form (form # 650-050-16)** in the EST to identify the potential for significant impact per EST Issue/Resource per **Section 4.5.3.2** of this **Manual** and propose a COA to the Lead Agency for approval. The Lead Agency receives recommendations to approve the COA for federal projects. Proposals to complete SEIRs are approved by the District Environmental Manager, or designee. Proposals to complete PEIRs are approved by the local agency. Once the Lead Agency approves the proposed COA, it becomes part of the project record and is published in the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report**.

The COA can be modified as needed. However, all modifications require concurrence from the Lead Agency.

#### **4.11 PUBLISH FINAL PROGRAMMING SCREEN SUMMARY REPORT**

FDOT publishes the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** following the COA determination by the Lead Agency and the updating of the scope of service outline. For ACE process projects, the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** is renamed to **Final Programming Screen Summary Report with Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report** and also contains Lead Agency concurrence on the **MM** and agreed upon eliminated alternatives. The **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** contains any updates to information previously published in the **Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report**. If the AN process is completed after the COA determination, the FDOT project team re-publishes the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** to document the comments and responses.

Upon publication, an email to access the **Final Programming Screen Summary Report** is automatically submitted to original project notification email recipients. The email identifies changes made since the previous publication. The report is available for public review on the ETDM Public Access Site (<https://etdmpub.fl-a-etat.org/est/>). ETAT

members review the report and provide comments, if applicable, within 30 days of notification.

## 4.12 ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS

ETAT commentary regarding potential project effects during the Programming Screen offers an opportunity to find solutions to complex issues among agencies by identifying mutually agreeable activities or conditions that will address a resource of concern while meeting transportation needs.

A strong commitment exists among the participants in the ETDM process to make every reasonable attempt resolve issues within the ETAT, prior to elevating them to higher level management. To facilitate meeting this commitment, potential disputes should be addressed as early as possible to make the best use of agency skills and resources. Projects with unresolved issues following the ETAT review and publication of the Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report require commencement or continuation of the ETDM issue resolution process.

The informal issue resolution process begins when the ETDM Coordinator in consultation with the Lead Agency assigns an “Issue Resolution Process Required” SDOE during a Programming Screen review. When assigning the SDOE, the ETDM Coordinator uses all known information including comments and DOEs from ETAT members. The ETDM Coordinator reviews the potential dispute commentary to determine its consistency with the definition of “Issue Resolution Process Required” (see **Table 4-1**) and in conjunction with the disputing agency’s regulatory authority. Initially, the FDOT ETDM Coordinator works with the appropriate ETAT representative(s) to informally resolve the disputed issue(s) at the agency staff level before elevating the discussion to the Formal Issue Resolution process. Refer to **Chapter 2, Section 2.7**, of this **Manual** for issue resolution procedures.

## 4.13 SUMMARY OF PROGRAMMING 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 a Programming Screen. The list below provides a quick reference, summarizing the activities of these participants during a Programming Screen. For details, refer to the preceding sections of this chapter, and **Chapter 2, Section 2.5, ETDM Coordination** of this **Manual**.

### 4.13.1 Programming Screen Preparation

#### *ETDM Project Information (FDOT)*

- Facilitate timely information flow between FDOT and MPOs/TPOs and local governments (as applicable).
- Identify priority projects for inclusion in the Five Year Work Program.

- Identify and develop review schedule of qualifying transportation projects.
- Develop or update project descriptions and purpose and need for candidate projects.
- Document planning consistency information in coordination with FDOT District MPO/TPO or Rural County Liaison.
- Map the location of each project.
- Identify previous studies and documents that can be included with project reviews.
- Prepare PEDs and ANs.
- Enter information into the EST or coordinate with the GeoPlan Center to upload batch files of project data.
- Perform quality assurance check 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.

***Sociocultural Data (FDOT or MPO/TPO)***

- Identify activities to gather information to support the SCE Evaluation.
- Gather or identify sociocultural data required for SCE Evaluation.
- Enter sociocultural data into the EST or coordinate with the GeoPlan Center to upload or secure GIS files.
- Perform quality assurance checks of sociocultural data and mappings (including project geometry and termini).

### 4.13.2 Programming Screen Reviews

ETAT members perform the following tasks for their resources; the FDOT 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.
- Conduct purpose and need reviews.
- Recommend potential avoidance, minimization, and mitigation opportunities.
- Identify required technical studies and permits.
- 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 Programming Screen reviews:

- Review provided project planning consistency information i.e., LRTP, State Transportation Improve Program (STIP), and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- When applicable, review and comment on AN package and assist with scoping activities.
- Review, comment, and approve the **MM**, within 30 calendar days when requested.
- Approve elimination of unreasonable alternatives not meeting the purpose and need or evaluated through application of the approved methodology **MM** and documented in the **ACER**.
- Invite Participating and/or Cooperating Agencies, as appropriate.
- Review and approve the Class of Action (COA) for the environmental document development in the **NEPA** study.
- Review and adopt planning products for use during **NEPA**.

### 4.13.3 ETAT Coordination

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

- Initiate Programming Screen and send AN packages.

- 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 and Programming Screens.
- 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 about how project plans or concepts have been adapted to address their concerns, or discuss their comments when necessary.

#### **4.13.4 Programming Screen Summary Report**

The FDOT ETDM Coordinator, Project Manager, or designee, performs the following tasks related to developing and publishing the ***Programming Screen Summary Report***.

