etdm
Efficient Transportation Decision Making

Progress Report #6

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

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the progress made by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process based upon the Agency Operating Agreement between FDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to continue participation in the ETDM process. This report reflects ETDM Performance Survey results, outcomes, findings, benefits, opportunities and recommendations; and provides a status on the ETDM program, existing agency agreements, ongoing activities and future initiatives. This document is the sixth in a series of progress reports that covers the period from January 2014 through December 2015 (referred to as the "reporting period").

2015 ETDM Survey Results

The Survey found District and Agency interactions received high favorable ratings. The Districts rated overall interaction with Agencies a score of 4.48 (Very Good) on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). Rating criteria included communication, working relationship, problem solving, comments and recommendations, quality of information and overall performance. The Survey found that the Agencies rated overall interaction with the Districts a score of 4.23 (Very Good) on the same scale and using the same criteria.

Other Survey results were favorable to the ETDM process, including Office of Environmental Management (OEM) support and recent ETDM initiatives. The Survey found ETDM continued to meet its objectives, was working well to incorporate environmental considerations into transportation planning, and had a number of highly rated process benefits (highest rated benefits were increased awareness of environmental resources [4.64] and strengthened interagency coordination and communication [4.63]).

The Survey found several opportunities for improvements, including enhancements to tools, data, communication, training, and information sharing.

ETDM Status

During the reporting period, a total of 73 screening events were completed, with 11 Planning Screens and 62 Programming Screens. There are 15 active agency agreements. A number of enhancements have been made to the Environmental Screening Tool (EST), including Advance Notification enhancement, Area of Interest Tool, Alternative Corridor Evaluation process and report, Cultural Resources Data Report, Elimination of Alternatives, Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT) Review enhancement, FHWA Environmental Review process, Geographic Information System (GIS) Analysis Report, Invitations to Participating and Cooperating Agencies, Preliminary Environmental Discussions, Project Alerts, Sociocultural Data Report, and State-Wide Accelerated Transformation (SWAT) project schedule tracking. In addition to the enhancements, other on-going activities include EST maintenance and support, ETAT members to recommend permits and technical studies, and working with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to provide additional checks for navigational determination.

Future initiatives include enhancing the comment form, enabling customizable organization of data layers, enhancing the class of action form, expanding public awareness, and updating the Survey to include annual reporting on selected metrics.

1 Purpose

This report provides an update on the progress made by the FDOT ETDM process based upon the Agency Operating Agreement (AOA) between FDOT and FHWA to continue participation in the ETDM process. This report reflects ETDM Performance Survey results, outcomes, findings, benefits, opportunities and recommendations; and provides a status on the ETDM program, existing agency agreements, ongoing activities, and future initiatives. This document is the sixth in a series of progress reports that covers the period from January 2014 through December 2015 (referred to as the reporting period).

2 ETDM Survey Results

This section summarizes the results of the ETDM Survey covering the reporting period.

2.1 Outcomes

Interaction between the FDOT Districts/Turnpike and the ETAT agencies are shown below.

- District/Turnpike ratings of interaction with ETAT – Very Good (4.48)

Question	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	TP	Overall Average Likert Rating
3. Communication	4.13	5.00	4.21	4.00	4.24	4.43	5.00	5.00	4.50 (Excellent)
4. Working relationship	4.00	5.00	4.27	4.08	4.17	4.57	5.00	5.00	4.51 (Excellent)
5. Problem solving	4.17	5.00	4.27	4.08	4.12	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.58 (Excellent)
6. Comments & recommendations	4.20	4.93	4.50	3.92	3.88	4.46	4.80	5.00	4.46 (Very Good)
7. Quality of information	4.20	4.93	4.07	4.00	4.24	4.67	4.57	5.00	4.46 (Very Good)
8. Overall performance	4.13	4.93	4.07	3.92	4.06	4.54	5.00	5.00	4.46 (Very Good)

- Agency ratings of interaction with Districts/Turnpike – Very Good (4.23)

Question	FDACS	FDEO	FDEP	SHPO	FFWCC	FHWA	NMFS	NPS	NRCS	NWFWMD	SJRWMD	SFWMD	SWFWMD	SRWMD	USACOE	USCG	USEPA	USFWS	Average Likert Rating
3. Communication	3.43	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.38	3.43	5.00	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.80	5.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.75	4.24 (Very Good)
4. Working relationship	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.57	4.38	3.43	5.00	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.20	5.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.13	4.23 (Very Good)
5. Problem solving	3.13	5.00	4.00	4.71	4.38	3.43	5.00	4.00	N/A	3.00	4.25	4.20	N/A	3.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.13	4.08 (Very Good)
6. Comments and recommendations	3.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.38	3.00	5.00	3.00	4.50	4.00	4.00	3.80	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	4.09 (Very Good)
7. Quality of information	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.86	4.38	3.00	5.00	4.00	4.63	4.00	4.00	3.80	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	4.13	4.21 (Very Good)
8. Overall performance	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.38	3.14	5.00	4.00	4.75	4.00	4.00	3.80	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	4.23 (Very Good)

- OEM Support

- o Training – Very Good (4.24)

- o OEM Manuals and Handbooks – Very Good (4.03)

- o Technical Assistance – Excellent (4.85)

Notably, OEMs technical assistance provided by the Help Desk and by OEM staff received the highest possible rating (Excellent) from the Districts and Turnpike in every category.

