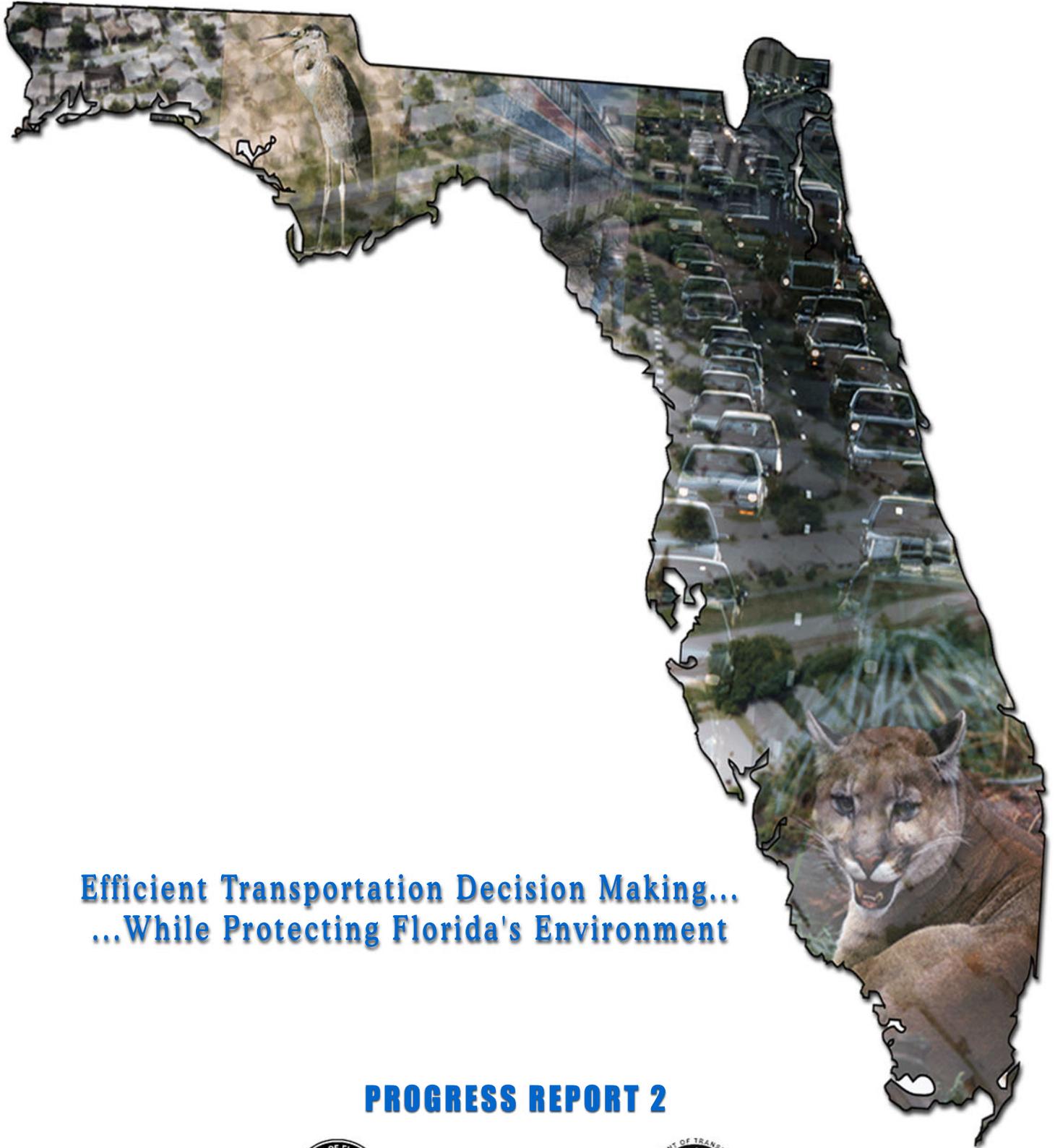


FLORIDA'S ETDM PROCESS



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

PROGRESS REPORT 2



April 2002





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

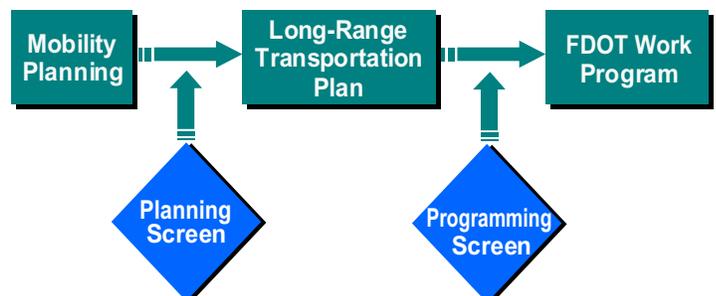
The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), working in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration and other federal, state, and local agencies, is developing a refined and improved methodology for effecting improved transportation decisions. Initially called “streamlining” in response to 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 report is the second progress report describing the state of development of the new process-The Efficient Transportation Decision-Making Process (The ETDM Process). This report includes the process refinements and changes noted below.

Significant Updates from Progress Report No. 1

- Agencies endorse MOU to implement the ETDM Process.
- ETAT and ETDM Coordinator roles and responsibilities defined.
- Planning and Project Development steps further defined.
- Process for community outreach and involvement defined.
- Environmental Screening Tool further developed.
- Dispute resolution process defined.
- Agency Operating Agreements being developed.
- Implementation strategy and schedule in place.

The ETDM Process creates linkages between land use, transportation, and environmental resource planning initiatives through early, interactive agency and community involvement, which is expected to improve decisions and greatly reduce the time, effort, and cost to affect 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 “Planning” and “Programming” Screens.

An Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) performs these screenings. The ETAT consists of planning, consultation, and resource protection agencies. Each agency will appoint their ETAT representative with responsibility to coordinate transportation reviews within their respective agency. They will then provide agency responses to the transportation planning entity (FDOT and the Metropolitan Planning Organization [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. Agency Operating Agreements (AOAs) are being created between FDOT, FHWA and each agency to address the specific details about ETDM implementation. The AOAs will also document agreed dispute resolution methods.

The following describes ETAT screening input at two stages in the planning and project development phases of a project.