- Review and respond to commentary received during the Programming Screen review.
- Incorporate the SCH Federal Consistency Review determination.
- Assign an SDOE to each ETDM resource issue.
- Summarize public comments received during the review.
- Develop the Scope of Service for the PD&E phase.
- Publish the Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report.

- Determine the COA in conjunction with the Lead Agency.
- Coordinate with appropriate FDOT District staff to identify potential candidate projects for the Five Year Work Program.
- Publish the Final Programming Screen Summary Report.
- Provide results of the Programming Screen to the PD&E project team, MPO/TPO and local governments (as applicable), and with the interested public.

#### **4.14 REFERENCES**

15 CFR Part 930. Federal Consistency with Approved Coastal Management Programs.

23 CFR Part 450, Appendix A. Linking Transportation and NEPA Processes.

23 CFR Part 771. Environmental Impact and Related Procedures.

23 U.S.C. (as amended). "Highways"

40 CFR §§ 1500-1508. Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act. 1978.

49 U.S.C. "Transportation"

Chapter 338, Florida Statutes. Florida Intrastate Highway System and Toll Facilities.

Chapter 339, Florida Statutes. Transportation Finance and Planning.

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

Executive Order No.12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," Federal Register (FR) 47, Page 30959 (47 FR 30959) (1982).

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Florida Department of Transportation. 2016. Work Program Instructions. Accessed at [http://www.fdot.gov/workprogram/Development/WP\\_instructions.shtm](http://www.fdot.gov/workprogram/Development/WP_instructions.shtm) on 4/21/2017.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

Shapley, G.E. 2007. Letter to George Hadley of FHWA, dated December 7, 2007.

State of Florida, Office of the Governor, Executive Order 95-359. 1995.

## **4.15 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



## 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, cultural, and community 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 December 14, 2016, 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 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 provide 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 review 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. **23 U.S.C §139** requires lead agencies 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.

**23 U.S.C. § 168** provides authority for, and encourages the integration of planning information and products into the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** process. 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 advance technical studies, if appropriate
- Identify the anticipated environmental Class of Action (COA)
- Distribute the Advance Notification (AN)

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, providing the environmental and engineering recommendations 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, Notice of Intent (NOI) serves as the official start date.

