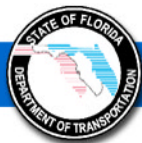


FLORIDA'S ETDM PROCESS

Efficient Transportation Decision Making...
...While Protecting Florida's Environment



August 2001

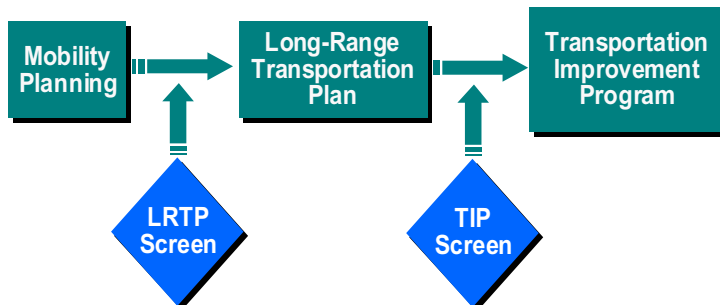




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), working in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration and other federal, state and local agencies, is developing a refined and improved methodology for effecting improved transportation decisions. Initially called “streamlining” in response to Section 1309 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21), the FDOT process redefines how the State of Florida will accomplish transportation planning and project development within its current statutes and regulations.

This Efficient Transportation Decision Making Process (the ETDM Process) creates linkages between land use, transportation, and environmental resource planning initiatives through early, interactive agency involvement, which is expected to improve decisions and greatly reduce the time, effort, and cost to effect transportation decisions. Efficiency is gained by two screening events and an efficient permitting process built into the current transportation planning and project development process. The screening events are the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program Screens (LRTP Screen and TIP Screen). These screenings are performed



by an Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT). ETAT consists of planning, consultation, and resource protection agencies, and each agency will appoint their ETAT representative with responsibility to coordinate transportation reviews within their respective agency. They will then provide agency response to the transportation planning entity (FDOT and MPO). This response will be advisory during the early phases of transportation planning. The ETAT member’s role transitions as a project proceeds from planning to project development. The ETAT member’s role then shifts to coordination within the agency to issue an opinion or permit the project.

Screening is conducted by the agency ETAT representatives appointed for each FDOT District. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) will be created between FDOT and each agency to address the specifics of ETDM implementation. MOUs will also address agreed dispute resolution methods.

The following describes ETAT screening input at two stages in the planning process and the consultation and permit coordination function during project development.

LRTP Screen: This screen allows agencies to comment on the impact of projects very early in the planning process. This will enable planners to adjust project concepts to avoid or minimize adverse impacts and to consider mitigation alternatives and costs. Secondary and cumulative effects will be evaluated on a system-wide basis in connection with the LRTP screen. The interrelationship between land use, ecosystem management, and mobility plans could then be considered integrated agency planning.

TIP Screen: This screen occurs when projects enter the FDOT Work Program and initiates the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for projects that have not been categorically excluded. ETAT input provides “agency scoping” requirements to satisfy NEPA and other pertinent laws, etc., that are addressed during the NEPA process. (“NEPA” is used throughout this report to collectively refer to all applicable laws.)

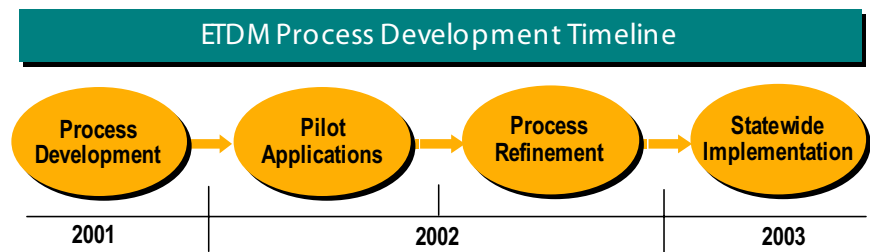
Permit Coordination: ETAT members coordinate with FDOT’s project managers during project development and coordinate within their agency to issue construction permits simultaneously with the federal NEPA Record of Decision.

An electronic database system will provide the vehicle for information exchange to and from ETAT members regarding project plans, impacts, and agency recommendations or requirements. The database system will be housed at the University of Florida GeoPlan Center. All project and resource data will reside in the GeoPlan Center’s Florida Geographic Data Library. The platform will be the current version of ESRI Geographic Information System (GIS) software. All GIS analyses will be performed within the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL) system so agency ETAT members will only need an Internet connection to view and comment on GIS results.

The database system will house responses from ETAT members as well as inputs documented from public involvement programs. That input will be summarized in virtually automated reports produced from the GIS database system. These reports will capture the essential detail that must be addressed as a consequence of ETAT and community input during planning and project development.

The ETDM Process has been in development since early 2000 and has involved significant effort by agency participants. The development work is ongoing and is expected

to continue through 2001 and much of 2002 before final statewide implementation occurs. The ETDM Process will be tested with selected pilot applications expected to proceed in early 2002. Based on pilot application experience, the process will be refined and then documented as an FDOT procedure that will complement the current Project Development and Environment (PD&E) manual and MPO Manual as well as statewide planning procedures.



Agency participants, FDOT, and the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) agencies believe that Florida’s ETDM Process is a better way to plan and implement transportation projects. Agency involvement will occur earlier in planning and will largely be evaluated through efficient electronic information exchange. Secondary and cumulative impact analysis and evaluation will occur early in planning on a system-wide basis. Environmental evaluations to satisfy NEPA will be focused on key issues and proceed years earlier than in today’s practice. Agency interaction and internal coordination by their ETAT members will lead to earlier permits and avoidance of late project changes.

CONTEXT

Planners, engineers, environmental scientists, and government officials have raised concern about the level of effort, time, and cost associated with the environmental review and approval process for transportation projects. Stories abound about long delays in implementing new projects, the difficulty of one agency’s change affecting another’s decision, and the high cost associated with rework when an agency denial for a permit requires restarting the environmental review process.