Planning 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 improve estimation of project costs. Secondary and cumulative effects will be evaluated on a project and system-wide basis in connection with the Planning Screen. The interrelationship between land use, ecosystem management, and mobility plans could then be considered in integrated agency planning.

Programming Screen: This screen occurs before 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.)

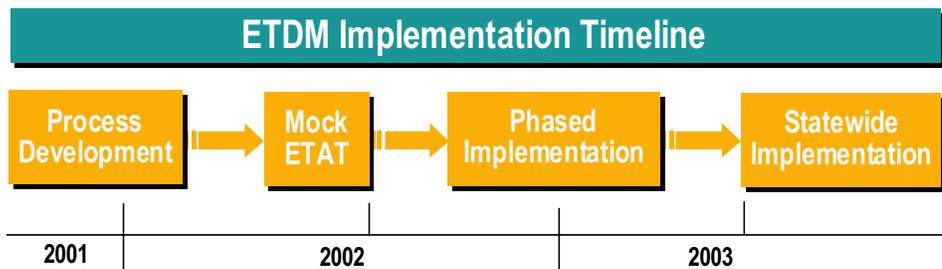
Permit Coordination: ETAT members coordinate with FDOT’s project managers during project development and coordinate within their agency to issue construction permits simultaneously with the federal NEPA Record of Decision.

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 (FGDL). The platform will be the current version of ESRI Geographic Information System (GIS) software. All GIS analyses will be performed within the 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 the public. 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 ETAT concept was developed to create linkages and communication with agencies responsible for protecting resources. Protection of the affected community, however, is accomplished by coordination of transportation plans through a Community Outreach Network. This network is the responsibility of the FDOT District Community Impacts Assessment (CIA) Coordinator.

During a Summit held in December 2001, federal and state agency heads signed a Memorandum of Understand-



ing supporting the continued development and implementation of the ETDM Process.



Agency participants, FDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 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 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.

The ETDM Process has been in development since early 2000 and has involved significant effort by agency participants. The development work is ongoing, and the new process is expected to be available for use in the summer 2002. The ETDM Process will be tested with a "Mock ETAT" during the spring 2002. Based on this 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 as well as MPO and statewide planning procedures.

CONTEXT FOR ETDM PROCESS

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 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 FHWA and 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.

TEA-21 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 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.

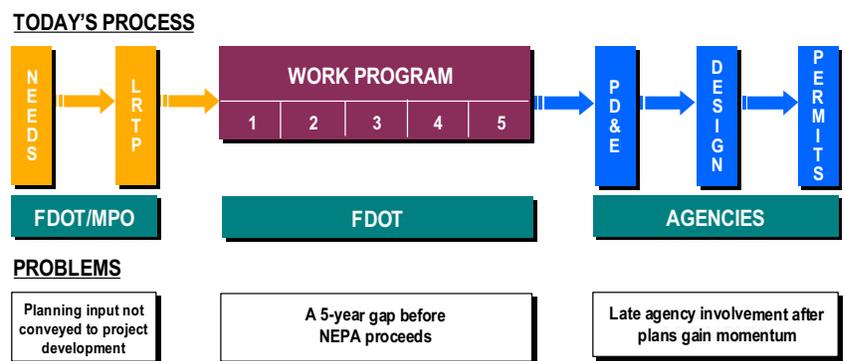
THE PROBLEM

In Florida's current transportation planning process, mobility needs are identified by MPOs and FDOT in response to the development thresholds allowed under approved Local Government 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.

MPOs and FDOT identify transportation improvement priorities for inclusion in a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) with little input from environmental resource agencies. The majority of 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 and significant funds expended. Substantial environmental impacts that could influence the priority of a project are not considered. Often, the purpose and need for the project has not been adequately defined.

The priority projects then enter the FDOT Work Program and remain there for five 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.

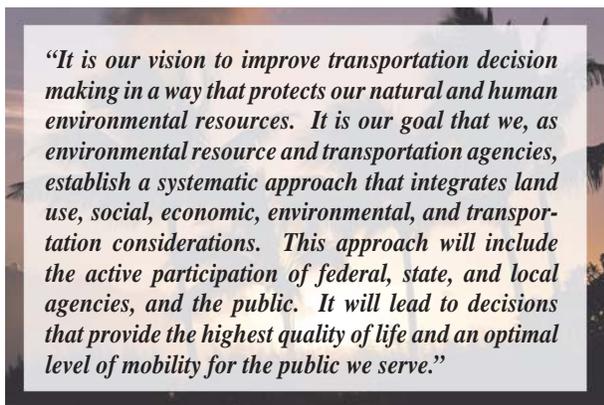


METHODOLOGY - THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE PROCESS

Opening 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 processes. 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 worked together with FDOT and FHWA in a series of multi-agency meetings to accomplish their shared vision.

Multi-Agency Meetings

The working group team participated in eight multi-agency workshops between February 2000 and November 2000 to examine the current planning process and develop a more efficient process while still protecting Florida's environment. This collaborative approach to redefine the existing planning and project development processes 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 Project Development & Environmental (PD&E) processes. Project Development and resource agency participants were similarly informed about the planning processes performed by MPOs and by FDOT. Together, the agencies identified problems with the current processes, and the team identified the follow-

ing 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 earlier in project development. Since implementation issues were focused on planning and permitting, 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, NEPA, and permitting processes. The focus groups conducted workshops in December 2000 and January 2001 and provided recommendations to improve the conceptual ETDM Process.

Task Work Groups

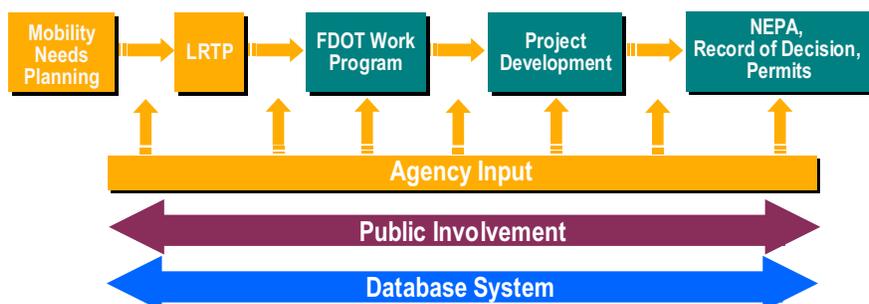
Recommendations resulting from the Planning and Permitting focus group meetings identified several issues requiring further work to define how the new process will be implemented. To address these issues, nine task work groups were created consisting of experienced specialists and practitioners who were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

By the fall of 2001, the task work groups developed findings and recommendations to further refine the specifics of the ETDM Process, and to define the content of Agency Operating Agreements and an ETDM Procedures Manual. The following sections present the status of the ETDM Process as well as the path to statewide implementation.