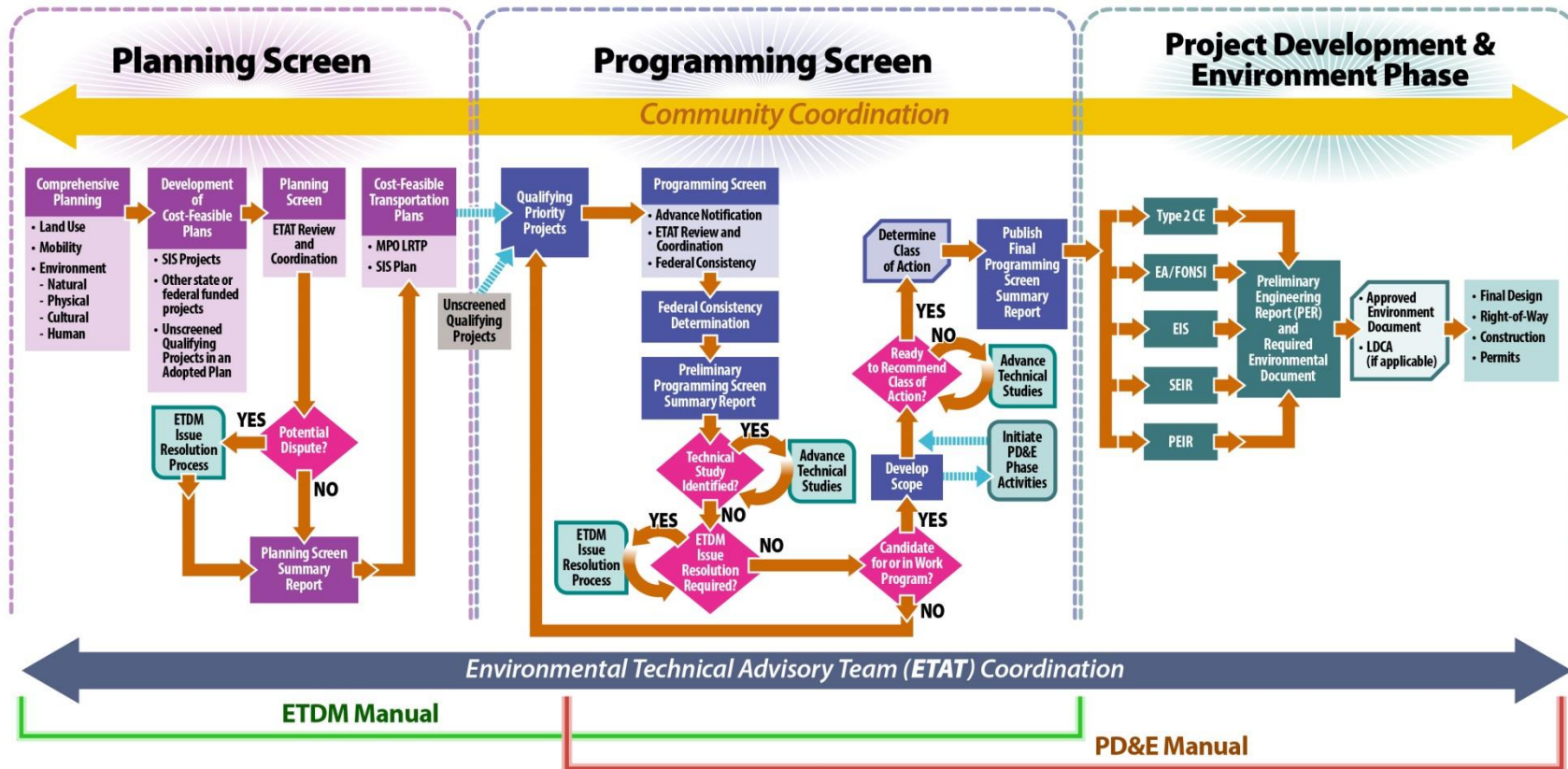


Figure 5-1: ETDM to PD&E Process Diagram

## 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 issue 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***.

At the end of the Programming Screen, 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*** and are approved by the District Environmental Manager. 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 identified as not using FHWA funds for any phase, 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 environmental 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 23, Planning, Section A.4, 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. A District may choose to complete 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 issue 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 Engineer, 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 transition to 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 a Preliminary Environmental Discussion (PED)
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 reevaluation (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. As issues are encountered or technical studies are developed, 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. The PD&E Project Manager, in coordination with the FDOT ETDM Coordinator, may upload completed technical studies to the EST for a 30-day ETAT review and comment period; relevant ETAT members are notified by email of a document's availability.

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, Section 3-2.4.1 Agency Roles\*](#)). 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 evaluating sociocultural effects of project alternatives during the

Planning and Programming Screens can be used to help develop the PD&E Public Involvement Program. 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 dispute 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. The outcomes of these activities should be recorded in the final PD&E 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 Decisionmaking.

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. 1978.

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

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

Florida Department of Transportation. 2015. Public Involvement Handbook, Accessed at <http://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubinvolvement.shtm> on 4/21/2017.



Florida Department of Transportation. 2016. Project Development and Environment Manual. Accessed at <http://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubs/pdeman/pdeman1.shtm> on 4/21/2017.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DATA MANAGEMENT**

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## 6.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter describes the data management procedures used to provide consistent, high quality information for supporting the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process through the Environmental Screening Tool (EST). These procedures define data collection, preparation, and maintenance responsibilities and techniques.

As illustrated in **Figure 6-1**, the flow of information during the ETDM process begins when the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) ETDM Coordinator enters project and community information into the EST. Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) members identify new or updated information from their agencies and confirm the accuracy and currentness of the resource data they have provided to the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL) and updating it as necessary. The University of Florida GeoPlan Center houses both the FGDL and EST and is responsible for system administration and data maintenance.

Once project information is entered into the EST, standard Geographic Information System (GIS) analyses, as prescribed by the ETAT, are automatically performed to identify potential environmental resources within proximity of a project. These analyses identify and quantify various natural, physical, cultural, and community resources within set buffer distances of the project centerline, ranging from 100 feet to 5,280 feet (one mile). Study areas, such as those established for projects undergoing the Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process, are not buffered. Rather, the analysis results are computed for the entire study area. The EST stores all the results, along with any other project information. The ETAT uses the EST to review the project and environmental information, and to provide comments on resources relative to their jurisdiction and authority. They supplement their review with additional information such as agency studies, site visits, and local area knowledge. The public is able to review project and environmental information through the ETDM Public Access Site.<sup>1</sup> The public provides input directly to the FDOT and MPOs/TPOs through the ETDM Public Access Site or through public involvement activities like workshops and surveys. After a project review period, the project's ETDM Coordinator publishes a summary report, which is available to the public and remains as part of the project record.

**Section 6.1** provides an overview of how information flows through the ETDM process, identifying data sources, processing, and output. **Section 6.2** describes the major data components of the EST. **Section 6.3** discusses data collection techniques and **Section 6.4** describes Quality Control/Quality Assurance measures for processing the data. **Section 6.5** describes the data archival standards of the EST. Detailed data specifications and formats are included in the [\*\*Environmental Screening Tool Handbook\*\*](#).

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<sup>1</sup> By statute, locations of archaeological sites and threatened and endangered species can remain confidential.