The environmental provisions in Section 1309 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) reflect Congress' concern about delays, unnecessary duplication of effort, and added costs often associated with the current process for reviewing and approving transportation projects. Called "Environmental Streamlining," this legislation challenged the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to implement an improved, more efficient transportation planning and environmental review process.

The objective of Environmental Streamlining is to improve interagency coordination, more effectively address environmental concerns, and reduce costly delays in the environmental review process. In addition to the need for predictable, expedient timeframes within which resource agencies conduct their roles in the process, there is also a need for increased, meaningful activity from the federal resource agencies. The advantage of more intensive federal resource agency involvement is that agencies' input is more useful in project decision making the earlier it occurs in the process. The timeliness and quality of the projects are improved, and environmental issues can more easily be resolved.

U.S. DOT Streamlining Objectives

- Establish an integrated review and permitting process;
- Integrate environmental review and approvals early in the transportation planning process;
- Encourage full and early participation by agencies;
- Establish coordinated time schedules for agency action; and
- Establish dispute-resolution mechanisms.

In the fall of 1999, Florida was selected as a pilot state for developing and implementing a streamlined planning and project development process. Florida was considered an

ideal pilot state due to its strong state environmental laws that must be meshed with federal laws and processes. In response, FDOT, working with the U.S. DOT, FHWA, FTA, and other federal, state, and local agencies committed to evaluating Florida's current transportation planning and project development and environmental processes and identifying ways to make these processes more efficient.

THE PROBLEM

In Florida's current transportation planning process, mobility needs are identified by MPOs and the FDOT in response to the development thresholds allowed under approved local comprehensive plans. During the comprehensive planning process, minimal consideration is given to the potential direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts of transportation or land use decisions on the community's social and natural resources.

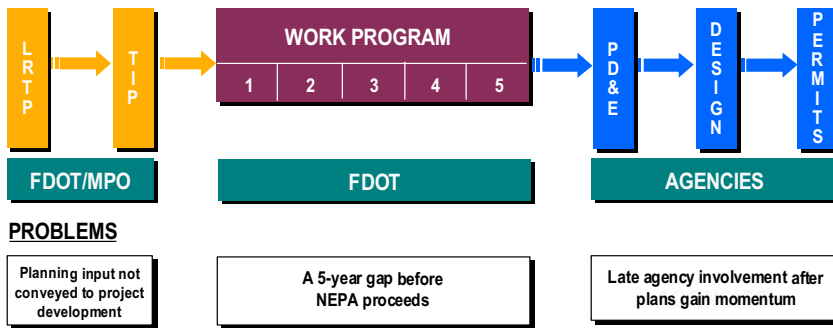
The MPOs and the FDOT identify transportation improvement priorities for inclusion in a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) with little input from environmental resource agencies. Agency input does not occur until later in the project development process, sometimes decades after it has been decided that a transportation facility is needed. Substantial environmental impacts that could influence the priority of a project are not considered. Often, the purpose and need for the project have not been defined.

The priority projects then enter the FDOT Work Program and remain there for 5 years before any substantial planning and environmental analyses are conducted. By the time a project enters the project development phase, it has gained so much public momentum that a decision not to build the project due to substantial environmental or social impacts is almost never made. Instead, mitigation strategies are identified. In summary, land use, transportation, and ecosystem preservation decisions are not truly balanced to support a community vision. The following figure

shows some of the problems with Florida's current planning and project development processes.

worked together with FDOT and U.S. DOT in a series of multi-agency meetings to accomplish their shared vision.

TODAY'S PROCESS



Multi-Agency Meetings

The working group participated in eight multi-agency workshops between February 2000 and November 2000 to examine the current planning process and develop a more efficient process that protects the environment. This collaborative approach to redefine the existing planning and project development process was characterized by

“out of the box” thinking by the team. Initially, these workshops were informational. Planning participants became informed of the Department’s Work Program and PD&E processes. Project Development and agency participants were similarly informed about the planning processes performed by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and by FDOT. Together, the agencies identified problems with the current processes, and the team identified the following characteristics of a streamlined environmental review process:

- Earlier agency involvement in the planning process,
- Complete and accurate information for improved decision making,
- Improved access to information,
- Better and continuous communication among agencies and with the public,
- More efficient and concurrent project reviews, and
- Complete and timely permit applications.

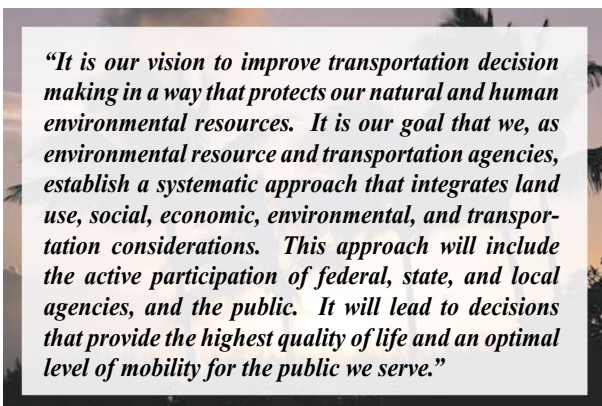
During the subsequent team workshops, the working group developed a conceptual process that included the above characteristics. The team named the new process the “Efficient Transportation Decision Making Process” (ETDM Process).