<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 (STIP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing a two-year STIP and a two-year Transportation Improvement Program (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, Five-Year 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 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 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 and community 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 Planning Screen and the Programming 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 is expected to improve the quality of decisions made during planning and reduce challenges during NEPA and 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;
- Reduced duplication of effort;
- Linkages between land use, transportation, and environment;
- Earlier assessment of secondary and cumulative Impacts;
- Access to comprehensive data in standardized formats;
- Earlier project approvals;
- Fewer projects subject to detailed reviews;
- Reviews focused on the key issues;
- Timely dispute resolution;
- Permit issuance linked to NEPA reviews; and
- Maximized use of technology for coordination.

Early Involvement - The Key to Success

Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT)

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 representative with responsibility to coordinate and perform all agency actions to satisfy the agency statutory responsibility with respect to the planning and implementation of transportation projects. This responsibility will require diverse and excellent skills,

especially the ability to function effectively within the agency and to coordinate with other agencies on the ETAT.

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 consultation 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.

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

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 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.

The ETAT is the mechanism for engaging agencies in the ETDM Process. It is equally important in this process to engage the affected community by providing timely information and effective methods for the public to participate. This will be accomplished in the ETDM Process through a Community Outreach Network.

Community Outreach Network

Each FDOT District Secretary has appointed a Community Impacts Assessment (CIA) Coordinator, who is the

conduit for the flow of information between transportation planners and the affected community. This person will be responsible for coordination with the District ETDM Coordinator to ensure the public's interests are known and represented. It is expected that the CIA Coordinator will compile Community Outreach Networks with the help of MPOs and local governments to engage the public in the transportation planning process.

The Community Outreach Network represents the public in non-MPO areas and complements the MPO Citizens Advisory Committee in urbanized areas. This is done by outreach to neighborhoods and other organized community groups. Representatives from social agencies may also participate through the Local Social Advisory Committee. The overall purpose of this network is to provide an avenue for two-way flow of information regarding transportation plans and effects on the community.

ETDM Coordinator

The District ETDM Coordinators will be responsible for the full implementation of Florida's ETDM Process, overall interagency and public involvement coordination, and for ensuring compliance with AOA's. This will include performing the following key coordination activities:

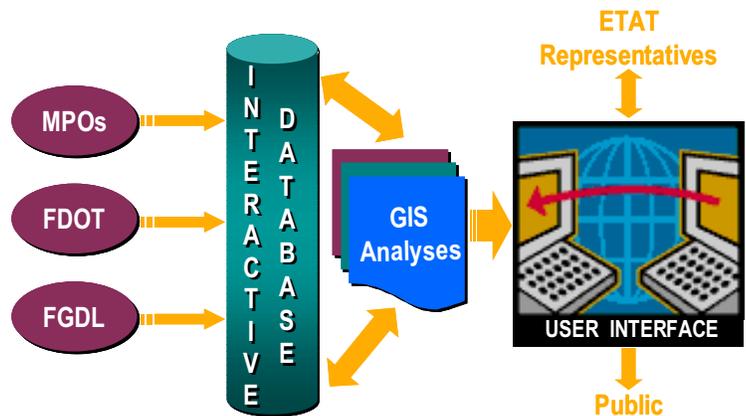
- Coordinates input of project planning data for the ETDM Process;
- Ensures timely ETAT reviews;
- Ensures timely information flow with the CIA Coordinator, the Community Outreach Network, and the Local Social Advisory Committee;
- Ensures that transportation projects and technical studies are developed in full compliance with NEPA and all environmental permit requirements;
- Prepares or delegates preparation of summary reports of ETAT and Community Outreach Network responses;
- Conducts ETDM training and provides technical assistance to ETAT members; and
- Coordinates permitting process with all agencies.

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

Environmental Screening Tool

The Environmental Screening Tool is an Internet-accessible GIS application that creates linkages between ETAT members and The Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL) housed at the GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida. The GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida will be responsible for managing and maintaining the environmental resource data within the FGDL. The Center has staff and faculty who are experts in using GIS for environmental management and transportation planning applications.

The Environmental Screening Tool application provides tools to input and update information about transportation projects, perform standardized GIS analyses, gather and report comments by the ETAT members, and provide read-only information to the public. The following diagram schematically displays the concept for the ETDM Internet-accessible GIS database system:



Data Entry

The GIS data input consists of environmental resource information and project planning information. Environmental resource information is provided by resource protection agencies which input their data to the FGDL. The environmental resource data is updated via the FGDL according to operating agreements with each agency. The ETAT member reviews the information in the FGDL to verify the most current information is available.

Project planning information is provided by MPOs and by FDOT in non-MPO areas. The Environmental Screening Tool provides three mechanisms for entering transportation project planning information into the ETDM database:

- **Interactive Data Entry Forms** - Forms enable MPOs and FDOT to draw project segments on an aerial photograph and enter information describing the project via on-line forms. These tools are intended to assist MPOs and FDOT to enter information that is not available electronically.
- **Extraction Tool for State Highways** - Allows FDOT staff to input planned improvements to roadways that are stored in the FDOT digital base map. The Tool allows planners to point at the beginning and end points along the roadway. Data entry forms are pre-populated with information extracted from the database so users can update and add to the information. When complete, the project information is loaded into the ETDM database.
- **GIS File Transfer** - Intended for MPOs or FDOT planners who have project plans in GIS format already and need to transfer their data to the ETDM database. This input tool allows the existing GIS data to be readily translated and transferred to the ETDM database. This minimizes redundant data entry.