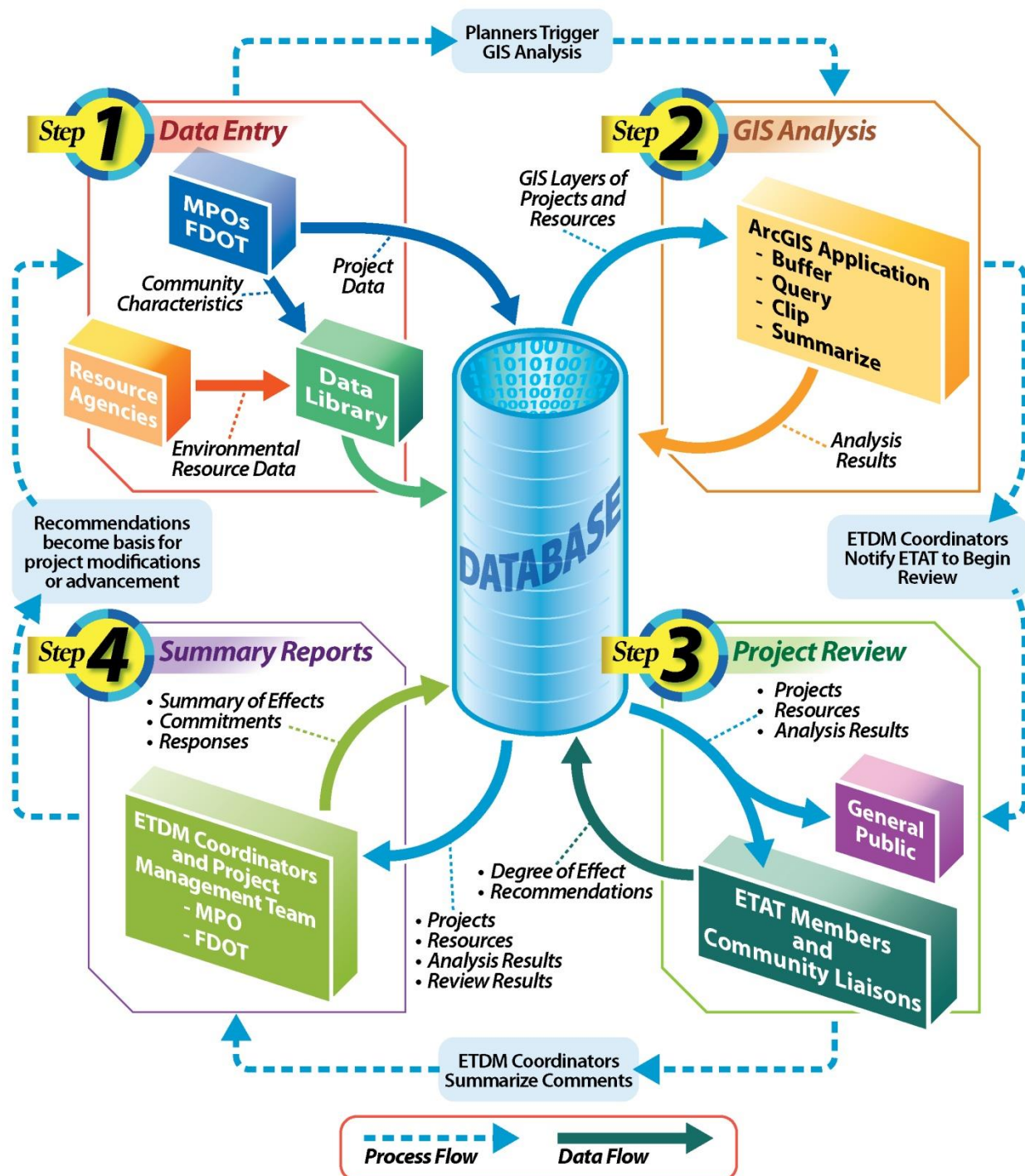


Figure 6-1: Environmental Screening Tool Process and Data Flow Diagram

## 6.2 DATA COMPONENTS

Prior to each ETDM screening event, FDOT and MPO representatives use the EST to input or update transportation project, environmental resource, and sociocultural or community information. FDOT project team members also use the EST to explore resources in their Areas of Interest. The ETAT members continually review their own resource data in the EST to make sure it reflects the most recent accurate data sets and best available data. **Table 6-1** identifies data component entry/update responsibilities.

**Table 6-1: Data Component Entry/Update Responsibilities**

Data Component	Responsible Entity	What	Geographic Responsibility
Transportation Project Data	FDOT ETDM Coordinator & Project Team	Qualifying projects	MPO/TPO and non-MPO/TPO areas
	MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinator	Qualifying projects that are candidates for inclusion in the Cost Feasible Element of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), excluding State Strategic and Intermodal System (SIS) projects	MPO/TPO areas
Sociocultural Community Data	FDOT Community Liaison Coordinator (CLC) & Project Team	Communities surrounding qualifying projects	MPO/TPO and non-MPO/TPO areas
	MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinator and CLC	Communities surrounding qualifying projects that are candidates for inclusion in the Cost Feasible Element of the LRTP (excluding SIS projects)	MPO/TPO areas
Environmental Resource Data	ETAT Member	New or updated agency data	Agency Jurisdiction
Areas of Interest	FDOT project teams	Study areas, usually in the vicinity of transportation projects; not necessarily ETDM projects.	Not applicable

NOTE: Qualifying projects are defined in **Chapter 2** of this **Manual** and with additional criteria identified in Chapters **3** and **4** of this **Manual**.

### 6.2.1 Transportation Project Data

FDOT ETDM Coordinators and PD&E Project Managers screen qualifying transportation projects in their jurisdiction. During the Planning Screen, MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators may screen qualifying projects within their jurisdiction, except for projects on the SHS or SIS and Bridge Replacement Program projects, which are screened by the respective FDOT District. The MPOs/TPOs do not conduct Programming Screens. The Turnpike ETDM Coordinator screens projects on designated Turnpike District screens. Information inputs for qualifying ETDM projects include:

1. Information regarding Plan Consistency pursuant to “Planning Requirements for Environmental Document Approvals” and local government comprehensive plans. Refer to [Project Development and Environment \(PD&E\) Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4, Project Description and Purpose and Need](#).
2. Project description with information regarding project mode, termini, project length, estimated cost, and any other known supporting information, including the roadway functional classification and Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for existing and future conditions, and whether or not the project is within an Urban Service Area. If the project involves widening an existing facility, describe the existing right-of-way considerations and whether the agency responsible for the project intends to widen within the existing right-of-way (if known). All project alternatives should be described. The alternative descriptions should highlight anything unique to the alternative. Detailed descriptions and specifications for these data elements are available in the [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#).
3. Purpose and need based on considerations for items such as emergency evacuation, community-expressed needs, and transportation demand. Refer to the [PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 4, Project Description and Purpose and Need](#) for guidance.
4. Visual representation of the project location (project geometry/mapping) for GIS analysis and review.

See **Chapters 3** and **4** of this *Manual* for a more detailed discussion of the required project information.