The workshop participants then focused on developing and refining the ETDM Process. A key issue was how the ETDM Process could produce construction permits ear-

METHODOLOGY - THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE PROCESS

Summit on Environmental Streamlining

On February 3, 2000, leaders from 23 federal, state, and local transportation and resource protection agencies participated in a summit meeting on environmental streamlining. The purpose of the summit was to initiate a statewide coordinated effort to improve Florida’s planning and project development process. The agency leaders committed their support and assigned responsibility to key staff who then worked with FDOT to form a shared vision for Florida’s transportation decision making process:



Following the summit meeting, a working group consisting of over 50 representatives from over 28 agencies

lier in project development. Since implementation issues were focused on planning phases and permitting issues, two expanded focus groups were formed.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were formed to further develop and refine the planning and permitting phases of the new process. The Planning Focus Group consisted of the planners from the working group plus an expanded roster of representatives from various federal, state, and local planning agencies. The Permitting Focus Group consisted of an expanded group of project development professionals and agency representatives involved in the FHWA and NEPA permit-

ting processes. The focus groups conducted workshops in December 2000 and January 2001 and provided recommendations to improve the conceptual ETDM Process.

Task Work Groups

Recommendations resulting from the Planning and Permitting focus group meetings identified several issues requiring further work to define how the new process will be implemented. To address these issues, nine task work groups were created consisting of experienced specialists and practitioners who were charged with developing the specific details about how the ETDM Process works. The task work groups and objectives are listed below:

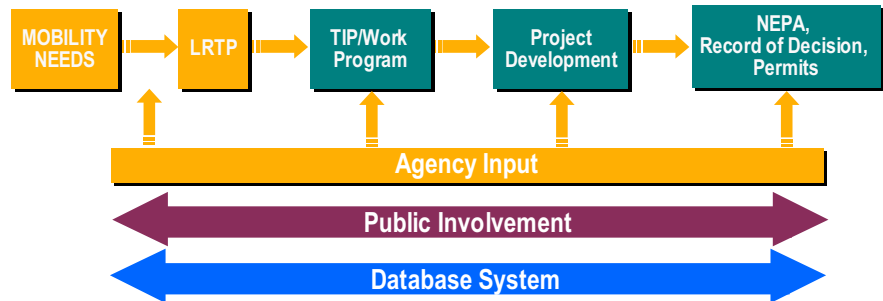
<i>Task Work Group</i>	<i>Objective</i>
Environmental Permits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a process to obtain construction permits simultaneously with the NEPA record of decision (ROD). 2. Achieve concurrent and simplified notices where feasible. 3. Develop criteria for categorically excluding certain projects from permitting.
Two-Year State Transportation Improvement Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a two-year STIP and a two-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) development cycle. 2. Determine the steps required to implement this 2-year planning cycle with FDOT.
Programming NEPA Projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a method for proceeding with environmental studies earlier in the FDOT Work Program.
NEPA Decision Making Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine how project development will be accomplished in the ETDM Process. 2. Determine the method for achieving agency consultation during project development.
Planning Document Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop recommendations for key documents that should be a part of the ETDM Process and create a linkage to project development. 2. Describe the timing during the planning process, the content, and the audience for the documents.
Secondary and Cumulative Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a framework in the ETDM Process for conducting secondary and cumulative impact assessments that incorporates needed data from land use, transportation, and resource protection plans.
Bridge Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate and document how the FDOT bridge program enters the Five-Year Work Program. 2. Recommend a method for interfacing the bridge program with the ETDM Process.
Cultural Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate and document how to complete archaeological and historical assessments for transportation projects more efficiently and earlier in the project development process. 2. Ensure how appropriate identification, avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of Native American Indian issues are considered and documented.
Community Impact Assessment (CIA)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Document how CIA and Public Involvement are accomplished in the ETDM Process.

The findings and recommendations from each task work group will be used to further refine the specifics of the ETDM Process before pilot applications are initiated. The above task work groups will be completing their assignments during the early fall, 2001. Their work products will be part of the continuing evolution of the ETDM Process development. The following sections describe the ETDM Process and should be considered a work-in-progress. Much progress has been made, but the ETDM Process is not complete at this time.

THE EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Florida's ETDM Process redefines how the state will accomplish transportation planning and project development within its current statutes and regulations. The ETDM Process will bring agency interaction forward into the early stages of transportation planning. Efficiency is gained in the new process by two agency screening events built into the current transportation planning process. The screening events are the Long Range Transportation Plan Screen (LRTP Screen) and the Transportation Improvement Program Screen (TIP Screen), which are conducted years earlier in the overall process than at present. This early agency involvement coupled with continuous community impact assessment and involvement are expected to improve the quality of decisions made during planning and reduce challenges during permitting. This interaction will continue throughout the life of a project to ensure that mobility needs are balanced with land use decisions and ecosystem management and preservation. In this new process, resource avoidance and minimization options and strategies are identified earlier, and cost

impacts for these strategies can be considered in establishing transportation plan priorities. Agency interaction during project development will allow permitting to be concurrent with the end of the federal NEPA process.



Key features of the ETDM Process include:

- Early agency and community involvement;
- Continuous public representation;
- Early identification of avoidance and mitigation strategies;
- Integrated planning between agencies;
- Reduction of duplication of effort;
- Linkages between land use, transportation and environment;
- Access to comprehensive data in standardized formats;
- Earlier project approvals;
- Fewer projects subject to detailed reviews;
- Reviews focused on the key issues;
- Permit issuance linked to NEPA reviews; and
- Maximized use of technology for coordination.

Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) - The Key to Success

Agency interaction will occur throughout the life of a project - from concept to concrete - to ensure that transportation decisions are balanced with social, land use, and ecosystem preservation decisions. This will be accomplished through an Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT). An ETAT, consisting of planning, consultation, and resource protection agencies, will be established with each agency appointing a transportation representative with responsibility to coordinate transpor-

tation reviews within his/her respective agency. They will then provide agency response to the transportation planning entity (FDOT and MPO). This response will be advisory and will include input about the agency's planning and regulatory program.