Standardized Analyses

As the projects are loaded into the ETDM database, standardized GIS analyses are automatically performed to

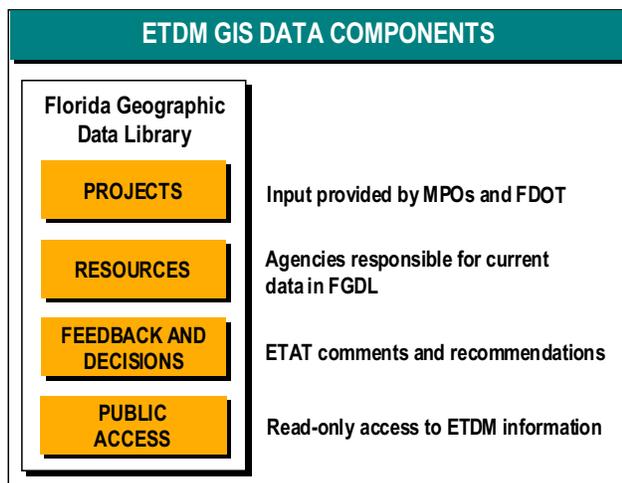
identify potential impacts to environmental resources. These analyses have been prescribed by the resource agencies performing the ETAT review on each specific resource issue. The analyses compare the location of proposed projects with the locations of environmental resources and provide quantitative results for consideration by the ETAT. The results are displayed in the ETAT Review module along with issue-specific maps displaying the project and environmental resources. Data layers, types of analyses, and graphic or tabular outputs were also prescribed by the agencies responsible for each issue through a series of workshops conducted in the fall 2001.

ETAT members access the information by Internet connection to the Department's ETDM website. "Point and click" simplicity is a feature of this system that allows agency ETAT members access to the ETDM database and GIS analysis results without the cost of high-end computer facilities, costly software, and the specialized skills of a GIS 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 Environmental Screening Tool includes interactive mapping tools, forms for adding comments during the Planning and Programming Screen phases of the ETDM process, and summary reports of ETAT comments. These reports are also available through a public access web site, which enables the public to view and query the information. Four data components compose the Environmental Screening Tool and are diagramed 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 Environmental Screening Tool:

- 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 and District or MPO planners gain 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.

Environmental Resource Data

The Environmental Resource data of the screening tool will include the data layers required by the ETAT members to perform environmental impact analyses on each mobility project. Each agency on the ETAT will be responsible for sending their updated data layers (including the location of priority resource protection areas) 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 performed during the Planning and Programming Screens. 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 and recommendations from each ETAT member about project impacts;
- Project scoping recommendations, including required technical studies; and
- Carry forward summary of community issues, concerns, and commitments made throughout the public involvement process.

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, sum-

marized 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.

The public and non-government organizations will not have the ability to submit comments using the Environmental Screening Tool. 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. The District CIA Coordinator will be responsible for engaging and documenting input from the affected community through Community Outreach Networks.

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, and 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 non-MPO rural areas mirrors the planning process in the MPO urban 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.



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 three years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas and every five 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 Government Comprehensive Plans, over a minimum 20-year period.

Rural Area Planning

In non-MPO areas, FDOT in consultation with local governments, has 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 Government Comprehensive Plans identify the mobility needs within each county and municipality.

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 Project Description Data component of the Environmental Screening Tool for review by the ETAT. The ETAT will conduct project impact analyses for each candidate project.

ETAT Planning Screen

This project impact analysis, called the Planning Screen, allows for 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 Planning Screen analysis will be documented in a Planning Summary Report which will be posted in the Feedback and Decision Data component of the ETDM database.

The Planning Screen is conducted on a maximum three-year cycle in MPO air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas and on a maximum five-year cycle in all other areas, consistent with the federal requirements for updating MPO long range transportation plans and Local Government 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 the Planning Screen, GeoPlan electronically uploads project description data received from the MPO and FDOT into the web-based Environmental Screening Tool and performs the standardized automated GIS analyses of the data for ETAT review.

The ETAT is electronically notified to conduct an assessment of the potential direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts that each candidate mobility project will have on the social or natural resource that their agency is responsible for protecting and/or managing. The ETAT will have 45 days to conduct their project impact evaluations and electronically submit their input to the ETDM database.

Potential Project Impacts

Social Resources

- Land Use
- Community Cohesion
- Community Impact Assessment
- Economic Resources
- Safety
- Mobility
- Civil Rights
- Relocations
- Noise
- Air Quality

Natural Environmental Resources

- Wetlands
- Wildlife and Habitat
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Aquatic Preserves
- Outstanding Florida Waters
- Sole Source Aquifers
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Floodplains
- Coastal Zone Consistency
- Coastal Barrier Islands
- Contaminated Sites

Cultural Resources

- Section 4(f) Lands
- Historic Sites/Districts
- Archaeological Sites
- Recreation Areas

Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

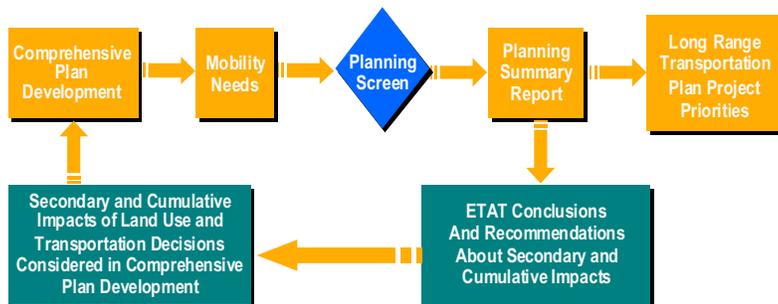
The Community Outreach Network will also be notified to perform their assessment of potential community impacts. Their evaluations will be submitted to the MPO in urban areas and the FDOT in non-urban areas for posting to the ETDM database.

The District ETDM Coordinator will verify that all input has been received from the ETAT and the Community Outreach Network. The Environmental Screening Tool will automatically date and time stamp all ETAT and public involvement comments for future reference.

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 impacts on the environment which result 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 development process as shown 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. This analysis will be performed by ETAT during the Planning Screen.