## 6.2.2 Sociocultural or Community Data

In addition to transportation project information and environmental resource data, the ETDM process relies on sociocultural or community information to make informed decisions about affected communities. This includes data that define community boundaries; identify community focal points; and document community histories, goals, and values (see **Figure 6-2**). Combined with the information above, the Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) provides results on a number of economic, demographic, and social variables from the three most recent United States Census (Census) events, the American Community Survey (ACS), and Florida county property appraiser data.



**Figure 6–2: Process for Developing Community Information**

**Table 6-2** shows some of the information automatically calculated within the EST for each SDR or gathered by a FDOT or MPO/TPO CLC. The EST GIS Analysis Report also provides additional sociocultural information.

**Table 6–2: Sociocultural or Community Data**

Population and Demographics	Employment Characteristics	Housing Characteristics	Physical Characteristics	Community Focal Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population and growth trends</li> <li>• Age distribution</li> <li>• Predominant ethnic/racial composition</li> <li>• Income trends</li> <li>• Special population groups</li> <li>• Automobile ownership</li> <li>• English-speaking proficiency</li> <li>• Education Attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment rates and trends</li> <li>• Employment base and type</li> <li>• Tax base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of structures</li> <li>• Type of structures</li> <li>• Condition of structures</li> <li>• Vacancy rates</li> <li>• Percentage of residents five years in home</li> <li>• Type of occupancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Existing land use</li> <li>• Future land use</li> <li>• Planned and approved developments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Medical and health facilities</li> <li>• Fire stations</li> <li>• Religious facilities</li> <li>• Intermodal facilities</li> <li>• Cultural centers</li> <li>• Law enforcement agencies</li> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Community centers</li> <li>• Social service facilities</li> <li>• Civic centers/ Multi-use facilities</li> <li>• Government buildings</li> <li>• Cemeteries</li> <li>• Other miscellaneous facilities</li> </ul>

FDOT and MPO/TPO CLCs define communities through quantitative (data) and qualitative (public input) analyses. The immediate geographic vicinity of a project typically dictates the area of impact; in some cases, however, the potential for sociocultural consequences extends well beyond the immediate area. CLCs should rely on MPO/TPO, local government, and public input to define community boundaries; identify community desires and attitudes; and verify community focal points and data. The [Sociocultural Effects web site](#), located on the FDOT Environmental Management web site, provides methods for identifying and defining Sociocultural Effects (SCE) study areas, as well as for collecting and organizing the community data.

The [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) contains instructions for defining community boundaries using the edit map features tools in the EST; documenting community histories, goals, and values; and generating a SDR from these efforts.



### 6.2.3 Environmental Resource Data

ETAT agencies provide digital information about the resource(s) they protect and manage. Each agency coordinates with the University of Florida GeoPlan Center to develop a data submission schedule to ensure that the content, currentness, and completeness of their agency's resource information are the most accurate and pertinent available.

It is the ETAT member's responsibility to identify GIS data within their organization that are available to use in determining the potential effects of transportation projects on agency goals and regulated resources. Examples include datasets developed from environmental studies and established agency plans, programs, and initiatives. This information could include locations and descriptions of the natural, physical, cultural, and community resources that identify priority resources.

The GeoPlan Center also coordinates at least annually with non-ETAT agencies that produce data needed for project evaluations.

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page of the ETDM Public Access Site at <https://etdmpub.flu-etat.org/est/> lists the datasets available in the EST and their sources.

### 6.2.4 Areas of Interest

FDOT project teams can use the EST to define and analyze an area anywhere in Florida to learn more about people, places, and natural resources at that location. They use the Area of Interest (AOI) function in the map viewer to draw a shape on the map. After the location is entered, the website summarizes environmental and community resource information from the Florida Geographic Data Library.

The standard EST Study Area Report identifies natural, physical, social and cultural resources in the area according to the EST GIS database. The Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) displays a demographic profile of the area, based on data from the US Census Bureau. The SDR and EST Study Area Report present the same resource data used for the project evaluations described above in **Section 6.2.2 Sociocultural or Community Data** and **Section 6.2.3 Environmental Resource Data**. The AOI information is automatically deleted after 30 days, unless otherwise specified by the user.

### 6.2.5 Document Reviews

Authorized EST users (Document Review Administrators) may upload and distribute documents to ETAT members or other interested parties for review. These documents may or may not be related to an ETDM project. The review administrator uses the EST to:

- Set up a review period.
- Identify commenters, team members, and responders for each document review.

- Send email notifications to document review participants, notifying them that a review has started.
- Modify existing document review events.

Once notified, recipients may review the documents and add comments to the EST. Following the review period, responders consider the comments and document responses in the EST. The documents, comments, and responses can be transmitted to **FDOT Environmental Electronic Document Management System (EEDMS)** for storage and retention.

## 6.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGIES

This section describes techniques for gathering and providing information for use in the EST. Unless otherwise indicated, these collection methodologies pertain to transportation project, resource, and sociocultural or community data. In general, users of this data define the data requirements. FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM) leads the data requirement efforts and seeks expert input from practitioners. The GeoPlan Center locates data sources to satisfy the information needs developed by the users. The GeoPlan Center then standardizes and loads the data into the EST. Data may be entered into the EST through direct upload to the GeoPlan Center, online data entry using the EST mapping tools, or from handheld applications.