One ETAT will be established for each of the seven geographic FDOT Districts. The ETAT will consist of representatives from agencies with statutory responsibility for approval and commentary on mobility projects and other transportation and governmental agencies. Agency heads will be responsible for appointing their ETAT members, who will be the point of interaction with that agency on transportation decision making. One or more ETAT representatives may be appointed depending on agency requirements and geographic considerations.

The ETAT representative will have delegated agency authority and responsibility to coordinate internally and represent agency positions. The role of the ETAT changes from advisory during planning to coordinator during project development, which includes permitting. During planning, the ETAT will advise the MPO in urban areas and the FDOT in non-MPO areas of potential project impacts to the natural and human environment, consistent with their agency's regulatory and planning program. Recommendations on how to avoid, minimize, or mitigate these impacts will be provided. The ETAT will also evaluate and provide comments on the potential secondary and cumulative effects of a transportation improvement project for the resource that their agency is responsible for protecting. The ETAT's role is advisory during planning. Final decision making for establishing project priorities still lies within the transportation planning agency.



As a project advances into the project development and design phases, the ETAT will continue to provide project input and technical assistance to the project sponsor (e.g., FDOT, local government, transit authority) to satisfy agency permit requirements. This will include identifying, defining, and participating in technical studies needed for permitting decisions. ETAT members will be responsible for coordinating within their agencies to accomplish construction permitting concurrent with the completion of the federal NEPA process.

- Potential ETAT Representatives***
- Federal Highway Administration
 - Federal Transit Administration
 - Federal Rail Administration
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
 - National Park Service
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - U.S. Coast Guard
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Forest Service
 - Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 - Florida Department of Community Affairs
 - Florida Department of Environmental Protection
 - Florida Department of State
 - Florida Department of Transportation
 - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 - MPOs within FDOT District (one representative per MPO)
 - Local Resource Agencies
 - Regional Planning Councils
 - Water Management Districts
 - Native American Tribal Governments
 - Local Planning Agencies
 - Expressway Authorities

ETAT Coordinator

The FDOT representative on each ETAT will be responsible for overall interagency coordination among ETAT members and for ensuring that the prescribed project impact reviews are conducted in a timely manner. At this time it appears that the following key coordination activities would be performed by the FDOT ETAT Coordinator:

- Verify that project information is loaded into the FGDL database.
- Provide notification to ETAT members to proceed with project reviews and maintain schedule for responses.
- Prepare System Summary Reports and Project Summary Reports that summarize key findings from ETAT responses.
- Prepare Class of Action Determination in cooperation with U.S. DOT and prepare Advance Notification packages.

Agency interaction during planning and project development will be accomplished largely through an interactive Geographic Information System (GIS), which will allow the ETAT to conduct environmental screenings on projects and transmit agency comments from their desktop computers. This will be accomplished by an Internet-accessible GIS application.

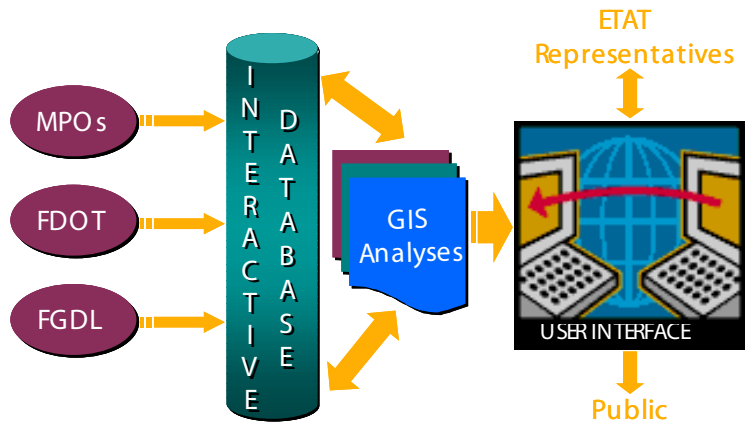
Internet-Accessible GIS Application

The Technology Work Group has evaluated available systems and hardware/software configurations to determine the best-suited digital database system to support the ETDM Process. Recommendations for the technology implementation strategy are presented in the “GIS Implementation Plan” dated July 18, 2001.

The strategy consists of creating Internet linkages between ETAT members and the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL) housed at the GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida. All GIS applications will be ESRI based, and standardized GIS analyses will be performed within

the FGDL system and produce standardized graphic and tabular results prescribed by agencies. Agency GIS specialists will have the ability to perform supplemental specialized analyses, if necessary, but the intent is to maximize use of the FGDL database.

The following diagram schematically displays the concept for the ETDM Internet-accessible GIS database system:

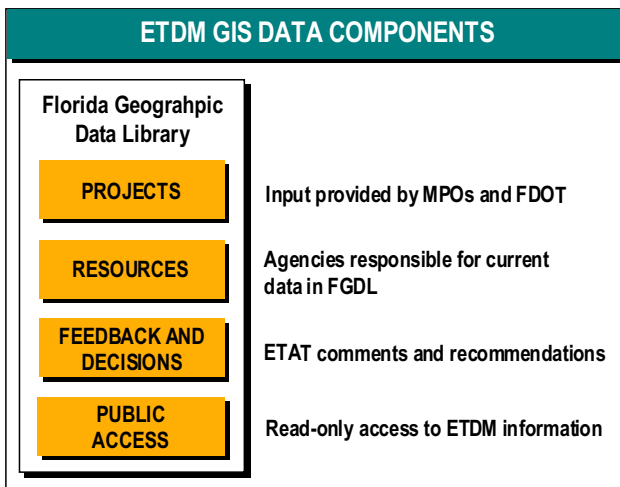


GIS inputs consist of project information provided by MPOs and FDOT in non-MPO areas. Information concerning Florida’s resources is already resident in the FGDL system. Once project planning information is loaded into the FGDL, standardized analyses will be performed producing graphic and tabular results for consideration by agency ETAT members. ETAT members will be able to access these results by Internet connection to the FGDL. “Point-and-click” simplicity is a feature of this system that will allow agency ETAT members access to GIS analysis results without the cost of high-end computer facilities, costly software, and the specialized skills of a GIS computer analyst.