The FDOT ETDM Coordinator will review the ETAT comments on potential secondary and cumulative impacts, summarize these results, and develop recommendations for addressing the stated impacts. The cumulative impacts will be based on a review of potential direct and secondary impacts related to both the baseline quality of environmental and community resources and the level of change that a future land use plan or planned transportation improvements could facilitate. This summary statement will be posted in the ETDM database. The

summary of ETAT comments on secondary and cumulative impacts will comprise a portion of the Planning Summary Report.

Analysis of Public Involvement Feedback

The MPO in urban areas and the FDOT in non-MPO areas will be responsible for compiling and analyzing all system-wide and project-specific public comments received from the Community Outreach Network. The comments will be summarized and entered into a standard report format. The report will be electronically submitted to the District ETDM Coordinator for posting in the ETDM database. Community input will be a portion of the Planning Summary Report.

Planning Summary Report

A Planning Summary Report will summarize key recommendations and conclusions for the direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts identified by the ETAT and the Community Outreach Network in the Planning Screen. The District ETDM Coordinator will be responsible for preparation of the summary report and posting it in the ETDM database. Standardized and automated report output forms will provide an efficient and accurate method of documentation. The Planning Summary Report will be available electronically to resource agencies and to the public.

Planning Summary Report Contents

- Project description,
- Purpose and need statement,
- Agency comments,
- GIS mapping,
- Secondary and cumulative impacts evaluations,
- Public involvement comments, and
- Preliminary project concept based on agency and public input.

The report will contain agency and community information needed by the MPOs and the FDOT to prioritize transportation improvement projects in the LRTP, Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) Plan, and the FDOT Work Program. The report will also be provided to the planners responsible for developing Local Government Comprehensive 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

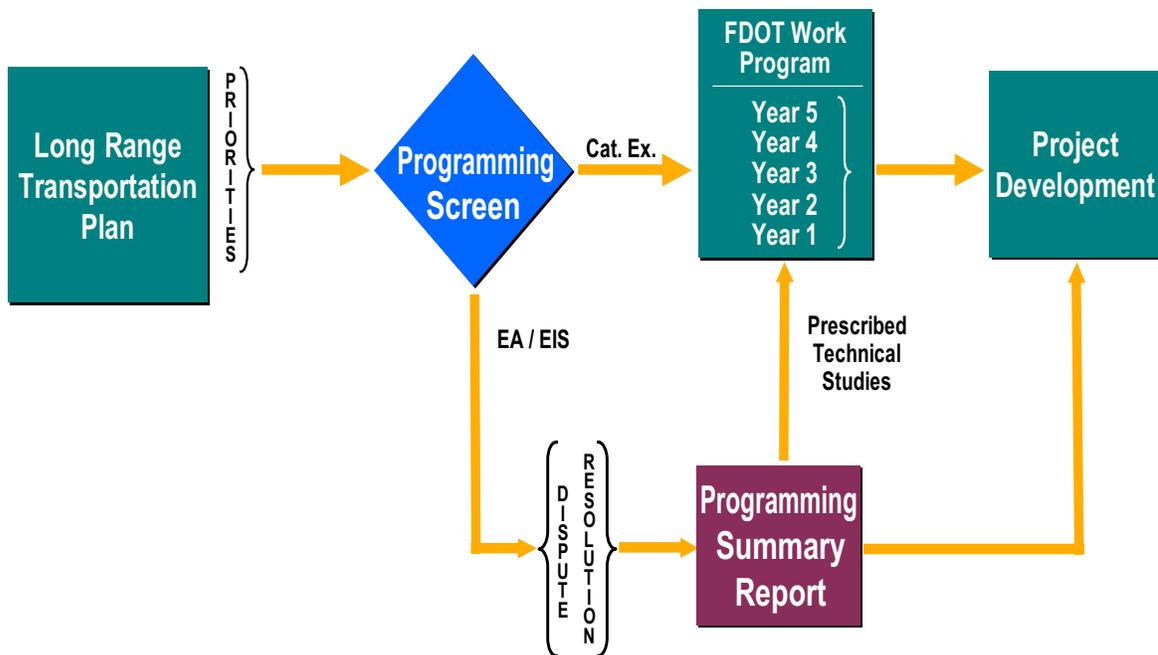
Programming Transportation Priorities

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 priori-

tizing 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 bridge replacement and FIHS project priorities in the non-MPO areas for annual approval by the FDOT Executive Board. These project priorities, along with the MPO and local government priorities, are used to guide the development of the FDOT Work Program. Before priority projects will be eligible for inclusion in the FDOT Work Program, a Programming Screen will be performed by ETAT.

Programming Screen

In the Programming Screen, ETAT representatives will review the Environmental Screening Tool information for priority projects and assist FDOT in scoping technical studies necessary to satisfy NEPA and obtain project permits during the project development phase. ETAT comments will be entered directly into the Feedback and Decision Data portion of the ETDM database.



Advance Notification

The NEPA process begins at the Programming Screen with the development of the Advance Notification (AN). The FDOT District ETDM Coordinator will be responsible for assembling the AN package of information in preparation for the Programming Screen. 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 package consists of a transmittal letter, application for federal assistance (when applicable), department project fact sheet, and location map. Part of the AN package will be produced as a "standard report" from a query generated from the ETDM database. The AN package will be available electronically to the ETAT and distributed to other appropriate federal agencies, central units of State government, local agencies, and American Indian tribes, as appropriate.

Class of Action Determination

Compliance with NEPA requires that the type of required environmental documentation be agreed upon in consultation with FHWA/FTA. This agreement is called the "Class of Action Determination" and will be made by the FHWA/FTA ETAT member in consultation with the FDOT ETDM 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 and comments provided by the ETAT in the Planning Screen.

Activities classified as Categorical Exclusions will advance to the design phase and will be programmed by FDOT. Interagency agreements between federal, state,

and local agencies will define categorically excluded activities using FHWA/FTA regulations as the basis.

Project Scoping

The primary purpose of the Programming 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 Programming Screen also provides the opportunity for ETAT members to elect "no further involvement" if the project has limited or no impacts on the resource that their agency is responsible for managing or protecting.

After notification by the FDOT ETDM Coordinator that the Environmental Screening Tool has been loaded with new projects entering the work program, each ETAT member will conduct the following activities during the Programming 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 Planning 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 ETDM 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.