### 6.3.1 Transfer of Existing Digital Information

A rich diversity of information exists in the state of Florida. Rather than recreate the data, the ETDM process partners with data source authors to directly transfer information into the EST. Existing digital data transfers should include the following components:

- Spatial features that represent the geographic locations of real world objects
- Attribute data describing the objects, including a unique identifier linking each spatial feature to a record in its corresponding attribute table
- Projection and geographic coordinate information describing the parameters used to determine the geographic coordinates of the spatial features
- A metadata file containing information about the source, attribute information, and accuracy of the data
- Contact information for the data source to use regarding any questions or problems with the data

Data transfer protocols and formats vary by data type. Support staff of the GeoPlan Center and the information technology staff at the source organization determine specific transfer protocols. Contact the ETDM Help Desk ([help@fla-etdm.org](mailto:help@fla-etdm.org)) for more information about transferring existing digital information to the EST.

### 6.3.2 Online Data Entry

Online data entry utilities exist in the EST for transportation project, AOI, and community data that do not already exist in digital format. These utilities allow users to draw features on a map window available through their Internet browser and enter descriptive information on customized forms. When the users complete the data entry, the EST automatically updates the information. The [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) provides instructions for using these utilities.

### 6.3.3 Field Data Collection

Applications for collecting field data using handheld data collection devices for specific resources are continually being developed or improved. These applications benefit ETDM data collection efforts by:

- Providing data formats compatible with the EST
- Customizing the data collection interface for ease of use
- Aiding locational accuracy

User documentation describing system requirements, application instructions, and data transfer mechanisms accompany completed applications. For information about the status and availability of these applications, contact [help@fla-etat.org](mailto:help@fla-etat.org).

Source agencies may use other field data collection techniques at their own discretion. Metadata should document these alternative techniques. Coordinate EST data requirements and formats for documentation with the GeoPlan Center and FDOT OEM in order to optimize data standardization.

## 6.4 QUALITY CONTROL/QUALITY ASSURANCE

This section establishes the data management Quality Control/Quality Assurance procedures used in the ETDM process. Standards and specifications established prior to data collection, followed by data processing protocols, and continual review and improvement ensure data quality.

### 6.4.1 Locational Accuracy

The goal for all EST data in terms of locational accuracy is 12 meters or better. This enables the data to be overlaid with relative accuracy over United States Geological Survey (USGS) 1:24,000-scale map series data and to be consistent with the FDOT roadway base map. Since this accuracy is not always available, dataset documentation must include an estimate of locational accuracy. Metadata for datasets used within the EST must meet the minimum Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards. The FDOT OEM Project Manager overseeing the EST may exempt some transportation project, environmental resource, sociocultural, or community data from this requirement if FDOT determines the data adds

enough value to justify its inclusion. In these instances, the GeoPlan Center will work with the data provider to complete the metadata documentation. The responsibility for understanding the limitations of any dataset lies with the user.

### 6.4.2 Data Currentness and Completeness

The effectiveness of ETAT commentary largely depends on current and complete data.

1. Through protocols developed with the GeoPlan Center, ETAT agencies specify dataset update/revision schedules. ETAT members ensure the EST contains their agency's current environmental data and mapping. Once uploaded to the EST, ETAT members should review the data again to ensure nothing was corrupted in the upload process.
2. FDOT and MPO/TPO ETDM Coordinators ensure the currentness and completeness of transportation project data prior to each screening event, as further discussed in **Section 6.4.5**.
3. FDOT and MPO/TPO CLCs update community data.
4. The GeoPlan Center helps coordinate and manage data from each of the above participants, as well as works with non-ETAT agencies to obtain data that would also benefit the ETDM process.

### 6.4.3 Data Documentation Standard

Metadata provides information about a dataset, including when and how it was developed, and recommendations for its intended use. The [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) defines the format of metadata for GIS datasets in the EST. A sample of the required metadata documentation format for transferring GIS data to the EST is provided under the Help tab in the EST.

Documentation core components include:

- Name and phone number for an agency contact person knowledgeable about the dataset
- Source
- Time period (year collected)
- Attribute definitions (table fields)
- File format (for example, shapefile)
- Coordinate system and projection parameters, if applicable (for example, latitude/longitude decimal degrees)
- Datum (for example, North American Datum 1927 or 1983)

- Data collection methods (for example, scanned, surveyed or digitized)
- Estimate of locational accuracy (for example, +/- 10 meters, survey quality, or developed from 1:24,000-scale source material)

For FDOT and MPO/TPO staff gathering GIS data from other sources, obtain a copy of the metadata, if possible. The GeoPlan Center will coordinate with the source agency to complete the metadata. The GeoPlan Center will also reformat metadata into the standard EST format, if needed.

#### **6.4.4 Data Processing Procedures**

The following outline describes data processing by the GeoPlan Center:

1. The GeoPlan Center secures data from ETAT participants.
2. The dataset is processed on local working directories. A text file is maintained in the subdirectory to describe the files that are in the directory. Minimally, it includes information about the data source, a description of the data contents, and the coordinate system for the dataset.
3. GIS data are re-projected as necessary into the standard FGDL projection. For projection specifications see <http://www.fgdl.org/metadataexplorer/fgdlfaq.html>.
4. Data are adjusted to the appropriate FDOT District or statewide extent.
5. Spatial indexes are created for all files. Additional indexes are created for frequently used fields to increase the speed of map queries.
6. The applicable agency reviews the dataset. A comparison of source data and newly processed data occurs to ensure errors were not introduced.
7. Metadata is modified, as necessary, to describe the lineage, accuracy, and usage of the data. A peer review process exists at the GeoPlan Center to confirm all metadata files.
8. The dataset is then loaded into the EST. The GeoPlan Center and ETAT member review the geometry again for any anomalies.
9. The EST data analysis routines, maps, and reports are updated to assess the new information.