Internet Access to the FGDL

- Incorporates point-and-click simplicity for access to results,
- Avoids costly computer expense for agencies, and
- Achieves consistency of formats and reviews.

The ETDM GIS system will be the resource for providing information to agency ETAT members and also for collecting ETAT responses about project impacts, avoidance or minimization strategies, and scopes of technical studies required to address a specific issue of concern. The system provides visibility to all concerned parties about project needs, issues of concern to agencies, and suggested alternatives as well as decisions. Four data components comprise the ETDM GIS system and are diagrammed and described below.



Project Description Data

The Project Description data will describe the candidate transportation projects for which the MPO and the FDOT require project impact evaluations. The MPO in urban areas and the FDOT in non-MPO areas will be responsible for developing the following information to describe each candidate project and uploading this data into the Project Description data of the ETDM GIS application.

- Project identification number,
- Project name (e.g., roadway, transit facility),
- Logical project termini (from/to),
- Brief description of initial project concept, and
- Initial purpose and need statement.

The project termini, description, and purpose and need statement may evolve over time - through the planning and project development phases of the project - as the

ETAT gains knowledge about project issues. Initially, the purpose and need statement should include the following information for each candidate project.

- Travel demand (traffic or ridership projections, volume/capacity ratio),
- Modal options,
- Agency-expressed needs (e.g., emergency evacuation, freight mobility), and
- Community-expressed needs.
- Agency-expressed goals and plans for integration with transportation planning.

Environmental Resource Data

The Environmental Resource data of the ETDM GIS application will include the data layers required by the ETAT members to perform environmental impact analyses on each mobility project. The GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida will be responsible for managing and maintaining the Environmental Resource data through the FGDL. The Center has staff and faculty who are experts in using GIS for environmental management and transportation planning applications. Each agency on the ETAT will be responsible for sending their updated data layers required for project analyses to the GeoPlan Center. These will include prioritized resource protection areas and species recovery plans for each resource agency. The Center will be responsible for ensuring that the latest available data layers are in a standard format and are accessible by all ETAT members.

Feedback and Decision Data

The Feedback and Decision data will contain the results of the ETAT project impact evaluations. This will include the following information about each candidate mobility project:

- Comments from each ETAT member about the purpose and need statement;
- Degree of impact of a proposed transportation project to the resource each ETAT member is responsible for protecting and/or managing;

- Comments from each ETAT member about project impacts;
- Recommendations;
- Needs plan or cost feasible plan portion of the Long-Range Transportation Plan; and
- Project scoping recommendations, including required technical studies.

The Feedback and Decision data will also contain the project sponsor’s (MPO, FDOT, Transit Agency, and FTA or FHWA) decision or response to the ETAT input, including the following information:

- Final purpose and need statement;
- Response to how each issue, comment, and/or ETAT recommendation was addressed; and
- Final Class of Action determination (which describes the extent of activity required to satisfy NEPA requirements: categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement).

The decision regarding class of action will be made based on FHWA/FTA regulations and will be made with input from the ETAT and FDOT’s ETAT coordinator.

Public Access

The public will be provided read-only access to key project information allowing the general public and non-government organizations to view project data. The project information available to the public and non-government organizations will include the project description, summarized GIS analysis graphics, summarized results of the ETAT project impact analyses, previously submitted public comments, and other information to assist formulation of comments on the project.

Initially, the public and non-government organizations will not have the ability to submit comments using the web-based GIS application. Comments can be submitted to the project sponsor in writing or verbally at a public workshop, hearing, or other locally identified method to receive public input.

During the planning phase of a project, the MPO in urban areas and the FDOT in non-MPO areas will be responsible for entering public comments received through their public involvement efforts into the Public Access data component. During the project development phase, the project sponsor (FDOT, Local Government, Transit Agency) will be responsible for loading public comments into the database.

MOBILITY PLANNING

The intent of the ETDM Process is that the long-range planning process in the rural areas mirrors the planning

Long Range Transportation Plan Development

Urban Area Planning

MPOs, which represent larger urban areas, are required to update long range transportation plans at a maximum of every 3 years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas and every 5 years in air quality attainment areas. The primary purpose of the long range transportation plan is to guide the development of transportation systems to serve the travel demands of existing development and new growth, as envisioned by and balanced with goals of other local comprehensive plans, over a minimum 20-year period.

Rural Area Planning

In non-MPO areas, FDOT in consultation with local governments have the responsibility of planning for future transportation systems. The Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) Plan is developed by the FDOT to identify the mobility needs on the major regional state roads throughout Florida. At the local level, the Transportation Elements of the local comprehensive plans identify the mobility needs within each county and municipality.

process in the urban MPO areas of the state. This will provide for consistency among planning documents developed during the planning process with standardized formats and reporting procedures throughout the state.

The planning phase of the ETDM Process is conceptually shown in the following Figure.



In the ETDM Process, the MPOs in urban areas and the FDOT in non-MPO areas will be responsible for identifying the mobility needs required to support projected growth and development in the region. The description and location of these candidate mobility projects will be electronically uploaded by the project sponsor into the ETDM GIS application for review by the ETAT. The ETAT members will have Internet access to the GIS application to conduct project impact analyses for each candidate mobility project.