ETDM Dispute Resolution Process

ETDM PROCESS COMMITMENT

Significant unresolved disputes must proceed through Dispute Resolution prior to programming.

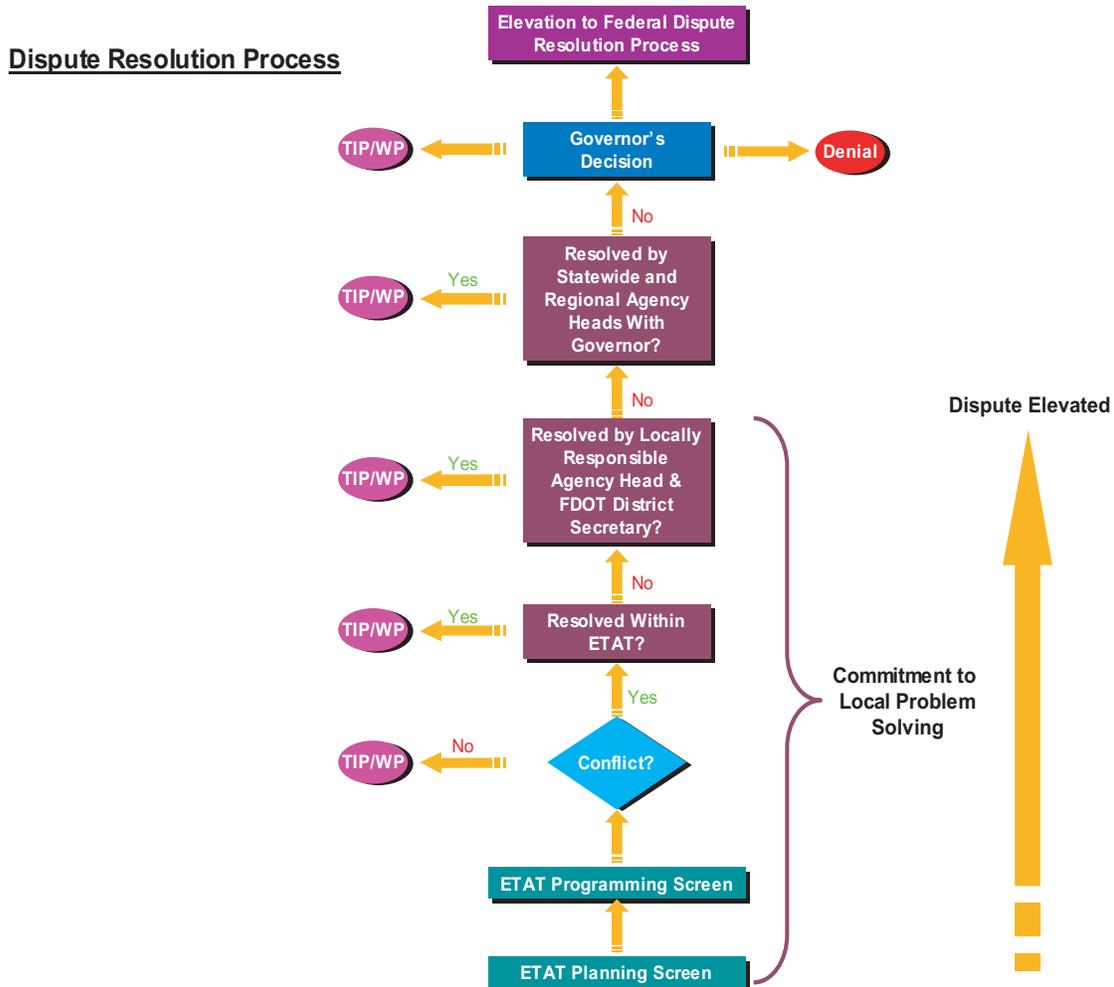
Identification of potential disputes will begin with the Planning Screen. Responses by ETAT will document the potential for a dispute relative to a candidate project's affect on a resource. When this occurs, the ETAT representatives and the District ETDM Coordinator are encouraged to consult and resolve the dispute, during the planning process, before the approval of the relevant LRTP or FIHS Plan.

Ongoing unresolved issues that require Dispute Resolution in the ETDM Process will be flagged by ETAT during the Programming Screen. Agency Operating Agreements (AOAs) and addenda will contain criteria that identify the basis and methodology for flagging a dispute.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2001 by state and federal agencies requires that project disputes be resolved before projects are eligible for programming by FDOT.

The ETDM Dispute Resolution Process is shown in the diagram below. This process focuses on resolution of disputes locally prior to elevation within agencies or to the Governor.

For each dispute in the ETDM Process, the ETDM Coordinator will first attempt to resolve the conflict or issue



at the agency staff level. The ETDM Coordinator will have the authority to make agency commitments, such as requiring specific technical studies to evaluate project alternatives or mitigation options during the project development phase. If the conflict cannot be resolved by the ETDM Coordinator, then the dispute will elevate to an Informal Dispute Resolution Process within the ETAT.

The Informal Dispute Resolution Process involves a subteam of the ETAT including those agencies with identified concerns for a transportation project. The ETAT subteam may undertake the following actions to address identified conflicts and issues: 1) resolve the issue or conflict through consultation and commemorate the resolution; 2) complete a feasibility or technical study for ETAT review; 3) advance project into the FDOT Work Program with identified issues to be addressed during project development.

Significant disputes which cannot be resolved locally within ETAT will enter Formal Dispute Resolution which involves elevation within agencies.

Programming Summary Report

A Programming Summary Report will be prepared for each project as a transition document to the project development phase. The following key components will make up this report:

Programming Summary Report Contents

- Project description and logical termini,
- Purpose and need statement,
- Class of action determination,
- Agency comments,
- Affected community comments,
- Preliminary project concept,
- Required technical studies to achieve NEPA compliance and project permit,
- Reasonable alternatives for further study,
- Dismissed alternatives with reasons, and
- Dispute resolution issues.

The community input and ETAT analyses, commentary, and documentation contained in the Environmental Screening Tool will provide the base information required for the Programming Summary Report. Standardized and automated report output forms will provide an efficient and accurate method of documentation.