An email is sent to EST users, who choose to be notified, that a new or updated data layer has been added.

#### **6.4.5 Quality Review of Information**

The EST provides a number of tools for performing a quality review on information in the system.

### 6.4.5.1 Transportation Project Data

Accurate reviews and commentary by the ETAT and the public require a clear representation of a transportation project's extent and location. When submitting project geometry to the EST, consider the following list to help identify and correct errors before initiating a formal review:

1. Verify that the project and any associated alternatives have unique names. This will prevent confusing one project or alternative for another within the EST.
2. Verify that the number of mapped alternatives equals the number of alternatives described in the project description.
3. Compare EST project geometry with the original source data.
4. For linear features, confirm consistency between mapped alternative endpoints and the "from" and "to" locations described in the project description.
5. Check the relationships among map features representing the project geometry (also known as "topology"):
  - a) Lines – alternative segments are adjoined at their respective endpoints unless otherwise intended and there are no duplicate lines representing the same feature.
  - b) Polygons – coincident borders do not overlap, nor contain gaps unless intended.
  - c) Points – one point per feature.
6. Compare the location of project features to other features represented on the map:
  - a) Zoom to a scale of 1:5,000 or less at the endpoint of an alternative. This scale range allows you to view the most detailed aeriels available in the EST – one-foot Resolution Digital Orthophoto Imagery (DOI).
  - b) Turn on additional map layers that will help confirm locational accuracy, such as:
    - i. Navteq Roads or railroads.
    - ii. Layers showing resources to avoid (schools, hospitals, parks, etc.).
  - c) Using the pan tool, move along each project feature to see if it is in the right place relative to other features on the map and consistent with the project description. For example:
    - i. If a project is supposed to avoid a sensitive resource in the area, confirm that the project does not intersect the resource.

- ii. If an alternative is intended to be within an existing road right-of-way, confirm that it is in fact within a few feet of a road.
7. Compare the value of the length field for a project alternative against the total length value entered in the Add/Update Alternative Description form.
  8. Check that the geometry type best portrays the current status of the project. The EST allows point, polygon, and linear features.
  9. Confirm that project geometry does not already exist by zooming to the proposed project area and turning on all subfolders within the project folder in the EST Map Viewer Table of Contents. For example, project geometry may exist at the time of a Planning Screen because it was uploaded at an earlier time as part of a MPO/TPO Needs Plan batch upload. Alternatively, institutional turnover at a MPO/TPO or FDOT may create a disjunction between existing and new geometry. When unclear whether to edit existing geometry or enter new geometry, coordinate with FDOT OEM.

Before initiating a project screening event, ETDM Coordinators can adjust project geometry and information as needed to respond to their findings from the above checklist and their review of the preliminary EST GIS analysis results. When satisfied, the ETDM Coordinator may update the status of the project to inform the ETAT that it is ready to be screened. The [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) provides instructions for updating the project status.

#### **6.4.5.2 Environmental Resource and Community Information**

Several mapping and query tools in the EST exist to help ETDM participants review datasets from their agency before they are uploaded into the FGDL. For each dataset, ETAT members review the metadata, line work, and database information for accuracy, completeness, and currentness. ETAT members compare this information with the data currently available from their agency to ensure the EST contains the most current and accurate data.

Consider the following during this review:

- Confirm that this is the most current version of the data available.
- Ensure the source contact information is listed in the metadata.
- Identify whether another dataset exists that more accurately reflects the current condition of the resource. If so, provide the GeoPlan Center with the data source contact information in order to obtain a copy for the FGDL.
- Review the dataset for errors (see suggested error checking items provided above for transportation information).
- Confirm the metadata is up-to-date and reflective of the constraints associated with using the data.

Contact [data@fla-etat.org](mailto:data@fla-etat.org) to provide information about any updates or required changes.

## 6.5 DATA AVAILABILITY AND RETENTION

The EST is an Internet application accessed via a web browser. OEM grants write access to specific named users through the secure website based on access approval by ETDM Coordinators. EST System administrators create the appropriate account access credentials. Read-only access is provided to restricted user accounts authorized on the secure version of the EST site and to all users of the ETDM Public Access Site. Users can access the EST and EST Public Access site 24 hours per day, seven days a week. OEM announces, in advance, downtime needed for system maintenance.

ETDM project data are extracted nightly and made available for download on the EST. This includes all reviewed projects or those currently in review. The file may be downloaded from [ftp://ftp.geoplan.ufl.edu/pub/etdm/ETDM\\_file\\_GDBs/](ftp://ftp.geoplan.ufl.edu/pub/etdm/ETDM_file_GDBs/). Refer to the [Environmental Screening Tool Handbook](#) for more information.

The FDOT Records Retention and Disposal Schedule dictates record retention schedules for information stored in the EST. The FDOT System Manager for the ETDM database implements the following Standard Operating Procedures:

1. Transportation project information, associated records, and documents shall be retained in the EST for at least five years following completion of construction of the last project segment, including storing a recoverable snapshot at each project status and/or phase change during the project life cycle. Upon deletion from the ETDM database, these records shall be archived on electronic storage media.
2. For projects not constructed, records shall be retained on the EST for at least five years following the last action. Upon deletion from the ETDM database, these records shall be archived on electronic storage media.
3. Information associated with draft projects (not reviewed by the ETAT) shall be retained until obsolete, superseded, or administrative value is lost as determined by the ETDM Coordinator. These records shall not be archived upon deletion from the EST.
4. GIS data included in the EST to describe the natural, physical, cultural, and community resources are duplicate copies of the original source records. These records are retained until obsolete, superseded or administrative value is lost. They are archived upon deletion from the EST.
5. ETDM Summary Reports, Methodology Memorandums, Alternative Corridor Evaluation Reports, Class of Action Reports, Advance Notification Packages, Document Reviews, and Project Attachments are automatically attributed, tied to the document retention and disposal schedule, uploaded and archived in the FDOT EEDMS.