This project impact analysis, called the LRTP Screen, allows for the early identification of environmental issues that could influence the priority, alignment, and/or future features of candidate projects. This system-level analysis also identifies resource protection areas that could influence future land use and transportation decisions in the comprehensive planning process. The results of the LRTP Screen analysis will be documented in a System Summary Report to assist the MPOs and the FDOT develop transportation project priorities.

ETAT LRTP Screen

The LRTP Screen is conducted on a maximum 3-year cycle in MPO air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas and on a maximum 5-year cycle in all other areas, consistent with the federal requirements for updating MPO long range transportation plans and local comprehensive plans. The primary purpose of this screen is to assist the MPOs in urban areas and the FDOT in non-MPO areas to prioritize transportation projects by providing resource agency input that identifies issues that could influence transportation planning decisions.

In this screen, the MPO in urban areas, and the FDOT in non-MPO areas, electronically uploads a list of candidate mobil-

ity projects with project descriptions and system-wide project location maps into the ETDM GIS application. The ETAT is electronically notified to conduct an assessment of the potential impacts that each candidate mobility project will have on the social or natural resource that their agency is responsible for protecting and/or managing. After notification by the MPO or FDOT, each ETAT member will have 45 days to assess potential project impacts and provide commentary back to the MPO and FDOT for their use in making transportation investment decisions.

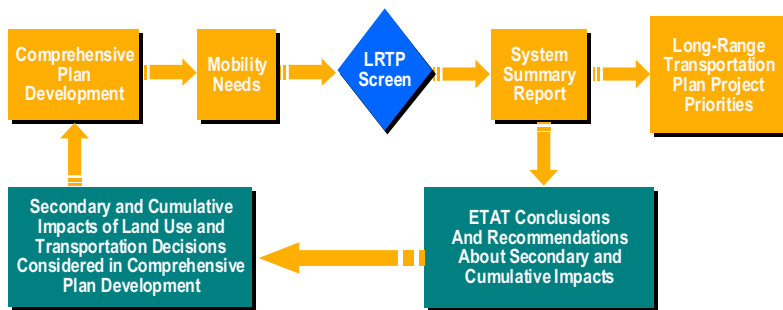
Evaluations will be conducted by the ETAT for potential project impacts, which include the following:

<i>Potential Project Impacts</i>
Social Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land Use ● Community Cohesion ● Community Impact Assessment ● Economic Resources ● Safety ● Mobility ● Farmlands ● Relocations ● Noise
Natural Environmental Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wetlands ● Wildlife and Habitat ● Water Quality and Quantity ● Aquatic Preserves ● Outstanding Florida Waters ● Wild and Scenic Rivers ● Floodplains ● Coastal Zone Consistency ● Coastal Barrier Islands ● Contaminated Sites ● Air Quality
Cultural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Section 4(f) Lands ● Historic Sites/Districts ● Archaeological Sites ● Recreation Areas
Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

Secondary impacts are the indirect effects of a proposed action that occur later in time, and are reasonably certain to occur. Cumulative effects are 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 or person undertakes such other actions.

In the ETDM Process, secondary and cumulative impacts of land use and transportation decisions will be evaluated at the system level during the comprehensive plan develop-



ment process as shown in the Figure below. Understanding the secondary and cumulative impacts of proposed actions early in the planning process is expected to lead to improved balance between transportation, land use, and environmental resource management decisions.

The following information will provide the basis for ETAT recommendations regarding secondary and cumulative impacts to the MPO, FDOT, and local comprehensive planners:

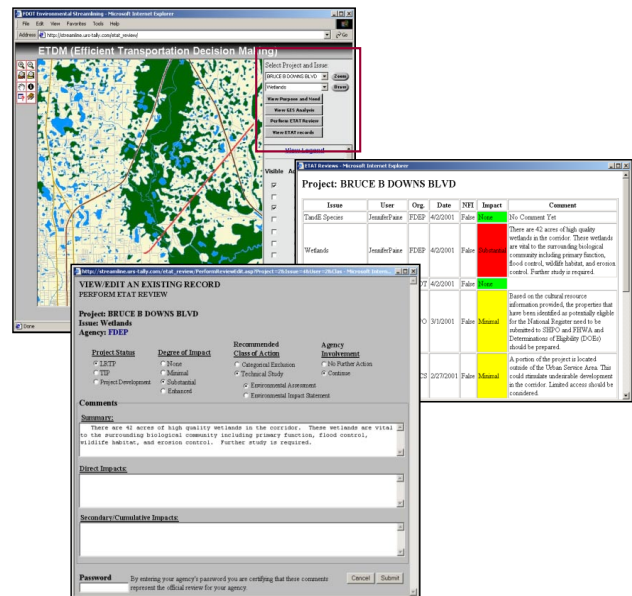
- Location of prioritized resource protection areas (identified by each resource agency),
- Location and type of approved developments (including Developments of Regional Impact),
- Development potential allowed under approved Future Land Use Plans,
- Delineated urban service area boundaries, and

- Location of existing public lands.

The commentary and recommendations provided by the ETAT about secondary and cumulative impacts will be recorded in a System Summary Report. This report will be provided to the planners responsible for developing local comprehensive plans for their consideration when making land use and transportation decisions. It will also be available to the MPO and FDOT for use in setting transportation priorities.

ETAT Input

Agency interaction during planning and project development will be accomplished largely through an interactive GIS application, allowing the ETAT to conduct environmental screenings on projects and transmit agency comments from their desktop computers. The following computer screen captures are examples of the communication tools that will be available to the ETAT.