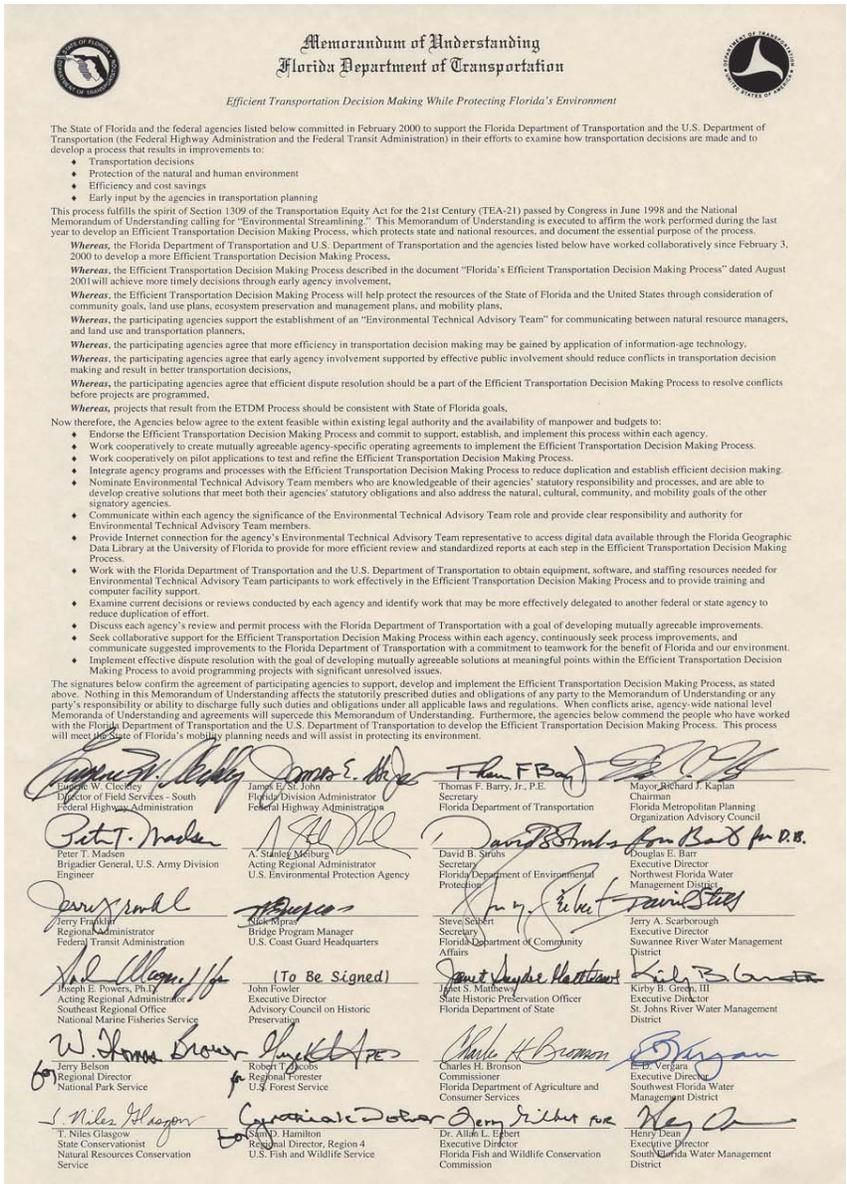
The ETDM Coordinator will be responsible for the preparation and posting of all Programming Summary Reports in the ETDM database. These reports will be electronically available to all ETAT representatives and the FDOT design engineers. The reports will be the transition document which transmits agency and community planning input for FDOT use in subsequent project development and design phases.

ETDM AGREEMENTS

Memorandum of Understanding

On December 14, 2001, federal and state agencies involved with the transportation planning decisions in Florida signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to support the continued development and implementation of the ETDM Process in Florida. The agencies endorsed the process concept and agreed to support, establish, and implement the ETDM Process within their respective agencies to the extent feasible within existing legal authority, staffing, and budget.





Planning and Programming Screens. The AOA's also document the resource analyses and technical reports necessary to obtain NEPA approval and project permits during the Project Development Phase. Mutually agreeable changes to operating procedures will be developed within agencies to document procedures supporting Florida's ETDM Process.

The Path Forward

Final preparations are underway through the spring 2002 to allow FDOT to begin using the ETDM Process in July 2002. It is planned that a "metered implementation" will proceed at that time with ETDM Coordinators within each FDOT District rolling out the new process to MPOs and District planners as warranted by their readiness and status of their planning cycle. MPOs initiating the needs assessment phase of their long range transportation plan update, for example, would be a priority to begin using the new process. Full statewide implementation is anticipated by July 2003.

Agency Operating Agreements (AOAs)

Agency Operating Agreements (AOAs) are currently in review or under development and are anticipated to be executed within the next six months. It is the intent of these AOAs to implement the ETDM Process for all transportation projects in Florida that require coordination, consultation, and compliance approval from transportation and environmental resource and regulatory agencies. Topics addressed in the AOAs include the project information and agency reviews necessary to complete the

The preparations include the following:

- Completing development of the Environmental Screening Tool;
- Completing the ETDM Procedures Guide which will be used by District planners, MPOs, and resource agencies;
- Developing training materials for agencies and consultants; and
- Testing the effectiveness of the new process with a "Mock ETAT."

Each of these implementation issues is described further in the following paragraphs.

Environmental Screening Tool

Activities planned through the spring 2002 include programming the final elements of the Environmental Screening Tool and finalizing preparation of the User's Guide as well as preparation of on-line documentation. This User's Guide will be included in the Procedure Guide. The GIS team will then train and work with the "Mock ETAT" during system testing and will make final refinements to the system and User's Guide prior to implementation.

ETDM Procedure Guide

Volume I of FDOT's Project Development and Environment Manual (the two-volume PD&E Manual) will be supplemented and eventually replaced by the ETDM Procedure Guide that will describe the steps and actions needed to accomplish efficient transportation decision-making within this new process. The Procedure Guide will detail, for example, the activities needed to accomplish the "Planning Screen," "Programming Screen," and the activities and timeline during "Project Development" that will lead to issuance of construction permits and the federal Record of Decision.

This Procedure Guide will draw from the results of task work groups that considered the specific actions needed to implement the ETDM Process.