- Recent Initiatives

  - o Alternative Corridor Evaluation process – Very Good (4.17)

  - o Preliminary Environmental Discussions – Very Good (4.07)

  - o Sociocultural Data Report – Very Good (3.69)

  - o Area of Interest Tool – Very Good (4.38)

Initiative	District Average	Agency Average	Overall Average
Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process	4.75	3.59	4.17 (Very Good)
Preliminary Environmental Discussions (PEDs)	4.25	3.88	4.07 (Very Good)
Sociocultural Data Report (SDR)	3.88	3.50	3.69 (Very Good)
Area of Interest (AOI) Tool	4.38	N/A	4.38 (Very Good)

2.2   Findings

Based on the responses provided by the 2015 ETDM survey, we found the ETDM process continues to meet its objectives:

- Early identification of potential issues for project scope development

- Timely decision-making that includes consideration of environmental quality

- Full and early public and ETAT member participation

- Linkage of planning and Project Development and Environment (PD&E), including National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes

- Incorporation of appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms during the planning process

Overall, participants indicated that the ETDM process is working well to incorporate environmental considerations into transportation planning. The information, decisions, and products from the ETDM process support efficient project delivery as projects move forward to design and permitting phases. Project examples illustrate continued cost and time savings realized through implementation of the ETDM process.

In addition to recognizing these achievements, the surveys identified some enhancements to tools, data, and communication techniques to help FDOT realize additional benefits. OEM has

begun acting on these recommendations. OEM appreciates the feedback received from ETDM participants and will continue to monitor the process and seek opportunities for continual improvement.

2.3   Benefits

ETDM Process Benefits

- Established lasting efficiencies in the environmental review process – Agree (4.30)

- Improved project permitting – Agree (4.03)

- Increased public access to project information – Agree (3.94)

- Increased the awareness of environmental resources – Strongly Agree (4.64)

- Increased the protection of environmental resources – Agree (4.13)

- Promoted better decision making for transportation projects – Agree (4.39)

- Reduced interagency conflicts – Agree (4.06)

- Saved money and reduced project costs – Agree (3.90)

- Strengthened interagency coordination and communication – Strongly Agree (4.63)

Average District/Turnpike Ratings of ETDM Process Benefits		
Statements about the ETDM Process	**Numerical Rating**	**Likert Rating**
Increased the awareness of environmental resources	5.00	Strongly Agree
Strengthened interagency coordination and communication	4.75	Strongly Agree
Promoted better decision making for transportation projects	4.50	Strongly Agree
Established lasting efficiencies in the environmental review process	4.38	Agree
Increased the protection of environmental resources	4.25	Agree
Reduced interagency conflicts	4.13	Agree
Saved money and reduced project costs	4.00	Agree
Improved project permitting	4.00	Agree
Increased public access to project information	3.88	Agree

Average ETAT Agency Ratings of ETDM Process Benefits		
Statements about the ETDM Process	**Numerical Rating**	**Likert Rating**
Strengthened interagency coordination and communication	4.50	Strongly Agree
Increased the awareness of environmental resources	4.28	Agree
Promoted better decision making for transportation projects	4.28	Agree
Established lasting efficiencies in the environmental review process	4.22	Agree
Improved project permitting	4.06	Agree
Increased the protection of environmental resources	4.00	Agree
Reduced interagency conflicts	4.00	Agree
Increased public access to project information	4.00	Agree
Saved money and reduced project costs	3.80	Agree

2.4 Opportunities and Recommendations

- ETDM Process
  - Share successful practices among Districts and encourage more consistency
  - Expand public knowledge of the ETDM website
  - Work with USCG to provide additional checks for navigational determination (In Progress)
  - Work with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to streamline the process for minor Endangered Species Act (ESA) informal consultations, and give higher priority and allow for quicker turnaround on FDOT-related ESA consultations (In Progress)
  - Publish quarterly updates for pending ETDM reviews for all seven FDOT Districts and Turnpike
- Training and Guidance
  - Continue to provide ETDM, EST, and PD&E training incorporating new guidance and procedures (In Progress)
- EST Enhancements
  - Data Updates
    - Add local parks to the recreational areas (Completed)
    - Update the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee FFWCC Land cover data layer (Completed)
  - Area of Interest (AOI) Tool Enhancements
    - Add an option to further reduce or turn off buffers (Completed)
    - Enable a customizable issues folder

- Add links to related tools available on other websites:
  - Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Floodplain Map Viewer
  - Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Dashboard
  - Update the form used by agencies to comment on potential project effects (In progress)
- Communication and Meetings:
  - Re-establish quarterly FDOT ETDM Coordinator meetings (Completed)
  - Provide opportunities for more frequent face-to-face interagency ETAT meetings (In Progress)
  - Follow-up with survey participants (In Progress)

3 Status

This section provides a status of the ETDM program.