System Summary Report

A System Summary Report will summarize key recommendations and conclusions for the direct, secondary, and

cumulative impacts identified by the ETAT in the LRTP Screen. The FDOT ETDM Coordinator will be responsible for preparation and distribution of the report. The report will be electronically distributed to all ETAT members. The following key components will comprise this report:

- Project description;
- Purpose and need statement;
- Agency comments, issues, and recommended actions categorized by the specific social, cultural, or natural resource;
- System-wide GIS mapping depicting the social, cultural, and natural resources;
- GIS mapping identifying prioritized resource protection areas and Species Recovery Plans for each agency;
- Agency comments, issues, and recommended actions for secondary and cumulative impacts categorized by resource;
- Comments from the general public and non-government organizations; and
- Preliminary project concept based on agency and public input.

The analyses, commentary, and documentation contained in the ETDM GIS application will provide the base information required for the System Summary Report. Standardized and automated report output forms will provide an efficient and accurate method of documentation.

The report will contain information needed by the MPOs and the FDOT to prioritize transportation improvement projects in the LRTP, Florida Intrastate Highway System Plan, and the Five-Year Work Program. The report will also be provided to the planners responsible for developing local plans. It will contain identified issues and recommendations regarding potential secondary and cumulative impacts to assist comprehensive planners in more effectively balancing land use decisions with ecosystem protection community mobility needs and the human environment.

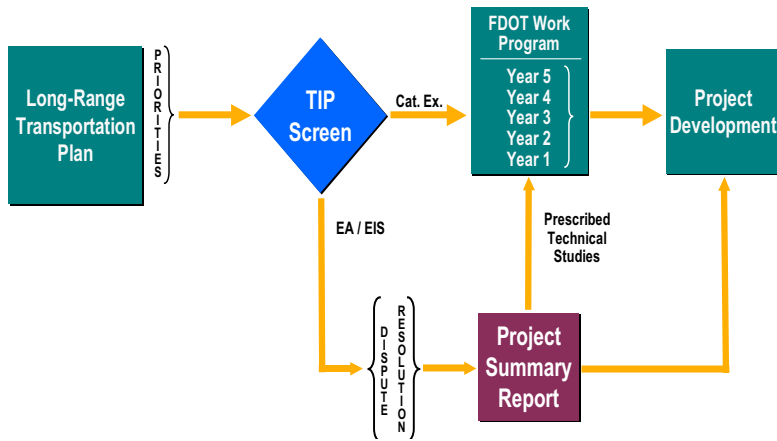
Project Development

Programming Transportation Priorities

Limited funding at the federal, state, and local levels necessitates that transportation improvements be prioritized to best serve the mobility needs of our citizens. In urban areas, MPOs are primarily responsible for prioritizing transportation improvement projects. The MPOs identify these priorities through project evaluation criteria used in the LRTP development process, public involvement, and interagency coordination and with guidance from their advisory committees. The FDOT and local governments establish transportation improvement priorities in the non-MPO areas. Annually, the MPOs submit their transportation priorities to the FDOT to guide the development of the FDOT Five-Year Tentative Work Program. The project development phase for a new priority project is typically programmed into the new fifth year of the FDOT Tentative Work Program. Subsequent design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction phases are programmed in following fiscal years. A public hearing is held to provide the general public an opportunity to review and comment on the Tentative Work Program. The FDOT considers all public and agency comments before submittal of the Tentative Work Program to the Legislature for adoption.

ETAT TIP Screen

To improve the efficiency of the project development phase of a project, the proposed ETDM Process includes a TIP Screen of projects after they enter the TIP and the Five-year FDOT Work Program, as shown in the Figure on the next page.



Class of Action Determination

Prior to project scoping, the ETDM Process requires a Class of Action Determination and Advance Notification be made for the MPO/FDOT project priorities before they enter the TIP and FDOT’s Five-Year Work Program.

The Class of Action Determination will be made by the FHWA/FTA ETAT member in consultation with the FDOT ETAT Coordinator. Their decision will determine whether a project can be categorically excluded from NEPA or whether the project requires further environmental analyses and documentation to achieve required permits. This decision by FHWA and FTA is based on the issues, comments, and Class of Action recommendations provided by the ETAT in the LRTP Screen.

Activities classified as Categorical Exclusions will advance to the design phase and will be programmed accordingly in the FDOT Work Program. Interagency agreements between federal, state, and local agencies will define categorically excluded activities using FHWA/FTA regulations as the basis.

Advance Notification

Projects requiring technical studies will go through an Advance Notification (AN) process. This process is the method used by FDOT to inform federal, state, and local agencies of a proposed action and to give notice of the Department’s intent to apply for federal aid on a

project. The AN process is required by the President’s Executive Order 12372 and the Governor’s Executive Order 93-194.

The AN package consists of a transmittal letter, Application For Federal Assistance (Form 424), Department Project Fact Sheet, and Location Map. The AN package will be produced as a “standard report” from a query or routine generated from the ETDM GIS application. The FDOT ETAT Coordinator will be responsible for producing the AN report and electronically notifying the State Clearinghouse of the Florida Department of Community Affairs that the report is complete.

The State Clearinghouse will access the AN report through the ETDM GIS application. The State Clearinghouse will be responsible for electronically distributing the AN report to all appropriate central units of state government, federal agencies, regional planning councils, local governments and agencies, and Native American Indian tribes.

All comments received will be summarized by the State Clearinghouse and electronically transmitted to the FDOT for its review and information.

Project Scoping

The primary purpose of the TIP Screen is for the ETAT to conduct “project scoping.” Project scoping entails the identification of environmental and social issues that require further study during project development and the methodology for analyzing those issues. The TIP Screen also provides the opportunity for ETAT members to elect “no further involvement” if they determine that the project concept has no impacts on the resource that their agency is responsible for managing or protecting.