6. AOI shapes and reports are retained for 30 days unless otherwise indicated by the user in the AOI tool.

## 6.6 REFERENCES

23 CFR § 630.1010. Significant Transportation Projects.

Federal Highway Administration Order No. 1324.1B, 2013. Accessed at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legregs/directives/orders/13241b.cfm> on 4/21/2017.

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Florida Department of Transportation. 2013. Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2013. Records Management Procedure (Topic Number 050-020-025). Accessed at <http://fdotwp1.dot.state.fl.us/ProceduresInformationManagementSystemInternet/?viewBy=2&procType=pr&officeID=51> on 4/21/2017.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2016. Environmental Screening Tool Handbook. Accessed at <etdmpub.fla-etat.org> on 4/21/2017.

Florida Department of Transportation. 2016. Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Manual. Accessed at <http://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubs/pdeman/pdeman1.shtm> on 4/21/2017.

## 6.7 HISTORY

**03/2006:** Original Publication

**07/2013:** Edits to update and clarify data management procedures

**12/2015:** Updated to reflect current 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**

## ACRONYMS

### A

- AA:** Agency Agreements
- AADT:** Annual Average Daily Traffic
- ACE:** Alternative Corridor Evaluation
- ACER:** Alternative Corridor Evaluation Report
- ACS:** American Community Survey
- AN:** Advance Notification
- AOA:** Agency Operating Agreement
- AOFA:** Agency Operating and Funding Agreement
- AOI:** Area of Interest

### C

- CAT:** Corridor Analysis Tool
- CBRA:** Coastal Barrier Resources Act
- CE:** Categorical Exclusion
- CEQ:** Council on Environmental Quality
- CFR:** Code of Federal Regulations
- CLC:** Community Liaison Coordinator
- COA:** Class of Action

### D

- DOE:** Degree of Effect
- DOI:** Digital Orthophoto Imagery

### E

- EA:** Environmental Assessment
- EEDMS:** Environmental Electronic Document Management System
- EFH:** Essential Fish Habitat
- EIS:** Environmental Impact Statement
- EST:** Environmental Screening Tool
- ETAT:** Environmental Technical Advisory Team
- ETDM:** Efficient Transportation Decision Making

### F

- FAST Act:** Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
- FAQ:** Frequently Asked Questions
- FCMP:** Florida Coastal Management Program
- FDEP:** Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- FDHR:** Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources
- FDOT:** Florida Department of Transportation
- FGDC:** Federal Geographic Data Committee
- FGDL:** Florida Geographic Data Library

**FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration

**FONSI:** Finding of No Significant Impact

**FR:** Federal Register

**F.S.:** Florida Statutes

**FRA:** Federal Railroad Administration

**FTA:** Federal Transit Administration

**FTP:** Florida Transportation Plan

## G

**GIS:** Geographic Information System

## H

**HAPC:** Habitat Area of Particular  
Concern

## I

**ISD:** Intermodal Systems Development

## L

**LAP:** Local Agency Program

**LDCA:** Location and Design Concept  
Acceptance

**LGCP:** Local Government  
Comprehensive Plan

**LRTP:** Long Range Transportation Plan

**LRSTP:** Long Range Statewide  
Transportation Plan

**LSM:** Land Suitability Mapping

## M

**MAP-21:** Moving Ahead for Progress in  
the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act

**MM:** Methodology Memorandum

**MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding

**MPO:** Metropolitan Planning  
Organization

**MSFCMA:** Magnuson-Stevens Fishery  
Conservation and  
Management Act

## N

**NEPA:** National Environmental Policy  
Act

**NFE:** Not Federal Eligible

**NHPA:** National Historic Preservation  
Act

**NMSA:** Non-Major State Action

## O

**OEM:** Office of Environmental  
Management

**OFW:** Outstanding Florida Waters

## P

**PD&E:** Project Development and  
Environment

**PDC:** Project Delivery Coordinator

**PED:** Preliminary Environmental  
Discussion

**PEIR:** Project Environmental Impact Report

**PSM:** Project Schedule and Management

## S

**SAFETEA-LU:** Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

**SCE:** Sociocultural Effects

**SCH:** Florida State Clearinghouse

**SDOE:** Summary Degree of Effect

**SDR:** Sociocultural Data Report

**SEIR:** State Environmental Impact Report

**SHPO:** State Historic Preservation Officer

**SHS:** State Highway System

**SIS:** Strategic Intermodal System

**SME:** Subject Matter Expert

**STIP:** State Transportation Improvement Program

**SWAT:** State-Wide Acceleration and Transformation

## T

**TEA-21:** Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**THPO:** Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

**TIP:** Transportation Improvement Program

**TPO:** Transportation Planning Organization

**Turnpike:** Florida's Turnpike Enterprise

## U

**UPWP:** Unified Planning Work Program

**USACE:** United States Army Corps of Engineers

**U.S.C.:** United States Code

**USCG:** United States Coast Guard

**USDOT:** United States Department of Transportation

**USGS:** United States Geological Survey