3.1 ETDM Screenings

During the reporting period, a total of 73 screening events were completed. **Table 1** shows the number and type of screening events completed by each FDOT District during the reporting period and since 10/1/2004.

Table 1 Number of ETDM Planning and Programming Screens

District	Reporting Period (1/1/2014 – 12/31/2015)			Since Implementation (10/1/2004 – 12/31/2015)		
	Planning Screens	Programming Screens	Total	Planning Screens	Programming Screens	Total
District 1	0	14	14	32	62	94
District 2	0	3	3	23	37	60
District 3	7	16	23	44	43	87
District 4	0	15	15	18	74	92
District 5	4	5	9	21	47	68
District 6	0	4	4	18	43	61
District 7	0	4	4	38	34	72
Turnpike	0	1	1	2	17	19
Statewide Total	**11**	**62**	**73**	**196**	**357**	**553**

Note: Some projects had multiple screenings during the reporting period.

3.2   Existing Agency Agreements

Table 2 shows the status of existing agreements with agencies engaged in the ETDM process.

Table 2 ETDM Agency Agreement Status

Agency	Agreement Dates	Funding
Federal Highway Administration	01/03/2016-11/02/2021	Non-Funded
FL Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services	3/27/12-Indefinate (AOA only)	Non-Funded
FL Department of Economic Opportunities	4/15/2015-4/14/2020	$25,999
FL Department of Environmental Protection	N/A	Non-Funded
FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	1/1/2012-12/31/2017	$701,986.80
FL Department of State	12/1/2012-11/30/2017	$1,240,750
National Marine Fishery Service	7/25/2011-7/24/2017	$2,022,474
National Park Service	8/11/2005-Indefinate (MA and AOA only)	Non-Funded
Northwest Florida Water Management District	6/6/2011-6/5/2018	$673,617
South Florida Water Management District	5/15/2007-5/14/2017	$250,000
Southwest Florida Water Management District	6/1/2015-5/31/2020	$1,000,000
Suwannee River Water Management District	10/1/2011-9/30/2017	$340,884
US Army Corp of Engineers	6/30/2015-6/30/2020	$2,600,000
US Coast Guard	N/A	Non-Funded
Natural Resources Conservation Service	N/A	Non-Funded
US Environmental Protection Agency	1/30/2015-1/29/2020	$1,750,000
US Fish and Wildlife Service	5/1/2015-4/30/2020	$3,837,889
US Forest Service	8/8/2006-8/8/2017	$194,938

Note: When funded, the value of the current funding agreement is provided (rounded to the nearest whole dollar).

3.3   Environmental Screening Tool Enhancements

The OEM continually builds on the success of the EST by adding new tools and features to support efficient transportation project delivery. Since the ETDM Progress Report #5, the following major enhancements were implemented:

- Advance Notification enhancement – allows Districts to distribute Advance Notifications separately from Programming Screen Notifications, when applicable.

- AOI Tool – allows users to draw boundaries on a map to identify a study area and extract information about environmental resources within those boundaries.

- Alternative Corridor Evaluation (ACE) process – supports reviews and processing of the ACE Report (ACER) and Methodology Memorandums.

- Cultural Resources Data (CRD) Report – identifies historic and archaeological resources recorded in the vicinity of the project.

- Elimination of Alternatives – provides support to document and obtain lead agency approval on the elimination of alternatives during the planning phase

- ETAT Review enhancement – reorganizes the forms and reports to more clearly identify comments received about project effects (direct and indirect) and cumulative effects.

- Federal Highway Environmental Review process – implements an approval process to identify whether the federal or state environmental review process will be used by a project when it advances to PD&E.

- GIS Analysis report – adds project and alternative location maps to the report with links to PDFs of the results, enabling quicker access to the reports.

- Invitations to Participating and Cooperating Agencies – supports invitation and notification process for Districts to recommend and Lead Agencies to invite agencies to serve as participating or cooperating agencies during the PD&E phase.

- Preliminary Environmental Discussions (PEDs) – provides easy access to GIS information and tools that help the project team convey information to the ETAT about FDOT's initial understanding of the natural, physical, cultural, and community issues/resources in a project study area.

- Project Alerts – provides reminders about project tasks and activities for project managers, ETDM Coordinators and their teams.

- Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) – compiles demographic, land use, and community data from a variety of sources to help project teams and ETAT reviewers begin to identify sociocultural resources in the study area.

- SWAT project schedule tracking – reports planned and actual schedule dates for project milestones related to the environmental review process.

3.4 On-going Activities

In addition to the EST enhancements above in Section 3.3, other on-going activities include:

- EST Maintenance and Support - technical support staff respond to user requests for assistance with the EST, provide online and hands-on training, monitor the system, and work on programming tasks to improve the performance and operation of the EST.

- Permits and Technical Studies – The EST is being enhanced to provide a feature the ETAT members can use during their ETDM screening reviews to recommend specific permits and technical studies for the resources under their jurisdiction. OEM has organized the required permits and studies in lists by resource issue and agency, making it easier for the ETAT to identify the appropriate options by selecting them from a list, rather than typing them in for each project alternative.

- OEM Pre-screening Review – As the Districts prepare their ETDM project information and screening schedules, they begin coordinating with the OEM Project Delivery Coordinators. After the District completes their internal QA/QC, OEM reviews the project description, purpose and need, and PED. During these reviews, OEM staff develop an understanding of the proposed project and provide comments to the Districts. OEM is currently working on enhancements to the EST to support these pre-screening reviews.

- EST Upgrade – The foundation of the current EST user interface was primarily developed in 2005, and was targeted for Internet Explorer (IE) 6. This prevents it from taking advantage of technology advances available in modern browsers. Upgrading the EST will allow for better performance and stability. It will also allow us to design modern, responsive web pages to work well across a wide array of devices and screen sizes, such as tablets and smart phones. In addition, the EST map viewer was developed with software that is no longer supported by the vendor. Upgrading the map viewer will allow the EST to take advantage of more powerful, responsive GIS capabilities that are currently available. It will be further customized to provide additional capabilities, such as enhanced search functions and customizable maps.

- USCG Determination - OEM is working with the USCG on an enhancement to the EST to improve early interaction on bridge navigational determination for water crossings per project and alternatives. It enables the USCG to Identify if a project is in USCG jurisdiction, needs a permit, needs a lighting plan or if its eligible for Exceptions to Bridge Permits (23 U.S.C 144, 1982 Coast Guard Authorization Act, Advanced Approval Waterway).

3.5 Future Initiatives

- Enhance the comment form used by the ETAT during screening events. OEM is working to allow agencies to select the required technical studies and permits needed for a project as part of their commenting abilities.   OEM has completed and reviewers can now input the same comment for several alternatives at the same time. This removed a recent restriction put in place to encourage agencies to distinguish issues across the alternatives. In many situations, a resource might be equally or nearly equally affected by all alternatives/segments, and reviewers would need to input the same comment many times. A number of ETAT agencies pointed out that this restriction created inefficiencies and the restriction has been lifted. OEM is also working to revise the "No Involvement" option on the comment form. The bottom of the review form asks what level of involvement is needed for the project. OEM is considering changing the "No Involvement" option to "No Involvement for this Issue." Since agencies comment on multiple issues, one or more may not be relevant, but agency involvement is still required for the project overall.

- Enhance the class of action recommendation tool within the EST to include a potential for significant impacts checklist, similar to the checklist found in the Type 2 CE determination form. The intent is to provide a single location tied to the proposed COA that quickly summarizes, issue-by-issue, whether there is a potential for significant impacts, a question of significance, no significance, or no involvement.

- EST Map Viewer Enhancement - The EST uses information from the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL) to provide maps of ETDM projects and various environmental resources. Currently there are over 300 different data sets (layers) available. Choosing which data layers to view depends on the project context, the resources of concern, and the focus of the specific user. For example, ETAT members from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service typically refer to different data layers than an ETAT member from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. Currently the EST uses a standard set of issue maps to organize the data in categories. Each issue map has many layers and users choose which ones to view. OEM plans to enhance the EST to allow the users to create their own maps adding or removing FGDL data layers to make it easier for them to select which layers to view.

- Expand public awareness of the ETDM public web site. Publicity about the ETDM public website should come from the District on a project-specific basis. Printed or electronic materials distributed about ETDM projects should also promote the site. OEM plans to set up a small workgroup to discuss these and other ideas to promote the website.

- Enhance the ETDM Survey reports to integrate charts and graphs with the text. In addition to text and tables, bar and/or line charts will be added to the statewide survey report to graphically display overall data findings and trends. Charts depicting detailed data are included and will continue to be included in the report appendices.

- Update the ETDM Survey itself to annually support training and communication metrics. NEPA Assignment measures will require FDOT to report annually on training, and on agency involvement and communications. The ETDM Survey, currently administered every two years, provides data for both metrics. The Survey will be expanded to the "off" years to cover data collection for the NEPA Assignment measures.