After notification by the FDOT ETAT Coordinator that the FGDL system has been loaded with new projects

entering the work program, each ETAT member will conduct the following activities during the TIP Screen:

- **Acceptance of the Purpose and Need Statement:** The ETAT member may provide comments to clarify the purpose and need statement.
- **Update Environmental Impact Reviews:** Environmental analyses conducted during the LRTP Screen may need to be updated if new data or project issues warrant further evaluation. The ETAT member may also elect “no further involvement” if participation is not statutorily required.
- **Identification of Required Technical Studies:** The ETAT will participate in project scoping to identify and define studies that should be conducted during project development to satisfy NEPA and permits requirements.

The ETAT will electronically submit analysis results to FDOT for use in programming the technical studies and subsequent project phases into the FDOT Five-Year Work Program. The FDOT ETAT Coordinator may elect to conduct one or more face-to-face meetings with any or all ETAT members to discuss specific project issues, including secondary and cumulative impacts, during project scoping.

Dispute Resolution

Dispute avoidance is one expected benefit from early agency and public involvement in Florida’s ETDM Process. Dispute resolution is a condition for candidate projects to advance into FDOT’s Work Program when significant issues are unsolved by ETAT following the TIP Screen. Dispute resolution methods have not been developed yet, but the emphasis will be on resolving issues locally within the ETAT.

Project Summary Report

A Project Summary Report will be prepared as a transition document to the project development phase of a project. The following key components will comprise this report:

- Project description,
- Final purpose and need statement,
- Class of action determination,
- Agency comments categorized by the specific social or natural resource,
- Comments from the general public and non-government organizations,
- Preliminary project concept based on agency and public input,
- Required technical studies to achieve a permit,
- Cost estimate of required studies,
- Reasonable alternatives for further study, and
- Dismissed alternatives with summary of reasons why alternatives were not carried forward.

The analyses, commentary, and documentation contained in the ETDM GIS application will provide the base information required for the Project Summary Report. Standardized and automated report output forms will provide an efficient and accurate method of documentation.

The FDOT ETDM Coordinator will be responsible for preparation and distribution of the report. The report will be electronically distributed to all ETAT members and the FDOT design engineers for their use in subsequent project development and design phases.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY - THE PATH FORWARD

Memorandum of Understanding

Collaborative efforts by federal and state agencies have produced the ETDM Process as it exists today. Continued collaborative effort will be needed as the ETDM Process is developed further, refined, tested by pilot applications and then finalized for adoption as an FDOT procedure. The FDOT and U.S. DOT believe it will be useful to document inter-agency understandings by Memoranda of Understanding.

- **Global Memorandum of Understanding:** It is intended that agency heads will sign a “Global Memorandum of Understanding” (Global MOU) at the September 14, 2001 Summit to commemorate and celebrate the collaborative accomplishment of developing the ETDM Process. The Global MOU will indicate continued agency support in the further development and implementation of this process. Agency-specific agreements will be documented in subsequent MOUs.
- **Agency-specific MOUs:** These memoranda of understanding will be developed following the “Summit” to address the specific details involved with implementing the ETDM Process. Topics to be addressed will be mutually agreed with FDOT but are expected to cover the spectrum from personnel and resource requirements, to modifications of permitting procedures and methods for resolving disputes.
- **Agency Operational Procedures:** Mutually agreeable changes to operating procedures will be developed within agencies to document procedures supporting Florida’s ETDM Process.

GIS Implementation Plan

An interactive GIS function is a key component of the ETDM Process. It provides analytical and visualization tools that help to synthesize and communicate information among agencies, non-government organizations, and the general public.

Access to high quality, reliable information was one of the goals established by the Work Group participants. The State of Florida has developed an extraordinary digital information database, the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL), which is housed at the GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida. FDOT’s GIS consultant specialists have worked together with the GeoPlan Center and with agency digital information resource specialists to develop a GIS Implementation Plan to support the ETDM Process. The plan identifies the resource requirements, development approach, and deployment strategy for the ETDM GIS application.

FDOT has authorized implementation of the GIS plan, which will be accomplished late in 2001. The GIS Implementation Plan task leader is in direct contact with participating federal and state agencies to develop a system responsive to agency needs.

Pilot Applications

Agency participants have developed an agreed framework for the ETDM Process and have worked in Task Work Groups to create the specific details for how the ETDM Process will be performed. One Task Work Group is developing the digital database platform on which the ETDM Process will operate. The plan is to begin testing the ETDM Process by pilot applications that will proceed early in 2002. Lessons learned from limited trial applications will be used to adjust or refine the process before statewide implementation.

These elements of the new process will be tested by four pilot applications:

- **MPO LRTP Screen:** An MPO LRTP update will be screened by an ETAT.
- **FIHS LRTP Screen:** A similar screening will be performed by an ETAT for a rural non-MPO area in which FDOT is responsible for transportation planning.
- **Secondary and Cumulative Impacts:** An LRTP Screen will be performed to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures developed for secondary and cumulative analysis on a system-wide basis.
- **MPO TIP Screen:** A new MPO priority project will be screened by an ETAT to evaluate project impacts and perform agency scoping.

Based on feedback from these pilot applications, the participants will identify improvements to the ETDM Process necessary to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process. Statewide implementation will proceed after these improvements are implemented.

Agency Commitments

The FDOT and U.S. DOT will need continued support by participating agencies to bring the ETDM Process to reality. Documentation of this continued support will be memorialized in Memoranda of Understanding (MOU). The “Global MOU” creates the framework for continuing agency participation in the further development and refinement of the ETDM Process. The Global MOU commits agencies to:

- Appoint effective ETAT members and to communicate the significance of this role within the agency.

- Provide computer resources and Internet access for ETAT members.
- Continue examining transportation project review and permitting procedures and effect improvements consistent with ETDM Process objectives.
- Seek effective dispute avoidance and resolution methods.

Details regarding the specific inter-agency agreements underlying the above commitments will be addressed in agency-specific MOUs. These MOUs are expected to contain mutually agreeable cost-sharing provisions.