The Procedure Guide will include a User's Guide for the Environmental Screening Tool as well as procedures for engaging input from the affected community.

Training

Training on the intent of the new process and procedures to be used will be required within FDOT, resource agencies, and MPOs. Some of the work to be performed within FDOT or by MPOs may be performed under Gen-

eral Consulting Contracts or other contract arrangements with consulting firms. Those consulting firms will also require training in the process.

Training materials and a training syllabus will be developed to support this preparatory activity. All training for Department, agency, and MPO personnel plus consultants will proceed shortly following the start of the Department's 2002/2003 fiscal year. ETDM Coordinators in each District will sequence the training depending on their perspective of the Department's needs and the degree of readiness for the entity involved. For example, an MPO that is not currently performing an LRTP update may be a lower training priority than an MPO which is starting its LRTP update.

It is planned that bulk training sessions will be held initially to introduce the process and describe the procedures to be used. Hands-on training will then be available as people engaged in the process begin using the Environmental Screening Tool and Procedure Guide. The goal of this training effort is to minimize the potential frustration that can occur as new procedures are implemented.

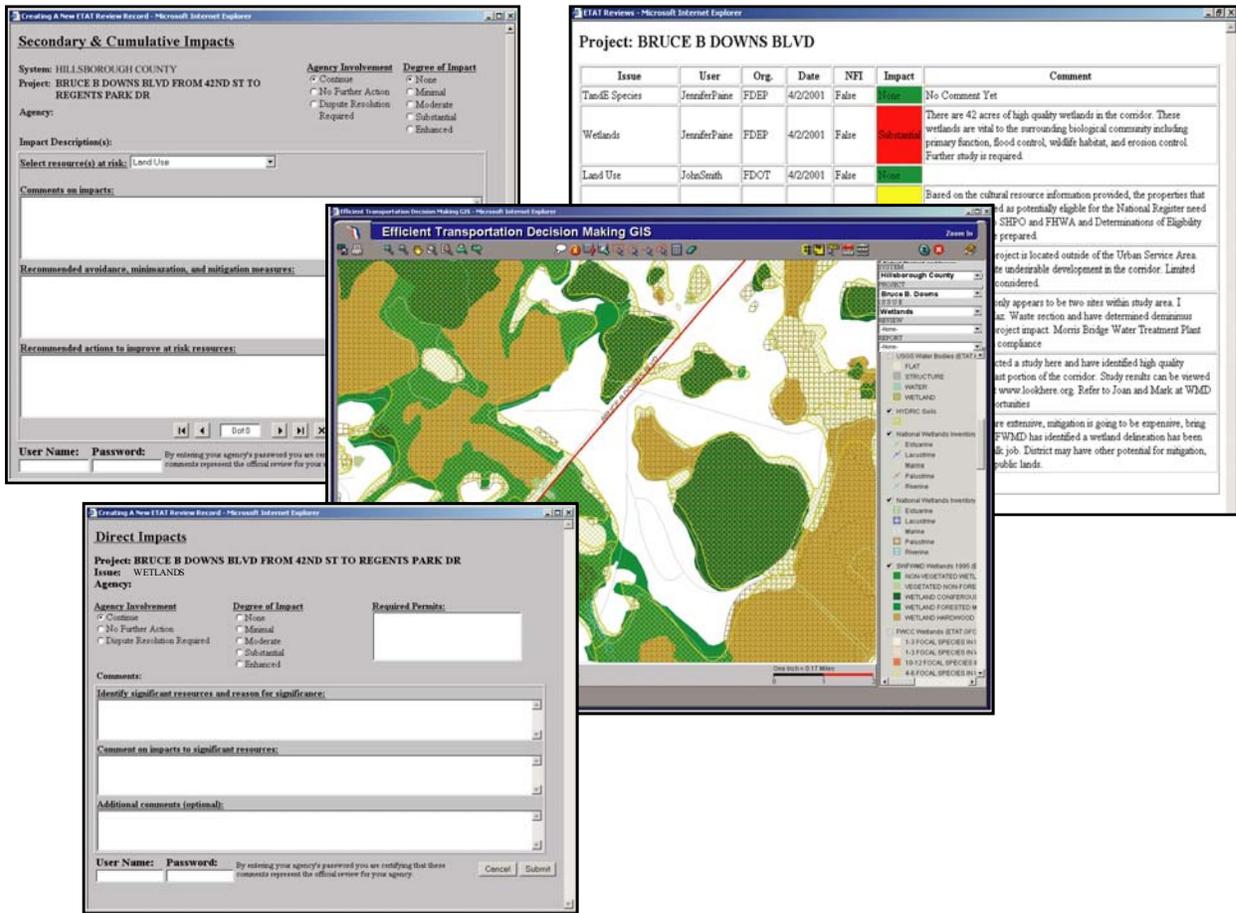
Testing the ETDM Process

Initially it was planned to conduct a series of "pilot applications" to test the Environmental Screening Tool and to allow more time for the FDOT Districts to adjust to a "new way of doing business." During meetings with the Districts in the latter portion of 2001, however, the FDOT Central Environmental Management Office met enthusiasm for proceeding with implementation. As a consequence, it was decided to accelerate preparations and to begin using the new process during the summer of 2002. The concept of pilot applications has subsequently been replaced by "Mock ETAT" testing to reduce the testing time required.

Late in the spring of 2002, the ETDM Procedure Guide and Environmental Screening Tool will be tested by a “Mock ETAT.” The FDOT and “Mock ETAT” will meet with the ETDM project team members for a two-day orientation period during which participants will be instructed in the use of the Environmental Screening Tool and Procedure Manual. This will be an abbreviated version of the ETDM training which will be provided to other participants since the “Mock ETAT” members will be knowledgeable of the background and intent that produced the ETDM Process.

“Mock ETAT” members will then perform the Planning Screen and Programming Screen involved with an MPO LRTP update and for selected project priorities within the LRTP. ETDM project team members will be available to the “Mock ETAT” through this test to provide hands-on help with the system and to collect feedback on suggested improvements.

The Procedure Manual will be modified to incorporate input from the “Mock ETAT” prior to implementation within Districts beginning in July 2002.



Examples from Environmental Screening Tool

